

Response to Hjørland and Nicolaisen

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I am writing to correct some of the misconceptions that Hjørland and Nicolaisen appear to have about my paper in the previous issue of *Knowledge Organization*.¹ I would like to address aspects of two of these misapprehensions. The first is the faulty interpretation they have given to my use of the term “naïve classification,” and the second is the kinds of classification systems that they appear to believe are discussed in my paper as examples of “naïve classifications.”

First, the term “naïve classification” is directly analogous to the widely-understood and widely-accepted term “naïve indexing.” It is not analogous to the terms to which Hjørland and Nicolaisen compare it (i.e., “naïve physics”, “naïve biology”).² The term as I have defined it is not pejorative. It does not imply that the scholars who have developed naïve classifications have not given profoundly serious thought to their own scholarly work. My paper distinguishes between *classifications for new knowledge* developed by scholars in the various disciplines for the purposes of advancing disciplinary knowledge (“naïve classifications”) and *classifications for previously existing knowledge* developed by information professionals for the purposes of creating access points in information retrieval systems (“professional classifications”). This distinction rests primarily on the purpose of the kind of classification system in question and only secondarily on the knowledge base of the scholars who have created it. Hjørland and Nicolaisen appear to have misunderstood this point, which is made clearly and adequately in the title, in the abstract and throughout the text of my paper.

Second, the paper posits that these different reasons for creating classification systems strongly influence the content and extent of the two kinds of classifications, but not necessarily their structures. By definition, naïve classifications for new knowledge have been developed for discrete areas of disciplinary inquiry in new areas of knowledge. These classifica-

tions do not attempt to classify the whole of that disciplinary area. That is, naïve classifications have a explicit purpose that is significantly different from the purpose of the major disciplinary classifications Hjørland and Nicolaisen provide as examples of classifications they think I discuss under the rubric of “naïve classifications” (e.g., classifications for the entire field of archaeology, biology, linguistics, music, psychology, etc.).³ My paper is not concerned with these important classifications for major disciplinary areas. Instead, it is concerned solely and specifically with scholarly classifications for small areas of new knowledge within these major disciplines (e.g., cloth of arasta, double harpsichords, child-rearing practices, anomalous phenomena, etc.). Thus, I have nowhere suggested or implied that the broad disciplinary classifications mentioned by Hjørland and Nicolaisen are appropriately categorized as “naïve classifications.” For example, I have not associated the Periodic System of the Elements with naïve classifications, as Hjørland and Nicolaisen state that I have done.⁴ Indeed, broad classifications of this type fall well outside the definition of naïve classifications set out in my paper. In this case, too, I believe that Hjørland and Nicolaisen have misunderstood an important point in my paper.

I agree with a number of points made in Hjørland and Nicolaisen’s paper. In particular, I agree that researchers in the knowledge organization field should adhere to the highest standards of scholarly and scientific precision. For that reason, I am glad to have had the opportunity to respond to their paper.

Notes

- 1 “Classification for Information Retrieval and Classification for Knowledge Discovery: Relationships between “Professional” and “Naïve Classifications”, *Knowledge Organization* 30(2), 64-73.

- 2 Hjørland and Nicolaisen, in their section entitled “The Scientific Investigation of “Naïve” Theories”, 1.
- 3 Hjørland and Nicolaisen, in their section entitled “The Scientific Investigation of “Naïve” Theories”, 5.
- 4 “This classification [the Periodic System] is the result of research activities, which stands as a model for research, as defining the very nature of “real” science, of real progress in knowledge, as real pragmatic utility for mankind and of scien-

tific consensus. To associate this classification with the adjective “naïve” is indeed mispla[c]ed.” (Section “The Nature of Scholarly and Scientific Classification”, 1). Hjørland and Nicolaisen have clearly associated the term naïve classification with the Periodic System, but I have not done so. In fact, I completely agree that the association of the two is misplaced. Further, their statement that I have made such an association is not only misplaced, but inaccurate.