

ISKO News

Edited by Hanne Albrechtsen

Communications Editor

5th ISKO Italy meeting, 1 April 2011 Venice, <http://www.iskoi.org>

On The 1st of April the 5th ISKO Italy meeting took place in a wonderful, sunny city of Venice. Despite a transports strike, which unfortunately forced one of the speakers, Luca Rosati, to give up, many people had the chance to join the initiative.

The programme was divided into a “technological morning,” opening with a challenging presentation by the international guest, Douglas S. Tudhope, and a “librarianship-naturalistic afternoon,” during which a number of research workers and professionals illustrated their studies to a very interested audience. Prof. Tudhope, from the University of Glamorgan, explained in his speech *Networked knowledge organisation systems and information discovery* how KOSs helps semantic interoperability in that they reduce ambiguity by providing synonyms and establishing semantic relationships between terms. He also presented his research group’s projects, STAR and STELLAR.

Roberto Raieli, from the University of Rome 3, in his speech about the semantic gap in MultiMedia Information Retrieval (MMIR), outlined an organic tool. The latter can help in retrieving information and is made up of text retrieval, audio retrieval and video retrieval. This system is based on a new searching strategy, as searchers can use not only terms of title, author, subject, but also images and sounds. Using an image scan as a source, for example, the computer can activate a visual recognition and give images as a result of our search. When we think it is possible to make an efficient search of images, sounds and videos with text, we meet a “semantic gap;” however, we would not try to search for a text using images or videos or sounds! MMIR is a content-based system: this characteristic is revolutionary and could make the difference in retrieving documents by using only their visual or audio content. In addition, this type of search could be helpful for the user, who would use a more intuitive language.

Erika Pasceri and Maria Taverniti, from the University of Calabria, are in Roberto Guarasci’s research

team at the Documentation Laboratory, an institutional ISKO member, and reported their experiences in a number of projects. Among them are CL.AuD.Io (2008), about automatic classification of documents; and the construction of a faceted thesaurus on energetic classification (2010), which adopted a hybrid structure, faceted and hierarchical, to organize the non-uniform terminology used by the public administration. Most of the difficulties in this task concerned the identification of terms, often known only by a restricted group of experts. In 2009, the group also joined a project to digitalize the network of justice-ships. Currently, the research group is involved with the EHR, Electronic Health Record. This job began in 2009 and resulted in the Italian version of a medical language and a taxonomy for medical classification: this task involved comparison of international thesauri with the standard language used in Italy and revealed the need to complete the Italian database with a large number of synonyms, because of the wide use made by Italian doctors of a colloquial medical language, which cannot be matched with standard languages used in international databases.

Barbara De Santis, from the University of Bologna, presented her Ph.D. research on a multilingual faceted classification of university skills. The research is based on two projects of the University of Bologna (the reform project and EHEA - European Higher Education Area) and on the Tuning educational structures in Europe, aims of which were career transparency and international mobility of both students and workers. Tuning has revealed how the creation of a common language for describing competences could be useful to compare academic and professional profiles. As De Santis was studying careers of four European universities, she observed the lack of a multilingual thesaurus.

Chiara Zara, from the University of Piemonte Orientale, reported her experience in the UDC translation group. The project, sponsored since 2009 by the UDC Consortium, involves the translation into 40 languages of UDC equivalents. The aim is to produce a short version of the scheme, with free access online, to promote the circulation, training and use of the

UDC and also to help mapping with other classification systems. The Italian translation, based on the previous one, edited by the CNR, and on a partial online translation edited by Serafina Spinelli, involves 2000 among classes and subclasses.

The “librarianship-naturalistic afternoon” began with a note by Claudio Gnoli, who gave information about recent ISKO Italy activities and the next international conference, which will be held in 2012 in Bangalore. After that, Emanuela Casson shared with the audience some impressions regarding the challenging, yet highly satisfactory experience of organizing the 2010 international ISKO Conference in Rome.

