196

Knowl. Org. 31(2004)No.3
Book Reviews

Book Reviews

Edited by Clément Arsenault

Book Review Editor

SATIJA, M.P. **A Dictionary of Knowledge Organization**. Amritsar, India : Guru Nanak Dev University, 2004. 248 p. ISBN 81-7770-101-0.

In the first issue of her journal *International Classification*, established in 1974, Dr. Ingetraut Dahlberg was lamenting the lack of a common terminology in the field of knowledge organization. Since then, several remarkable efforts at vocabulary control and definition have led to publication of valuable terminological products (e.g. *ASIS Thesaurus of Information Science and Librarianship*[1], *Vocabulaire de la documentation*[2], etc.), while recently published manuals include well crafted glossaries (see for example: A. Taylor, *The Organization of Information*[3]). M.P. Satija's *Dictionary of Knowledge Organization* is the latest offering in the field. Satija's objective is to propose brief, simple, logical and consensual meanings for terms, with explanations, examples and comments where appropriate, in the hope of improving communication among field specialists.

Professor Satija adopts a very broad perspective of knowledge organization, viewing it as a "conglomeration of activities to sort and order knowledge, to acquire, utilize, evaluate, represent, and communicate knowledge for problem solving" (p. xi). His *Dictionary* covers parts of the following domains: Knowledge, Epistemology, Concepts, Terminology and vocabulary control, Classification systems, Subject analysis, Fundamental categories and facets, Context and text analysis, Use of classification in online systems and on the Web, Subject cataloguing, Indexing and retrieval languages, Cognitive aspects of information-seeking behaviour, Automatic classification, Descriptive cataloguing, Theory, standards, and codes, OPACs.

The author has elected to define and describe 693 terms, expressions (e.g. First-of-two rule, Mark and Park systems), and subjects (e.g. Browsing and classification, Inverse relationship between precision and recall, Searching with uncontrolled vocabularies). He even tackles such major concepts as Data, Information, Knowledge, and Documents. His descriptions

of interesting contrasts (e.g. Catalogue vs Bibliography, Knowledge vs Information) are helpful. Professor Satija brings to his task extended knowledge and culture, and a mastery of many concepts, especially those that relate to Ranganathan's theories and work (see, for example, descriptions of APUPA pattern, of Rounds and levels, etc.). The best entries, and the most informative ones, provide historical information (see, for example, Broad System of Ordering (BSO)). Satija's sources are varied, but not necessarily the most recent or interesting ones; the definition of Broader term (BT) provided in the ISO standard[4] is much more explicit than the description attempted by the author, for example. Internet-based sources are conspicuously absent.

Beyond noting that "terms which have no literary warrant have not been included" (p. xiv), the author does not specify how the list of terms appearing here was established. It is easy to note the absence of fundamental concepts such as Access points, Alphabetical order, Authority record, Bibliography, Category, Chain indexing, Cutter numbers, Decimal notation, Faceted classification, Indexing policy, Information retrieval, Library of Congress Subject Headings, and Subject access. Also missing are most terms that relate to the organization of the virtual library and the Internet (such as Subject gateways, Directories, Portals, etc.) Access is described as being of three types, the most interesting for knowledge organization being subject or intellectual access; neither one of these latter terms gets an entry in the *Dictionary*. Of the Boolean operators, OR gets its own entry, but not AND and NOT. There is an entry for Related term and another one, with a slightly different description, for RT (Related term). There is an entry for Organizing of information, whose description opens with "Synonymous with knowledge organization", a concept defined elsewhere. Notes and Scopes notes are separate entries, but they have very similar descriptions and are obviously considered synonymous terms. Abstract and abstracting appears as a single entry when one can clearly be defined as en entity, and the other as an activity or process (let's note in

passing that, on the contrary, Index and Indexing get separate entries). Names of important people in our field would have been a valuable addition: W.T. Harris gets a listing, but Dewey, Cutter, and even Ranganathan do not get their own entry. And on the other hand, one may wonder why terms such as Fanciful title, Off print, Press clipping, and Universe, have been included!

