

artificial language and with references to the Universal Esperanto Association and to the World Esperanto Congress, but its broader concept and any other artificial languages have obviously been forgotten.

Nevertheless, this second edition of the *Language Industries Atlas* is certainly a useful, worthwhile and handy reference work for all parties concerned, and it also looks fine with its glossy, light violet hard cover.

Ingetraut Dahlberg

Dr. Ingetraut Dahlberg, Woogstr. 36a, D-60431 Frankfurt, Germany.

CAPURRO, Rafael: Leben im Informationszeitalter. (Living in the Age of Information). Berlin: Akad.-Verl. 1995. 131p, ISBN 3-05-002716-9.

Such a complex, imaginative and detailed collection of essays as Capurro's *Leben im Informationszeitalter* can hardly be summarized in a few mere words. At the price of considerably reducing its complexity, the following key thoughts, however, may be emphasized. Our contemporary information and media society suffers from a one-sided functionalistic and technocratic orientation, paying undue homage to the cognitive paradigm and disconnecting man from the *Lebenswelt* (Edmund Husserl's concept of the world in which we live) finally ending in man's degradation. Referring to both Martin Heidegger and Greek philosophy, Capurro even speaks of Man's desacralization, of his loss of plenitude and being.

The preeminence of technology, rapidity, simulation and the virtual, as well as the danger of information overload, should be opposed by the traditional art of living and the practices of the formation of the self (p.22-36): asceticism, meditation, contemplation, writing, dialogue. Capurro demands that the dimensions of the *Lebenswelt* be reconquered in order to enrich the pragmatism of information technology. He recommends a new asceticism of life, of the use of the media and information and demands the conscious self-confined employment of weak [sic] rather than strong information technologies. Capurro pleads for an understanding of the contingency, fragility and mortality of human life, a turning away from an instrumental anthropocentrism, a reconsideration of the great tales and myths and a revival of the praising functions of language. Fortunately, Capurro voices all these recommendations without encouraging a new esotericism or even irrationalism.

True to these premises, Capurro defines informatics or computer science as a hermeneutic, highly philosophical discipline rather than as merely technological. Computer science is asked to become more

than just a science of electronic tools and to attach importance to its ethical dimension¹, above all to the virtue of *prudentia*. The artificial and postbiological higher intelligences of the computer scientist's dreams are unmasked as a "mythology of ghosts in technical attire" (p.78-96), as metaphysical machinery which, by a bold analogy, Capurro compares to angels as they are imagined in Thomistic angelology. The criteria of this comparison are substantiality, knowledge and will.

Certain remarkable assets of Capurro's book should be emphasized: the refusal of a mere technological reductionism; the emphasis on the ethical dimension of the information society; the concern with the ecological perspectives of information; the visionary power of integrative and holistic thought; the reliability, competence and intellectual precision of argumentation; the epistemological radicalism; the intimate knowledge of the major concepts of the history of philosophy which should not be forgotten in an age of restlessness (*gnothi sauton*: "Know Thyself"); the endeavor to use information theory in order to open up new paths of anthropology; the insight into the ambivalence and paradox of the *conditio humana*; the fundamental criticism of the amorality and cynicism of our contemporary society.

The drawbacks of Capurro's collection are palpable, too:

1. The ways out of the crisis suggested by the author are rather noncommittal. The appeal to the reader to enforce the value of virtues such as justice, courage and prudence is rather vague.
2. History teaches the sad experience that Capurro's practices of the self are at the disposal of an intellectual elite, the happy few only.
3. Capurro's somewhat unrestrained joy in analogy, metaphor and expressive imagery generates far-fetched comparisons and almost 'promiscuous' equations; concepts are hereby removed from their definitive historical context and made homeless. Just one example: Capurro enthusiastically describes the "Platonic cave of the world-wide web" as a "rather adequate image of our information society" (p.107). Such an image smacks of a tempting aestheticism. But is it incisive enough to be of real help?
4. The attempt to attach catchy labels to threatening phenomena of crisis (e.g., "GOLEM-galaxy", p.112) is rather problematic, too.
5. In my opinion it is somewhat naive to believe that "paradoxically mass media may become media of the formation of the self" (p.43).
6. Capurro's affection for hyphens serving the etymologizing marking of words - a stylistic device notoriously characteristic of Heidegger - some-

times borders on mannerism ("unter-worfen", 'sub-jected', p.37; "re-volutionieren", 're-volutionize', p.70; "Un-Wahrheit", 'un-truth', p.71).

