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Dynamism and Stability in Knowledge Organization: From one Conference to Another: Toronto 2000, Lille 2011

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Since its creation in 1996, the French chapter of ISKO has been concerned with knowledge organization issues. This topic has been dealt with from different angles: knowledge organization structures, tools for mediation, forms and mechanisms for knowledge sharing. Given that these issues are at the center of information production and access as well as knowledge dissemination, the 8th edition of the ISKO-France conference aimed to focus specifically on the subject of stability and dynamism in the concepts and paradigms underlying knowledge organization research. Eleven years after the sixth International ISKO Conference organized by the Faculty of Information Studies at the University of Toronto on this very theme, the French ISKO chapter,[1] convinced of the importance of this theme, proposed to revisit it.

Access to information and thereby to knowledge is an important social, political, cultural and economic stake. This demands that we take a reflexive look at the theories, paradigms and concepts underlying the organization and the circulation of information and knowledge. The past years have witnessed an increase in the potentials of information technology. New socio-technical practices have emerged. This 2011 edition aimed in particular to examine the mutations that modes and structures of knowledge organization might have undergone in the face of technological advances driven by the Web, especially by the Social Web. Conversely, we also sought to ascertain which modes and structures had resisted the technological upheaval provoked by the Web. What are the reasons for their stability or dynamism? What is the impact of the societal mutations induced by the penetration of the Web in every aspect of scientific and professional activity on modes of knowledge organization and on modalities for the production and

circulation of knowledge? What is or will be the impact of the so-called "Semantic Web" on knowledge organization research? What repercussions may we expect on models, structures and knowledge representation modes? Are we in the face of an evolution or a revolution, a break-off or continuity?

The call for papers identified four main topics:

1. Historical and epistemological foundations of knowledge organization (KO)
   paradigms underlying research in KO
   structures and relations in KO
   role and influence of culture for the design of KO tools
   evolution and stability of KO paradigms in different societies or cultures
2. Knowledge organization systems
   evolution of controlled vocabularies (classification languages, thesauri,...) in the semantic web era
   interoperability of systems and devices for KO
   centralized systems for KO and the social collaborative practices of web 2.0
3. Mutations in professional practices
   transformation of documentary forms
   collaborative practices in documentation services
   interoperability of knowledge representation tools
   metamorphosis of the documentation space in its relation with sense making, with form and time
   new editorial forms, new representation modes for information and knowledge circulation
4. Uses and users of knowledge organization systems
   users practices of KO systems
   uses of new tools and devices for classification and categorization (folksonomies, folksontologies)

Our comparison between the two conferences was based on two elements—first, the contributions to ISKO-Lille (2 keynote addresses, 26 papers and 7 posters) and the contributions to the Sixth ISKO International Conference held in Toronto, and second, the panel addressing the general theme of the conference organized by Clément Arsenault and Widad Mustafa El Hadi. The invited panelists were: Charles Huot, TEMIS, France; Michèle Hudon, EBSI, Université de Montréal; Sylvie Leleu-Merviel, U. de Valenciennes; Maria López-Huertas, Facultad de Biblioteconomía y Documentación, Université de Grenade (Spain); Peter Ohly, President, ISKO International; Fabrice Papy, Université de Nancy 2; Barbara Sosinska-Kalata, Université de Varsovie; Manuel Zacklad, DICEN-CNAM, Paris.

We asked the panelists to report either on theoretical work linked to stability or dynamism of theories, concepts and paradigms in the field of knowledge organization or to focus on innovative applications but with an emphasis on the theoretical and epistemological underpinnings of these practical works. We suggested that their contributions and remarks could focus on elements pertaining to their expertise in knowledge organization or grounded on the elements drawn from the abstracts of accepted proposals for ISKO 2011 in Lille.

Frequency analysis performed on uniterms and phrases from titles and abstracts of papers presented at the two ISKO conferences (Toronto 2000 and Lille 2011), helped to highlight the differences and similarities between these two meetings. The results of this analysis were presented as word clouds to panelists, whom we asked to participate in the closing session of the conference in Lille, in the hope that these patterns of representation might provide food for thought. These were simply intended as a guide and could be used a starting point for their analysis. The main questions raised were partially drawn from our Call for Papers. Although rudimentary, this statistical exercise revealed quite clearly, however, what were the main themes discussed during the two conferences and showed the progress over the last decade. The evolution of themes reflects the dynamism of our community and of our field of study. The frequency analysis also revealed what are the recurring themes common to both conferences, unwavering and proud representatives of the stability which also characterizes our field.

