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BIBLIOTECA NAZIONALE CENTRALE DI FIRENZE. *Nuovo soggettario: guida al sistema italiano di indicizzazione per soggetto, prototipo del thesaurus*. Milano: Bibliografica, 2007. 246 p. + 1 cd-rom. ISBN 978-88-7075-633-3 (hb)

This *Nuovo soggettario* is the first sign of subject indexing renewal in Italy. Italian subject indexing has been based until now on *Soggettario per i cataloghi delle biblioteche italiane* (Firenze, 1956), a list of preferred terms and see references, with suitable hierarchical subdivisions and cross-references, derived from the subject catalogue of the National Library in Florence (BNCF). New headings later used in *Bibliografia nazionale italiana* (BNI) were added without references, nor indeed with any real maintenance. Systematic instructions on how to combine the terms are lacking: the indexer using this instrument is obliged to infer the order of terms absent from the lists by consulting analogous entries. Italian libraries are suffering from the limits of this subject catalogue: vocabulary is inadequate, obsolete and inconsistent, the syndetic structure incomplete and inaccurate, and the syntax ill-defined, poorly explained and unable to reflect complex subjects.

In the nineties, the Subject Indexing Research Group (Gruppo di ricerca sull'indicizzazione per soggetto, GRIS) of the AIB (Italian Library Association) developed the indexing theory and some principles of PRECIS and drew up guidelines based on consistent principles for vocabulary, semantic relationships and subject string construction, the latter according to role syntax (*Guida* 1997).

In overhauling the *Soggettario*, the National Library in Florence aimed at a comprehensive indexing system. (A report on the method and evolution of the work has been published in *Knowledge Organization* (Lucarelli 2005), while the feasibility study is available in Italian (*Per un nuovo Soggettario* 2002). Any usable terms from the old Soggettario will be transferred to the new system, while taking into consideration international norms and interlinguistic compatibility, as well as applications outside the im-

mediate library context. The terms will be accessible via a suitable OPAC operating on the most advanced software.

The guide *Nuovo soggettario* was presented on February 8th 2007 at a one-day seminar in the Palazzo Vecchio, Florence, in front of some 500 spellbound people. The *Nuovo soggettario* comes in two parts: the guide in book-form and an accompanying CD-ROM, by way of which a prototype of the thesaurus may be accessed on the Internet. In the former, rules are stated; the latter contains a pdf version of the guide and the first installment of the controlled vocabulary, which is to be further enriched and refined. Syntactic instructions (general application guidelines, as well as special annotations of particular terms) and the compiled subject strings file have yet to be added.

The essentials of the new system are: 1) an analytic-synthetic approach, 2) use of terms (units of controlled vocabulary) and subject strings (which represent subjects by combining terms in linear order to form syntactic relationships), instead of main headings and subdivisions, 3) specificity of terms and strings, with a view to the co-extension of subject string and subject matter and 4) a clear distinction between semantic and syntactic relationships, with full control of them both.

Basic features of the vocabulary include the uniformity and univocality of terms and thesaural management of a priori (semantic) relationships. Starting from its definition, each term can be categorially analyzed: four macro-categories are represented (agents, action, things, time), for which there are sub-categories called facets (e.g., for actions: activities, disciplines, processes), which in turn have sub-facets. Morphological instructions conform to national and international standards, including BS 8723, ANSI/NISO Z39.19 and the IFLA draft of Guidelines for multilingual thesauri, even for syntactic factorization.

Different kinds of semantic relationships are represented thoroughly, and particular attention is paid to poly-hierarchies, which are used only in moderation: both top terms must actually be relevant. Node

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labels are used to specify the principle of division applied. Instance relationships are also used.

An entry is structured so as to present all the essential elements of the indexing system. For each term are given: category, facet, related terms, Dewey interdisciplinary class number and, if necessary, definition or scope notes. Sources used are referenced (an appendix in the book lists those used in the current work). Historical notes indicate whenever a change of term has occurred, thus smoothing the transition from the old lists. In chapter 5, the longest one, detailed instructions with practical examples show how to create entries and how to relate terms; upper relationships must always be complete, right up to the top term, whereas hierarchies of related terms not yet fully developed may remain unfinished.

Subject string construction consists in a double operation: analysis and synthesis. The former is the analysis of logical functions performed by single concepts in the definition of the subject (e.g., *transitive actions, object, agent*, etc.) or in syntactic relationships (*transitive relationships* and *belonging relationship*), so that each term for those concepts is assigned its role (e.g., *key concept, transitive element, agent, instrument*, etc.) in the subject string, where the core is distinct from the complementary roles (e.g., *place, time, form*, etc.).

Synthesis is based on a scheme of nuclear and complementary roles, and citation order follows agreed-upon principles of one-to-one relationships and logical dependence. There is no standard citation order based on facets, in a categorial logic, but a flexible one, although thorough. For example, it is possible for a time term (subdivision) to precede an action term, when the former is related to the latter as the object of action: "Arazzi – Sec. 16.–17. – Restauro" [Tapestry – 16th–17th century – Restoration] (p. 126). So, even with more complex subjects, it is possible to produce perfectly readable strings covering the whole of the subject matter without splitting it into two incomplete and complementary headings. To this end, some unusual connectives are adopted, giving the strings a more discursive style.