There is no doubt that Professor Satija's *Dictionary* contains a significant amount of interesting information. Unfortunately, there are several problems with the writing and presentation of this information, and this makes it difficult, even frustrating at times, to use this terminological source. Minor irritants include lack of editing (e.g. catalouging instead of cataloguing, glossarries instead of glossaries, knowledge organization sometimes spelled with an s, sometimes with a z, field and filed frequently inverted, Classificationist entered as Classificanist (p. 36), and Mnemonics entered as Mnememics (p. 147)); a particular style of writing (most articles and function words are missing from sentences as in: "The area knowledge organisation [sic] has thus definite and huge body of literature … (p. vi)); an absence of punctuation which makes long descriptions difficult to read and understand (e.g. Members in these arrays are counterparts of each other for example your brothers and sisters on the one hand and your real cousins on the other form collateral arrays" (p. 40–41)). Most typos would have been caught by any spell checker: jounral (for journal), seperate (for separate), visting (for visiting), etc. Proper names suffer even more: Eric de Grolier is referred to as De Groiler (p. 158 and p. 207)), the Noble (sic) laureate Henri La Fontaine has become La Fontrine (p. 237), Calvin Mooers is cited as Moores (p. xviii), Farradane is on occasion Ferradane (p. 121), etc. There are several occurrences of misfiled terms (e.g. Reclassification and Records follow Relevance). Integrated figures would be interesting but they are most often provided without title or legend (e.g. p. 26, p. 104–105, and p. 150).

The author describes quite accurately the principles of terminological definition, in form and in display; he specifies for example that within a definition, bold type is normally used to identify terms that have their own entry somewhere else in the list. But in the *Dictionary*, this technique is not applied consistently: indeed, most of the time, the bolding is not applied where it should be, while it is used for work titles or to emphasize terms that do not appear in the *Dictionary* (e.g. **Anteriorising common** in the

description of APUPA pattern, **Chain procedure** in the description of POPSI); this is a major source of confusion.

More important, however, in a document of this nature and covering the field of knowledge organization, is the non-respect of the very principles, organization and display standards that regulate our field. There is a lack of consistency in the form of dictionary entries which sometimes appear in the singular form (e.g. Descriptor, Heading), and sometimes in the plural form (e.g. Role indicators, Subject headings) for no apparent reason. The cross-referencing network, which should play a major role in a terminological tool such as this one, is extremely weak. Many *See* references are missing (e.g. one reads in the description of Intension: "… also termed as connotation", but there is no entry in the *Dictionary* that would lead the reader from Connotation to Intension). A large number of *See* and *See also* references lead to terms that are not listed in this *Dictionary* (e.g. Computers and classification *See* Classification and computers (not an entry), Analytico-synthetic classification *See also* Species of classification (not an entry), Postulate *See also* Normative principles (not an entry)). References often lead to terms that appear in the *Dictionary* but in a different form (e.g. Base number *See also* Synthesis (the actual entry is Synthesis of class numbers), Humans vs Machines in knowledge organisation [sic] *See also* OPACs (the actual entry is Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC)). Boolean operators are often referred to, when the entry is actually made at Boolean search; references are consistently made to Broader classification, when the entry is under Broad classification; many references are made to Feedback, which is not in the *Dictionary*, but one eventually discovers Users feedback, which is probably where these references should have led in the first place. Many of the established relationships are unexplainable: why link Dialectical method and Dictionary definitions, or End-user thesaurus and General classification, for example?

Satija presents his work as descriptive rather than prescriptive. This reviewer would add that there are in fact few true definitions in this *Dictionary*; the reader is often not told what a concept is, but rather what it does, what its functions are, what its context is, who used it, when and why, etc. (e.g. Aboutness: To avoid the difficulties of addressing the concept of subject proper and the previous vagueness of the concept of subject, the concept "aboutness" was introduced by R.A. Fairthorne and others". This is

198

Knowl. Org. 31(2004)No.3
Book Reviews

why we think that this work will be most interesting and useful when read in its entirety, to get an idea of what knowledge organization consists of, but may not get much use as a reference tool.

The *Dictionary of Knowledge Organization* remains a "good read", with information that is generally accurate, if somewhat ill-structured and incomplete. And the reader will get to enjoy the occasional colourful personal appreciation of the author, an example of which would be: "Ad hoc classification reflects a very low level of ambition in knowledge organization" (p. 4).

Notes

1 Jessica. L. Milstead. *ASIS Thesaurus of Information Science and Librarianship*. 2nd ed. Medford, NJ : Information Today, 1998. 192 p. ISBN 1-57387-050-1

2 *Vocabulaire de la documentation*. Ouvrage coordonné par Arlette Boulogne. Paris : ADBS, 2004. 334 p. ISBN 2-84365-071-2.

3 Arlene G. Taylor. *The Organisation of Information*. 2nd ed. Westport, Conn. : Libraries Unlimited, 2004. 417 p. ISBN 1-56308-976-9.

4 International Organization for Standardization. *Documentation – Guidelines for the Establishment and Development of Monolingual Thesauri : ISO 2788-1986*. Geneva, Switzerland : ISO, 1986.

M. Hudon

Dr. Michèle Hudon, École de bibliothéconomie et des sciences de l'information, Université de Montréal, Montréal, Québec, H3C 3J7, Canada. E-mail : michele.hudon@umontreal.ca.