Ilaria Micheli, from the University of Venice, gave an absorbing speech on classification in ethnoscience and illustrated a case-study about drum-shaped instruments from Ivory Coast. She explained how the population of that area classified them not by shape or material, nor by playing method, but by their use in religious ceremonies rather than in traditional events or as incidental music during royal speeches or proclamations. It is evident that our classification methods are relative and cannot be considered universally valid, as they are based on different categories that cannot be used by different cultures. Man cannot be external to the system that he is classifying, so it is his relation with objects that determines the classification of things. This speech gave Roberto Raieli the opportunity to confirm the usefulness of MMIR: a person from the western world does not necessarily know that a drum is not an instrument for music, but a religious object, therefore using a query made up with images could be more simple and effective.

Alessandro Minelli, from the University of Padua, gave useful information about classification in evolutionary biology, with a historical approach. Since Linneaus’s age, species have been identified as the units of biological classification, and homologue characters have been looked for in order to reconstruct evolutionary trees; this is especially emphasized in Willi Hennig’s “cladistic” approach. Whether taxa higher than species should be considered as arbitrary or natural units, and ranks such as genera, families, orders and classes are absolute or relative, remain open problems. Bad taxonomy can even kill, like in the case of some reptiles that were not protected by law, although after their extinctions they were acknowledged as a separate species.

Riccardo Ridi, from the University of Venice, took his cue from Thomas Metzinger’s last book, *The Ego Tunnel*. He made references to the theories of such distinguished philosophers as Plato, Hume and Kant,

but also the famous film *The Matrix*, and noted how man and world are unknowable. Consequently he underlined how impossible it is to create a universal classification that is able to put reality into a scheme, because our senses, which are the only instrument we have to know the world, are not reliable. However, Ridi reasserted the importance of finding repeated patterns in the world around us, of constructing grammars, based on man’s experience, that can help us to know and classify this world, despite the unavoidable flaws in their uniformity.

Isolina Baldi, from the Central National Library of Florence (BNCF), reported about the development and integration of the Nuovo Soggettario (the main Italian subject headings list) in the library OPAC. The Nuovo Soggettario project is now quite advanced in its development, as systems components, thesaurus, online application manual and integration between thesaurus and the BNCF opac have already been completed. The system is accessible by Web and is already used by some Italian libraries. The multidisciplinary thesaurus has been enriched and now includes more than 38,000 terms: the goal is to retrieve historical terminology about subject indexing, which have been strengthened by use, and revised to create hierarchical relations, as well as to constantly enhance terms, especially the most neglected areas. Another important aim is to enhance the integration between thesaurus and OPAC: the test database, for now accessible only through the BNCF server, allows the use of new search methods, more simple and with a lot of filters.

Elisabetta Viti, also from BNCF, spoke about the interoperability of Nuovo Soggettario with special thesauri, giving a wide overview of the aims and activities that her research is achieving. She is studying how this general thesaurus interacts with the LIUC specialized thesaurus, trying to implement the simultaneous research on BNCF and LIUC opac. Until now, she has analyzed terms about finance and their hierarchical structure, building up a corpus of terms that can be used as a benchmark for comparison. She has also found differences between the two thesauri, between terms referring to the same concept and between facets. She also points out a different articulation of the hierarchy.

Carlo Bianchini, from University of Pavia, presented the last speech of this very full day. He spoke about applying the Colon Classification (CC) in a natural science library, that of the Natural Science Museum of Friuli in Udine. He showed the similarities between CC and Nuovo Soggettario, especially in the

stage of subject analysis and translation in the indexing language. This affinity is one of the causes that suggested the use of CC for the experiment. Other standards were used, like REICAT and ISBD, and the comparison with DDC has been continuous, as DDC had previously revealed its inadequacy for this specific library, pushing the staff to experiment with CC. It was necessary to integrate special tables of zoology, library science and biology, but generally the co-

nclusions are positive, as Bianchini said, because collected data demonstrate the benefits of faceted organization and also the advantages of class O Literature for application in public libraries.

Sara Franzoso
Ca' Foscari University of Venice
<sarafra@univite.it>