

Guest Editorial

The French ISKO Chapter, origins and activities

by Widad Mustafa El Hadi



The French Chapter is one of the most recent ISKO Chapters. It 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. There were only nine

French ISKO members in 1992. At the occasion of the Warsaw Conference (13-15 September 1995) Danièle Degez met Ingetraut Dahlberg, and the idea of a French Chapter came out of their discussions. Eventually the small team succeeded in recruiting new members (18 overall in 1996), so that the constitutive meeting could be held in Paris. It brought together ten French members, and also Winfried Schmitz-Esser, an experienced leader of the German Chapter. The first Board of the French Chapter was elected unanimously as follows: Chairperson, Widad Mustafa El Hadi; Deputy Chairperson, Danièle Degez; Treasurer, Jacques Maniez. Since then the number of adherents increased regularly, up to 38 in 2001. In November 2000, the French Chapter adopted the non-profit legal organization status, in agreement with International ISKO. This new status enables the Chapter to establish conventions with various organizations and institutions where ISKO France could be housed so that they can take charge of precise events at the administrative and financial levels. The new ISKO-France status specified the creation of a Board and of an executive Bureau. On the occasion of the biennial ISKO-France 3d Conference, preceded by the General Assembly meeting, new elections were organized. The current Chapter organizational chart is as follows:

The Board:

Christian Cote, University of Lyon 111
Amos David, Loria, University of Nancy
Gérard Henneron, University of Grenoble
(IUT 2)
Omar Larouk, ENSSIB, Lyon
Jean-Paul Metzger, University of Lyon 111
Widad Mustafa El Hadi, University of Lille 3
Rosalba Palermi, University of Grenoble
(IUT 2)
Ismaïl Timimi, University of Lille 3

The Executive Board:

Chairperson: Jean-Paul Metzger, University of Lyon 111
Deputy Chairperson: Widad Mustafa El Hadi, University of Lille 3
Secretariat & Communication: Amos David, Loria, University of Nancy & Omar Larouk, ENSSIB, Lyon
Treasurer: Gérard Henneron, University of Grenoble (IUT 2)

Since its creation in 1996 the French Chapter has organized on a twice-yearly pattern of micro conferences known as *Journées ISKO-France*. The first of these meetings took place in Lille in 1997 and, given their popularity, they will doubtless be continued.

We hope that presenting the French Chapter and its work to the international scientific community will allow a better understanding and appreciation of French researchers' endeavors and of their contributions to the field of Knowledge Organization.

In this issue we are including a selection of papers presented during ISKO-France Second Conference¹ *Indexing in the Era of the Internet*, co-organized by Richard Bouché (ENSSIB) and Jean-Paul Metzger (ERSICO-Lyon 111) in Lyon in October 1999.

A variety of papers and invited talks were read on numerous aspects of Indexing. Out of the 120 papers submitted, twenty full papers and twelve posters were presented². The areas covered by the contributions are the following: *Access to Information resources on the Internet; Indexing & document space; Indexing of movies; Multilingual indexing; Semantic and discursive approaches* and finally *Indexing seen as a task and method*. Various approaches, *computational, statistical linguistic, logical, psychological and sociological* were interwoven in a coherent manner in the final results. The Conference attracted over 120 knowledge-organization researchers, mostly from France, but other countries (Algeria, Canada, South Africa and the USA) were also represented.

We are presenting here only three of the best papers, chosen in agreement with our Scientific Advisory Board. The papers selected here deal with indexing from different perspectives.

The first paper, "The Technical Document: Unicity and Plurality", presented by Christel Froissart (Université Stendhal - Grenoble III) and Geneviève Lallich-Boidin (Université Claude Bernard - Lyon 1) deals with indexing from a discursive point of view and focuses on the particularity of technical documents. The authors present an outline of the results of a study on technical documentation using electronic support with the aim of improving machine aided information retrieval.

The second paper deals with indexing from a semantic perspective: "Query Reformulation for Information Retrieval on the Web" is presented by Leïla Nait-Baha, Agata Jackiewicz, Brahim Djoua, Philippe Laublet (LALIC-CAMS, Université de Paris-Sorbonne 1V). This paper discusses information retrieval using a Contextual Exploration approach. It describes the RAP project «Research, Analysis and Proposal». This project employs the combination of two methodologies: query reformulation using linguistic markers that correspond to a given point of view and text semantic analysis by means of Contextual Exploration method. The work mainly focusses on reformulation issues.

The third paper, "SDI Selecting, Describing and Indexing: Did You Say Automatically?", presented by B. Thirion, F. Baudic, and J. Piot (Bibliothèque médicale Universitaire de Rouen) and J.P. Leroy, M. Douyère, and S.J. Darmoni (Centre Hospitalier Universitaire de Rouen) deals with medical information. The authors argue for the importance of a prior selection of information. They think that automatic tools created to date are not satisfactory and a rigorous human selection made by information professionals with the ad-

vice of networks of experts, seems the most reasonable and efficient approach to gain access to the incredible variety of this network.