All these objections to Capurro's book do not diminish the value of this fascinating collection of essays. It should be recommended not only to the expert in knowledge organization and information technology, but also to the anthropologist and philosopher.

The volume is rounded off by a useful bibliography (p.115-121), a detailed subject index (p.122-128), an index of Greek terms (p.129), an index of Latin terms (p.130-131) and a name index (p.132-134).

¹ See Capurro, R. (ed.): *Informationsethik*. [Ethics of information]. Konstanz: Universitätsverl. 1995. (Schriften zur Informationswissenschaft, 18).

Werner Bies

Dr. Werner Bies, Forststr. 52, D-12163 Berlin, Germany.

WELLISCH, Hans H.: Indexing from A to Z. Dublin/New York: H.W. Wilson. 1995. 569 p. US\$ 45. ISBN 0-8242-0882-X.

This is the second edition of Wellisch's book, revised and enlarged in 1995. It contains almost 400 citations, in part most recent and in part dating back to the pioneer times of mechanized documentation and even earlier.

In this book, the author releases his comprehensive knowledge of the topic of indexing, collected and having matured in life-long teaching and practice. The contents of the author's numerous publications of the author are displayed here in concentration.

The book is preceded by a list in which the most important technical terms in indexing are compiled, together with the definitions in which the author uses them. This contributes much to the clarity of their use in the text.

Much valuable knowledge for indexing has fallen in oblivion and is presented anew by Wellisch here. One example is the loss of any discrimination between relevance and pertinence. An unattainable goal is set for any retrieval system if a type of "relevance" of the responses (with which pertinence is meant in reality) is demanded for them. Much time and manpower is presently being wasted for this goal.

Wellisch also criticizes various habits and opinions that have become untenable in the present – for example, the sorting mode of "letter by letter", the excessively pre-coordinating Library of Congress Subject Headings, and their claim to constitute an appropriate tool for databases.

In indexing, business and science clashes to an extent hardly found in any other field. From his eminent view, the author relentlessly criticizes those authors who in carelessness or ignorance try to promote their business under the label of science. In particular, those are meant here who make publishers believe that there is a super-simple, cheap and at the same time effective way of indexing in existence. Wellisch emphatically advises against embedded software if it is restricted to merely marking so-called important textwords.

The usefulness of a thesaurus for indexing is stated, but at the same time it is wisely advised against underestimating the task of thesaurus construction. The employment of published and continually maintained thesauri or their adaptation to the task at hand is recommended. For the reviewer, this reservation is certainly appropriate for large and continually growing databases, those covering an entire field of knowledge. However, the construction of a thesaurus for the (fairly limited) subject field of an individual book is a thing that may be expected of a professional indexer. Those headings which will have to be related to each other by "see" and "see also" references can be compiled more completely from a thesaurus than through mere reflection. At the same time the indexer would feel the necessity of taking into consideration those terms as headings that had not been explicitly used by the book author and under which, however, a user might look-up.

The book is subdivided into 96 sections, alphabetically arranged, among them, for example, Automatic Indexing (towards the prospects of its success for the autonomous creation of useful indexes the author is skeptical), Bad Indexing (subtitle: "a baker's dozen of common mistakes"), Costing (including everything a freelance indexer must know), Depth of Indexing (comprising exhaustivity and specificity), Indexing Languages (with a comparison of natural and controlled languages), Legal Texts, Medical Texts, Training in Indexing. But topics of more formal character are treated, too, for example Abbreviations, Double Entries, Locators, Personal Names, Punctuation.

Each section comprises almost everything in an encyclopedia-like fashion which is of interest for the topic under consideration. Occasionally, the reader is referred to other sections in which parts of the topic are also dealt with. Should there not be a section of its own for a topic of interest, for example, subheadings, one finds ample reference in the index to those sections in which the topic is also discussed.

If a comprehensive topic would have exceeded the framework of the book, the reader is referred to the special literature, which is often the most recent one.

The book is preceded by a list of particular comprehensive topics, and it is recorded in which sections