Terminologie der Information und Dokumentation.
Hrsg. vom Komitee Terminologie und Sprachfragen
(KTS) der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Dokumentation
(DGD). Redaktion: Ulrich Neveling und Gernot Wersig.
München: Verlag Dokumentation 1975. X, 307 p.,
DM 48,–, = DGD Schriftenreihe 4

Whether information science (IS) can really claim to be
a science in its own right has been questioned – among
others by myself, although I am now more inclined to
answer the question positively. The terminological con-
fusion that besets this field has, however, not become
less baffling with the gradual development of IS, a fea-
ture which it seems to share with many other branches
of science during their early stages. (Some of these,
notably the social sciences, actually have to cope with
more terminological difficulties the more they expand
and extend the range of their inquiries). Any attempt
to bring order into the terminological chaos of IS must
therefore be welcomed, but it must also be subjected to
thorough scrutiny lest it add to the confusion it is in-
tended to resolve, the more so if it is a trilingual glossary
that seeks to establish standardized terminology in Ger-
man, English and French. Unfortunately, what was no
doubt destined to become a noble horse has ended up,
as is so often the case with the work of a committee, in
the shape of the proverbial camel, and at that not even
a very useful one, having too many humps.

Despite the protestations of the editors that this work is
by no means to be taken as a final product and that they
invite comments and criticism, the fact that the glossary
is presented as a hardbound book by a reputable pub-
lisher defers on it a measure of authority and status
which is both premature and partially undeserved. Per-
haps the true sentiments of the editors are better ex-
pressed in the foreword by Mr. Lutterbeck, who states
that the method used in compiling the work "is inten-
tionally aimed at achieving also propagandistic effects
within the profession itself as well as outside it among
the rest of the professional world" (my translation of
the German text). In other words, this is a prescriptive
list of terms: it tries to tell us what we *ought* to call
certain things and phenomena in an ideal world of in-
formation science. In view of the widespread and indis-
criminate use of mutually inconsistent and often in-
comprehensible terms by various practitioners of IS
in different countries, such a prescriptive approach is
to some extent justified, so long as the best and most
useful terms are chosen among those that are presently
current. But to anyone familiar with the actual literature
of IS in any of the three languages covered it will be
obvious that a large number of terms in this work have
been artificially invented because they seemed to fit a
preconceived framework in the German language, regard-
less of whether they exist, and whether or not they have
equivalents in any of the other two languages. This I con-
sider to be the main fault of this glossary.

The terms dealing with purely technical matters, especi-
ally those that already have a long-standing tradition in
librarianship, and many that have been established in the
related field of computer science are, on the whole, well
chosen, and their English and French equivalents are cor-
rectly given. The questionable (because artificial) terms
occur mainly in the sections on "General concepts" and

on "Documentary languages" (the latter being such an
artificial term itself). There is also a peculiar unevenness
in the treatment of certain terms and their compounds,
probably due to a certain bias on the part of the editors
(as expressed in occasional notes); some terms occur in
a large number of possible combinations with other
terms, while others, which are known to have more than
one denotation both within and without IS are being
briefly dismissed with a single definition. Thus, the most
central term, namely *Information* itself, is defined only
as "Verringerung von Ungewissheit" (reduction of un-
certainty). Where are the definitions of Shannon, McKay,
and Fairthorne, to name only three that have an imme-
diate bearing on IS? The compound *Information System*
is obviously needed, but it is followed by *Information
System within an Organization* (which is a phrase, not
a term, it being irrelevant that the German source term
can be written as one word due to the syntactics of the
German language); this, in turn, is followed by *Manage-
ment Information System* and *Hospital Information Sy-
stem* (both with acronyms not known to be used gener-
ally in the English-speaking world). Now, *Information
System* can be linked up with a great many terms such
as 'business', 'commerical', 'biological', 'engineering',
etc. Why single out hospital? *Documentation* is lavishly
treated to no less than six different definitions, which
may be necessary in Germany where the term is widely
used, but is an anachronism in the U. S. where it is now
virtually obsolete and has almost pejorative overtones.
No amount of diligent inventing of non-existing English
terms that contain the word "documentation" or "docu-
mentary" will revive it in the American language com-
munity (where, after all, the bulk of IS literature is
being generated).

The preface expresses the hope that "the work ought
also to promote international cooperation". Alas, it will
not achieve this goal, for several reasons. One is the fact
that all definitions and explanatory notes and examples
are given in German only. Although most educated
Germans have at least a reading knowledge of English,
the opposite is unfortunately not true: if English-speak-
ing information scientists are to derive any benefit from
a multi-lingual glossary, the text must be accessible in
English throughout. The same is probably true for French-
speaking users. Much as I personally deplore this state of
affairs, it is a fact of life which compilers of multi-lingual
glossaries must bear in mind. Second, while the editors,
as indicated in their introduction, secured the services of
a Francophone to advise them on the validity of French
terms, the absence of a similar acknowledgment of an
English expert leads me to believe that they thought
themselves to be sufficiently well versed in that language
to (a) list existing English terms for German ones, and
(b) where those are lacking, to invent them for the bene-
fit of their English-speaking colleagues. Sad to say, the
self-confidence of Messrs. Neveling and Wersig is not mat-
ched by their proficiency in English, and money spent on
a native English adviser would have been a good invest-
ment.