The Third Conference of the French Chapter took place July 5-6, 2001 at the University of Paris X. The theme «Information Filtering and Automatic Summarization in Networks», brought together over 120 participants. A majority from France, but with Canada, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States represented as well. Stéphane Chaudiron (Paris X University) acted as conference chairperson and programme co-chair together with Christian Fluhr (DIST-CEA, France)³. Twenty eight papers were presented at the Conference. The topics covered by these contributions are as follows: various aspects of automatic text summarization, indexing, classification, categorization and extraction, collaborative and individual filtering, semantic analysis, semantic maps, techniques for modeling the needs and profiles of individuals and groups in both text and multimedia applications and the evaluation of the usability and acceptability of the different methods designed for improving information retrieval and end-users satisfaction⁴.

The areas of interest of the French Chapter members and researchers can be seen through their contributions in the four ISKO conferences held in France. In 1997 at the First ISKO-France Conference held in Lille⁵, the most important section had been Natural Language Processing (NLP) techniques and their applications to cognitive analysis or abstract concept representation and automatic indexing (more than seven papers in the 1997 Proceedings⁶). Other linguistic aspects, mainly the semantic and discursive approaches, as well as terminology, and their relevance to indexing attracted more than fourteen papers and posters out of 35 in Lyon and nine papers in the 5th International ISKO Conference in Lille, 1998⁷. Eight papers in the Paris Proceedings focused on the use of language engineering in automatic text summarization and filtering in the networks.

User profile modeling comes as the second most important theme in the three ISKO-France Conferences: six papers were presented in Lille, fewer in Lyon; but in Paris five papers and one of the two invited talks dealt with this subject. Image indexing is gaining momentum: four papers were presented at the Lille 1997 conference and three presentations in Lyon 1999. Evaluation has now taken a place in the ISKO-France community, namely in the Paris conference.

Other fields of knowledge organization more or less equally represented in the French contribution include: indexing languages; monolingual and multilingual thesauri; statistical, mathematical and computational approaches applied to automatic indexing; design of information systems, among others. More recently, the Paris conference brought together many researchers interested in the field of automatic text summarization and information filtering.

These three ISKO France conferences have showed the diversity and vitality of French research in the field of knowledge organization. Their outcome and the growing number of participants and ISKO-France members show that our association answers a need by offering our colleagues a framework for their reflections, allowing development in two very important directions: a total multidisciplinarity and a synergy between theoretical and applied research.

The Fourth ISKO-France Conference will be held at the University of Grenoble 11 in 2003. The choice of the theme is still being discussed. We will end by renewing our call for increased participation to our future conferences.

Notes

- 1 *L'indexation à l'ère d'Internet*, M. Hassoun, O. Larouk, J-P. Metzger (eds.). Actes du 2e Colloque ISKO-France, 21-22 octobre 1999, Lyon, Services d'impression de l'ENSSIB, Villeurbanne. The Proceedings are now available at the ENSSIB.

- 2 For a detailed review of the conference, cf. Amos David in KO, 26(1999)No. 3. News & Reports. 162-164.
- 3 The Proceedings, *Information Filtering and Automatic Summarization in Networks*, Chaudiron, S, Fluhr, Ch. (Eds) Actes du 3e Colloque ISKO-France, Paris, 5-6 juillet 2001, are available. Contact: Université Paris X.
- 4 For a detailed account in English cf. the Preface of Clare Beghtol in Chaudiron & Fluhr (Eds): *Information Filtering and Automatic Summarization in Networks*, Actes du 3e Colloque ISKO-France, Paris, 5-6 juillet 2001
- 5 La représentation des connaissances en vue de leur intégration dans les systèmes d'information (*Knowledge Organization as an Element in Representational End Informational Retrieval Systems*). For a detailed review of the Conference, cf. Jacques Maniez, ISKO News 30, KO 24(1997)No. 4. 247. The Proceedings are available at the University of Lille Presses.
- 6 Maniez, J., Mustafa el Hadi, W. (1997). (Eds). *La représentation des connaissances en vue de leur intégration dans les systèmes d'information*. Editions u Conseil Scientifique de l'Université Charles-De-Gaulle-Lille 3. Coll. Travaux & Recherches Lille 1997. 403 pages.
- 7 *Structures & Relations in Knowledge Organization*, Widad Mustafa El Hadi, Jacques Maniez, & Steven A. Politt (Eds), Proceedings of the Fifth International ISKO Conference, Lille, 25-29 Août 1998.