Unsurprisingly, key themes such as indexing, classification, semantic analysis, information and knowledge are present in both 2000 and 2011. The analysis shows however that the attendants were more concerned ten years ago with the foundations and the theoretical basis than is the case today, at least for this conference. In 2011, in terms of classification, it is not so much the foundations and the systems that were the subject of the studies presented but rather the practical uses and the integration of classification systems within larger information systems. Concerning indexing, we notice that we have discussed the linguistic foundations less than a decade ago. Instead, at the 2011 conference, many texts addressing the social use of indexing and its integration into the information practices of users were presented. New practices such as collaborative tagging and the products of social indexing, such as folksonomies, hardly known ten years ago, are now brought to the forefront as a topic of

study by several researchers. In 2011 the web is ubiquitous. There is no mention even of the Internet, which has become an implicit element of the world in which we evolve. The glut of information available on the web has resurrected, from a new perspective, the issue of archiving, including systems of open archives, a theme that was absent from the conference of 2000.

The most apparent difference between the topics discussed during the two conferences is the clear emergence of everything related to the social web. The terms "collective," "collaborative," "community," and "interoperability," almost absent in 2000, are, in 2011, among those with the highest frequency of occurrence. This is not surprising considering the enormous progress made during the last decade in the democratization of information achieved through the spectacular development of the web and its integration in all spheres of society. The appropriation of information systems by non-expert user communities requires that we devote more and more studies toward users and refocus these on their information needs. This theme appears very clearly in 2011 while in 2000 it was all but emerging. A decade ago, the emphasis was clearly mostly on systems, design, interfaces, terminology and thesauri, whereas today, studies are turning their attention to social uses and behavior of new classes of users.

The two-day conference in Lille had an outstanding selection of speakers from the domains of knowledge organization, bibliographic classification, Information and Communication Sciences. The conference attracted researchers representing several of the major Information and Communication Departments in France, along with Library and Information Science Schools and industrial firms from many countries: Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Saudi Arabia and Spain. The conference took place at the University of Lille 3 and the program included two keynote addresses, 26 papers organized into 9 sessions, a poster session and a panel addressing the general theme of the conference. The conference proceedings were published by Hermès-Science, *Traités des Sciences et Techniques de l'Information, Collection Organisation de l'information* (El Hadi and Arsenault 2012).

The articles presented in this issue of *Knowledge Organization* (vol. 39, no. 4), are translated and updated versions of the presentations published in the conference proceedings. The first two articles are the two keynote addresses: "Knowledge organization in the context of Information and Communication Science: A French exception?" by Viviane Couzinet,

Université de Toulouse 3. The second keynote address, "Metadata about what? Distinguishing between ontic, epistemic, and documental dimensions in knowledge organization," by Claudio Gnoli, Università di Pavia. Three other articles, representative of the French research in KO and Information and Communication Sciences, have also been selected. We hope that presenting the French Chapter and its work to the international scientific community will allow a better understanding and appreciation of the French researchers' endeavor and of their contributions to the field of Knowledge Organization.

Note

1. The French Chapter was founded in December 1996 at the initiative of Jacques Maniez and Danièle Degez, both ISKO members at that time. Jacques Maniez was the French coordinator of ISKO in its early beginnings. In November 2000, the French Chapter adopted the non-profit legal organization status which enabled it to retain its independence from any organization in France and remains closely linked to International ISKO. This new status enabled the Chapter to draw conventions with various organizations and institutions where ISKO France could be housed so that they can take charge of specific events at the administrative and financial levels.

   Since its creation in 1996 the French Chapter has organized, once every second year, micro conferences known as *Journées ISKO-France*. The first of these meetings took place in Lille in 1997 and, given their popularity, they were carried on since then and are now called, *the ISKO-France Conference* (ISKO-France website: http://www.isko-france.asso.fr/).

   At the end of the Lille conference, the General Assembly was convened and a new Executive Board was elected: Prof. Dr. Amos David, University of Lorraine, was elected as the Chairperson, Prof. Dr. Widad Mustafa El Hadi as the Deputy-Chair, Prof. Dr. Gérard Régimbeau as Secretary and Dr. Philippe Kislin as treasurer.

   The areas of interest of the French Chapter members and researchers can be seen through their contributions in the eight ISKO conferences held in France from their first meeting in 1997 to the last conference held in Lille in 2011 as follows:

   – Epistemological and Historical approaches to KO
   – Conceptual approaches to KO

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- Abstract concept representation and automatic indexing
- Natural Language Processing techniques and their applications to cognitive analysis
- Semantic and discursive approaches
- User profile modeling
- Image indexing
- Indexing languages
- Monolingual and multilingual thesauri
- Statistical, mathematical & computational approaches applied to automatic indexing

- Design of information systems
- Social and Semantic

Reference

El Hadi, Widad Mustafa and Arsenault, Clément eds. 2012. *L'organisation des connaissances dynamisme et stabilité traité des sciences et techniques de l'information.* Traités des Sciences et Techniques de l'Information, Collection Organisation de l'information. Paris: Hermès-Science.