To give just a few examples, culled at random: *Indexie-
rung* is anglicized as *'indexation'* which does not exist
in English usage (the correct term is *indexing*); in com-
pound terms, however (e. g. *Indexierungsgenauigkeit*,

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Indexierungstiefe, ect.), the corresponding English term is indeed *indexing*. It would be interesting to find out what if any difference the editors perceive between "indexation" and "indexing" and why they think that the first term has to be added to the already overburdened English vocabulary of IS. *Wirkungsgrad* is not overall efficiency but *'effectiveness'*, *Wirtschaftlichkeit* is not 'economic efficiency' but *'cost-effectiveness'* (the editors tell us in a note that this term "ought not to be used", but it nevertheless exists and *is* widely used in the literature of management written in English, and cannot arbitrarily declared to be unsuitable). And where, in this context, is *cost-benefit ratio?* In English, at least, it is definitely not a "quasi-synonym" for cost-effectiveness. There are also outright howlers: *Schrift* (in the sense intended in the glossary) is not 'writing' but *script*. (Incidentally, it would have been useful to include *Schrift* also in the sense in which it is used in German for "work" or "document".) *Fehlselektion* is not a (non-existing) 'noise-unit' but a *false drop*, and there are many more instances where the editors happened to look up the wrong translation in their dictionary or were simply not familiar with English terminology.

The glossary is studded with what the learned editors call their "propositions" (someone ought to explain to them that the difference between this word and the correct "proposal" is the one between German "Antrag" and "Vorschlag"), clumsy and for the most part linguistically deficient attempts to invent English terms. Such a venture is doomed to failure because neither the British nor the Americans will readily accept terms coined for them by foreigners, even if they do not happen to have equivalents in their language for German terms. I am not even sure that the editors were justified in inventing non-existing German terms for the Germans; moreover, the professional language of IS in East and West Germany is now considerably divergent, a fact which is scarcely acknowledged anywhere in the glossary.

Finally, despite the large number of terms and their occasionally hairsplitting proliferation (is there really a need to distinguish between *Document, Documentary Unit,* and *Documentary Reference Unit,* quite apart from the fact that the last two terms do not exist anywhere in English IS literature?) there is at least one area that has been entirely neglected, namely *kinds* of documents as to their physical form, mode of production, handling, physical storage, preservation and use. In an (unpublished) draft for a new classification schedule in the UDC, submitted for discussion several years ago, more than a thousand such terms were identified. While this may have been too large a number, there are certainly at least several dozens of terms that necessarily belong in a glossary of IS, a science which, after all, deals with physical documents and records of all kinds, and not only with theories about them.

A trilingual glossary of IS, reflecting the terminology of the 1970's is indeed a worthwhile and urgently needed undertaking. The glossary under review here is, however, definitely not it. The KTS committee and the editors would be well advised to take it back to the drawing board, with a view to produce a work based less on a preconceived scheme and more on actual usage, with definitions and explanations in all three languages, and

with the close collaboration and supervision of native speakers of the languages who are also information scientists themselves, so as to assure truly idiomatic and authoritative renderings of terms which will be acceptable to the IS community throughout the Western world.

Hans W. Wellisch

BUCHANAN, Brian: A Glossary of Indexing Terms. London: C. Bingley; Hamden, Conn.: Linnet Books 1976. 144 p., $ 8.– £ 3.75, ISBN 0-208-01377-6

This book contains nearly 1000 entries, expanded from a word list provided for students at Loughborough School of Librarianship, in England. A glossary was originally a collection of glosses, which could be definitions of, or comments upon, words in a given text. Nowadays, a glossary is usually taken to mean a collection of (hopefully authoritative) definitions of specialized, technical, or unfamiliar terms in a given field of knowledge, without the addition of comments or criticisms, although, if synonyms exist, preference for one term over another may be indicated. With the rapid growth of specialist jargon today, the need for glossaries is evident. I regret to have to say that this present book seems to me to be very unsatisfactory. The author breaks all the 'rules' for good construction of a glossary. He divides entries into (a) definitions, (b) examples and comments, and (c) 'see also' references. The definitions are not always clear, and are sometimes inaccurate, and examples of comments are sometimes intermixed with them. The incorporation of examples and extended explanations may be justifiable in a work to be used in teaching, but the (b) sections sometimes contain criticisms and opinions on the value of methods, or even only anecdotes; these are often clearly personal, and should not appear. The 'see also' references are sometimes to antonyms, which can be muddling. There are also errors in the examples, e. g. that for 'Analets'; the diagrams for Arrowgraphs and Circular Thesaurus (which appear to have been the authors invention – he has a penchant for the subject of weapons and hunting) show some strange interconnections. There are many unnecessary entries (such as "Brevity" and "Length *see* Brevity"); an entry for "Serendipity" gives only an anecdote (a letter from Horace Walpole) and a cross reference to Browsing, which is defined as 'to look . . . at random, with no conscious search strategy' or 'to choose . . . among documents by examining each'; browsing has a least the strategy that one is trying to find something on a desired topic, and not necessarily examining each. In any case, why enter 'Serendipity' at all?

There are some obvious omissions, e. g. File (Inverted File and Uninverted File (horrid term) *are* entered); MARC (surely a 'must' in an indexing glossary), Body-punched cards, Free-text searching, Cycling (as used in searching the Science Citation Index), etc. The area covered seems in fact rather vague and the terms defined show peculiar biases in favour of edge-punched cards, certain types of classification, and early work on keywords and information retrieval systems, and what there is, is outdated. In fact, one gets the impression that the terminology and experience of the author is that of ten to fifteen years ago. For example, there are several references to "the proposed

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