

KO Reports

Knowledge Organization in Italy

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As an Italian chapter of ISKO has recently been reorganized, I was kindly invited to write a short report on current KO activities in our country. So, in the following, I will briefly illustrate the local situation of the various kinds of knowledge organization systems, as well as related developments and activities. I am grateful to Paola Capitani, Emanuela Casson, Michele Santoro, and Lorena Zuccolo for providing useful information to be included here.

Subject headings

Many Italian libraries create subject headings for their catalogues, using as a reference guide the "Soggettario per i cataloghi delle biblioteche italiane." This is basically a list of subject terms created by the Biblioteca nazionale centrale di Firenze (BNCF), first published in 1956 and later updated with various lists of new subject headings. Though the Soggettario is still the main available reference, librarians are generally aware that it is outdated in both vocabulary and structure, especially as it does not provide explicit principles and rules to create and combine subject headings.

A research group, called the Gruppo di ricerca sull'indicizzazione per soggetto (GRIS), was founded in 1990. It was devoted to improving the principles and consistency of subject indexing. Its members have performed in depth investigations of the structure of subject headings, starting with the principles of facet analysis used in PRECIS and including original developments. Results of their work are coded into the Guida all'indicizzazione per soggetto, published in 1996 and available also online <<http://www.aib.it/aib/commiss/gris/guida.htm>>. The GRIS guide does not concern vocabulary, but morphological and syntactical rules for choosing and combining terms according to a sound citation order, based on a "role scheme." Unfortunately, GRIS principles have

been applied only in a small number of libraries, mainly in Tuscany, where most GRIS members are located.

A new project is now attempting to blend the traditional authority of the Soggettario with the more advanced principles of GRIS. A working group has been formed with people from BNCF, GRIS, and others, to study the feasibility of a renewal of the Soggettario. The group produced a report book in 2002, specifying the desirable features of the new system, and is at present searching for grants to implement it.

Terminology and thesauri

BNCF is also involved in a working group collecting information on online terminological resources <<http://www.indire.it/websemantic>>. The group is headed by Paola Capitani, and has organized several roundtables on terminology in special domains, such as economy, fashion, law, and education.

Thesauri are generally poorly known and used in Italy, although there are significant exceptions: among faceted systems we can mention the "thesauro italiano di sociologia," published in 1999, and the "Thesaurus regionale toscano," as well as specialized on social sciences including a general outline, available both in print (1996) and online <<http://www.regione.toscana.it/ius/ns-thesaurus/>>.

Classification systems

The Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) is by far the most widespread classification scheme in Italian libraries. A working group, coordinated by Luigi Crocetti, regularly translates the new editions of DDC manuals, and gives refresher courses on it for librarians. BNCF makes DDC numbers for bibliographical records both of its own catalogue, and of the national bibliography (= Bibliografia nazionale italiana: BNI), which is available for other libraries in a CD-ROM edition. A very large number of public libraries use DDC for their shelfmarks, so that users are accustomed to it.

This situation is different from other European countries, e.g., Spain where UDC is widespread. In Italy, UDC is only used in a limited number of librari-

ies, especially in the scientific area. UDC numbers are included in many records of the national union catalogue of serials, ACNP <<http://acnp.cib.unibo.it/cgi-ser/start/en/cnr/fp.html>>. The Library of Congress Classification is rare as well, while other used schemes are either locally created, or devoted to special disciplines (MSC for mathematics, JEL for economics, etc.). Faceted classification is poorly known and almost never used, though Bliss Bibliographic Classification 2 (BC2) was considered among options for new arrangement of books in some university libraries, before DDC was chosen, and a new booklet on the subject has just been published (Gnoli C., *Classificazione a faccette*, AIB, Roma, 2004). The main obstacle for faceted classification to spread is clearly the lack of available manuals and schedules in Italian, as well as teachers able to train cataloguers.

Digital applications

BNCF subject headings and DDC numbers are also common in Italian online catalogues. Among the 196 OPACs which are searchable through the national metaOPAC (MAI), 80% can be searched by subject heading, and 33% by DDC class. However, subject access is largely underexploited in OPACs, as the semantic richness included in terms and class numbers cannot be used, in most cases, to perform searches and browse results. This has been shown by a survey carried out in 2003-2004 on about 150 OPACs, by applying a carefully developed checklist; details and results of this project, called "OPAC semantici", are available online <<http://mate.unipv.it/biblio/sem/>>. That the majority of OPAC software provides poor exploitation of subject access is paradoxical, as cataloguers often invest much effort to input subject information in databases. Some examples, however, show nice possibilities which could be easily produced by appropriate settings of search engines and web interfaces.

As for directories of Internet resources, Tuscany (sort of an oasis for subject indexing!) offers a Virtual reference desk for public libraries <http://www.cultura.regione.toscana.it/biblioteche/servizi_web/vrd/>, consisting of selected links to web sites with abstract and DDC number, reproducing the BUBL model; DDC can also be used to browse disciplines, which is especially appropriate for users seeing it on the shelves of their public library as well. Such a classified approach is not used, instead, in a more recent directory of Internet resources, SegnaWeb <<http://www.segnaweb.it>>, developed by the Italian

library association (AIB) and based on the MyLibrary software. AIB's large web site includes useful directories of knowledge organization systems available online: see section 16 in <<http://www.aib.it/aib/lis/lis.htm>>.