Thesaurus software is based on AgroVoc (http://www.fao.org/aims/ag_intro.htm) provided by the FAO, but in modified form. Many searching options and contextualization within the full hierarchies are possible, so that the choice of morphology and syntax of terms and strings is made easier by the complete overview of semantic relationships. New controlled terms will be available soon, thanks to the work in progress – there are now 13,000 terms, of which 40 percent are non-preferred. In three months, free Internet access by CD-ROM will cease and a subscription will be needed. The digital version of old *Soggettario* and the corresponding unstructured lists of headings adopted in 1956–1985 are accessible together with the thesaurus, so that the whole vocabulary, old and new, will be at the fingertips of the indexer, who is forced to work with both tools during this transition period. In the future, it will be possible to integrate the thesaurus into library OPACs.

The two parts form a very consistent and detailed resource. The guide is filled with examples; the accurate, clearly-expressed and consistent instructions are further enhanced by good use of fonts and type size, facilitating reading. The thesaurus is simple and quick to use, very rich, albeit only a prototype; see, for instance, a list of *DDC* numbers and related terms with their category and facet, and then entries, hierarchies and so on, and the capacity of the structure to show organized knowledge. The excellent outcome of a demanding experimentation, the intended guide welcomes in a new era of subject indexing in Italy and is highly recommended. The new method has been designed to be easily teachable to new and experimented indexers.

Now BNI is beginning to use the new language, pointing the way for the adoption of *Nuovo soggettario* in Italian libraries: a difficult challenge whose success is not assured. To name only one issue: including all fields of study requires particular care in treating terms with different specialized meanings; cooperation of other libraries and institutions is foreseen. At the same time, efforts are being made to assure the system's interoperability outside the library world. It is clear that a great commitment is required. "Too complex a system!" say the naysayers. "Only at the beginning," the proponents reply. The new system goes against the mainstream, compared with the imitation of the easy way offered by search engines – but we know that they must enrich their devices to improve quality, just repeating the work on semantic and syntactic relationships that leads formal expressions to the meanings they are intended to communicate – and also compared with research to create automated devices supporting human work, for the need to simplify cataloguing. Here AI is not involved, but automation is widely used to facilitate and to support the conscious work of indexers guided by rules as clear as possible.

The advantage of *Nuovo soggettario* is its combination of a thesaurus (a much-appreciated tool used

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across the world) with the equally widespread technique of subject-string construction, which is to say: the rational and predictable combination of the terms used. The appearance of this original, unparalleled working model may well be a great occasion in the international development of indexing, as, on one hand, the *Nuovo soggettario* uses a recognized tool (the thesaurus) and, on the other, by permitting both pre-coordination and post-coordination, it attempts to overcome the fragmentation of increasingly complex and specialized subjects into isolated, single-term descriptors. This is a serious proposition that merits consideration from both theoretical and practical points of view – and outside Italy, too.

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FUGMANN, Robert. *Das Buchregister: Methodische Grundlagen und praktische Anwendungen* (The Book Index: Methodological Foundations and Practical Applications). Frankfurt: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Informationswissenschaft und Informationspraxis e.V., 2006. 136 p. ISBN: 3-925474-59-5

Except for a slim volume (Kunze 1964) there has not as yet been published in German a textbook on book indexing so far. Therefore this book by Dr. Fugmann fills indeed a much deplored gap in our professional literature. Although there have been many articles and books by Robert Fugmann himself on indexing, in German as well as in English, he decided this time to take care of this gap and at the same time he tried to upgrade the art of book indexing by combining it with the science of indexing as used for the extraction of the essence of documents in information science.

Having read this very carefully written, edited and of course also indexed book – which caused me much trouble, I must confess, because the typography is so small that I needed a magnifying glass to read the footnotes on each page – I must, however, state that the result of his endeavor should be regarded as an outstanding textbook not only for German book indexers but also, in translations, for book indexers on a world-wide scale. So far, book indexing has not been taught at Library and Information Science Schools. With this book by Fugmann one could consider making it a subject to be taught at such Schools. By this, one would also contribute to the recognition of the great cultural value which is contained in the knowledge embedded in textbooks or in similar publications. If indexes present this knowledge in the most concise way, one will be able to utilize such an index, even if one had not studied the source book beforehand. With Fugmann's volume one will learn how to establish the most adequate form of optimal knowledge representation in a really clear, accurate and pertinent form.

Fugmann presents his text very logically, numbering each paragraph so that the index entries would relate directly to the appropriate place. He sets out with a theoretical part in which he shows the difference between word and concept, the search by memory (Bernier 1960: "question of recall") and the search by discovery ("question of discovery") and tackled also the problematic issues caused by natural language in the searching process. Furthermore he shows the opposition between assignment indexing and extraction indexing and explains also what is understood by indicative and informative indexing. The latter is characterized by its richness in informative subentries. For all cases he gives a maximum of pertinent examples. The book concludes with an informative alphabetical index and an informative systematic index. For such a systematic index one needs of course a well-structured categorization. With respect to this kind of index in Fugmann's book, however, I must state that the divisions in the first four areas are much too broad (he uses for the entire mass of entries only Information philosophy, Content analysis, Search, Information technology, Persons, Institutions and Subject fields.). This could have been improved by introducing subcategorization, so that relevant entries could be scanned much easier and faster. The alphabetical informative index of this book is however a masterpiece and very convincing indeed.

A very essential help of the book is also the necessary agreement which need to be settled between in-