Unfortunately, the Italian library community is poorly connected with other fields relevant to knowledge organization, such as linguistics, automatic text processing, ontology, etc. Computer scientists at various research centres are more connected with the international network of their field than with national information institutions. Giovanni Maria Sacco at the Polytechnic of Turin works on a technique called dynamic taxonomy, which is basically analogous to faceted classification, and has been applied to article archives of the newspaper "La Stampa". Other people, like those involved in the EDAMOK project, are working on automated classification of digital documents and mapping of different taxonomies, in the context of knowledge management. An interesting bridge between disciplines is being built by Luca Rosati, by providing simple descriptions and examples of faceted classification in the contexts of knowledge management and information architecture; for the latter domain he has created an Italian mailing list, "Architecta." Finally, the continuing work on ontology meant as a philosophical field, also to be applied to knowledge organization, by former ISKO member Roberto Poli and his co-workers at University of Trento and Mitteleuropa Foundation must not be forgotten.

Events

Events concerning subject indexing are occasionally organized, especially by AIB sections and groups. Recently, some of them concerned the work about renewal of the Soggettario, and others will soon occur on the "OPAC semantici" project. A rich one-day seminar entitled "L'indicizzazione: problemi e prospettive," with contributions by several esteemed librarians, was held in Modena in December 2002 on the initiative of Michele Santoro: fulltext proceedings are available as papers of the online journal "Bibliotime" <<http://www.spbo.unibo.it/bibliotime/num-vi-1/>>. A smaller event was organized in Turin in 2001, and is reported in the ISKO Italia website <<http://mate.unipv.it/biblio/isko/doc/spazi.htm>>. GRIS holds a half-day session each year within the AIB national congress held in October in Rome.

The Italian ISKO chapter

ISKO has had a chair for Italy since 1991, in the person of Giliola Negrini. She organized seminars and workshops in the 1990s together with the National Research Council, and has been working on applying terminology, concept analysis, and Dahlberg's Systematifier model to knowledge bases in the humanities. At the end of 2003, the chair charge passed to me, as Giliola is more involved with new research for the industrial sector.

The Italian Chapter of ISKO has only a few members, so far. However, encouraging results are coming from the reorganization of the national section through the creation of an electronic mailing list open to non-ISKO members, and a website with information on the society, its history, and useful links <<http://mate.unipv.it/biblio/isko/>>. Lorena Zuccolo is providing substantial help for this. Spreading information through the Net seems to be a key factor. Indeed, in 2004 we already passed the threshold of 10 members (including well-known librarians and LIS professors) to become a full ISKO chapter.

There is room for hope that we will further extend this basis, as many people seem to be interested in the

domain of knowledge organization, while the main Italian institution devoted to subject indexing, GRIS, is being absorbed into a larger committee of the national library association. Developments in information and computer science also make it necessary to think of knowledge organization on a skyline broader than librarianship, as a cross-disciplinary field including contributions from information science, philosophy, linguistics, etc.

Therefore, the main aim of the Italian ISKO chapter, for now, is to provide a reference in the field of knowledge organization, by pointing to bibliographic and Internet sources, and linking interested people to KO activities and events in other countries, both by ISKO and other organizations. The website will offer a place for various reports, translations and other contributions in KO by members. Original research is also planned, on impulse of interests of single members, about classification theory, with special reference to the theory of integrative levels previously studied by the Classification Research Group and Dahlberg, and its possible applications in the digital environment. Anyone interested in more information about KO in Italy, and ISKO chapter activities, is welcome to contact the chair at <gnoli@aib.it>.

14th National Conference of the Association of Librarians in Education – Romania (Asociatia Bibliotecarilor din Invatamant – Romania – ABIR)

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The 14th National Conference of the Association of Librarians in Education - Romania (Asociatia Bibliotecarilor din Invatamant - Romania - ABIR) was held at the Central University Library "Lucian Blaga" in Cluj. On this occasion the Cataloguing and Indexing Section of ABIR had a very active workshop under the general theme of the conference, the changes in the librarian's profession.

On the first day of the conference a new indexing tool was released: "Tezaurul interdisciplinar multi-

lingv pentru uzul bibliotecilor - româna, engleza, franceza" (Multilingual interdisciplinary thesaurus for library use - Romanian, English, French) by Victoria Frâncu.

The range of subjects discussed was not limited to the theme but also included other topics including: the Romanian translation of IFLA's document Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records for which the permission was obtained in the meantime; the Romanian translation of Ia McIlwaine's "The Universal Decimal Classification: a Guide to its Use" as a result of the favourable answer to the survey organised by our section of the library association; the inclusion of Romanian as a language of the future multilingual UDC Master Reference File; and future activities.

The speakers, all specialists in cataloguing and indexing from the main university libraries of Romania, presented papers including subjects such as the following: the Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records, the use of RAMEAU authorities in a Romanian library environment, cataloguing of electronic resources, a well-documented user study on different user and document categories, the many