

# Theoretical Dialogs About Ethical Issues in Knowledge Organization: García Gutiérrez, Hudon, Beghtol, and Olson

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**Abstract:** Considering the need for a constant questioning on the role of the information professional, more specifically with respect to the ethical aspects of their practice, this study discusses how information science has been addressing over the past decades the ethical aspects inherent to the field of knowledge organization. In this context, we discuss the concepts of interactive epistemography and transcultural ethics of mediation by Antonio García Gutiérrez, multilingualism in knowledge representation by Michèle Hudon, cultural hospitality by Clare Beghtol and the power to name by Hope Olson, in their aspects of convergence, complementarity and dialogicity.

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## 1.0 Introduction

Significant changes that have currently influenced the field of information science, (increasing information and communication technologies, more demanding discourse communities, etc.), have led to a questioning in the international literature on the role of the information professional, specifically regarding the ethical aspects of their practice within a broader conception of well-acting or well-doing. This reveals the way in which a given society from its own values expects individual behaviors and interpersonal relationships to occur or, in other words, human conduct after its own likeness, herein the professional information environment (Weckert and Adeney 2000, Sá 2000).

With the development of a capitalist society, the issue of production is also the focus of discussions by professional segments, which leads to the need to verify not only the technical and operational issues related to professions—“how” to do—but also “why” and “what for.” This aspect evidences what is named “professional ethics,” which ultimately reflects an everyday dimension of ethics in the environment of labor relations from a set of moral values that a particular professional class must guide and follow to achieve correct professional actions, which are appropriate to the society in which he/she operates. In this context, two dimensions are presented: the axiological dimension, focused on values inherent in a given professional sector, and the deontological dimension, reflected in the good practice guidelines that the professional class states to regulate the profession.

This discussion in the field of information science has been more traditionally addressed either in the context of professional practice as a whole, as malpractice, liability, etc., or in problems related to specific rights such as privacy, copyright, intellectual freedom, censorship, etc. In this context, the emphasis in previous decades was centered on professional activities related mainly to collection development, services to the users and information management (Mintz 1990; Froehlich 1994, 1997; Spinello 1999; Arot 2000; Langford 2000; Fernández-Molina 2000; Gorman 2000; Guimarães 2000; Koehler and Pemberton 2000; Sturges 2002; Vaagan 2002; Accart and Réthy 2003; Rothenbach and Mendina 2003; and Bair 2005).

Froehlich (1994) systematized a set of intervening factors in ethical decisions by the information professional on aspects linked to social usefulness, social responsibility, organizational survival, professional survival, respect for oneself, respect for other individuals and institutions, public and cultural patterns and legal standards. From these factors, the author proposed a set of guiding principles of ethical actions—or moral imperatives—by information professionals: search for justice and social harmony, re-

spect for oneself, for the user community and the organization he/she works in and the search for reducing damages as a result of the decision-making processes that previous values may require.

As consequence, there is a set of ethical commitments for the information professional, such as those Leblond (1999) relates to mediation, citizenship, training, horizons of science, transmission and spirit of the system (set of existing documentary organization criteria). Guimarães (2000) in turn, refers to commitments with the user, organization, information, profession and the professional himself as a citizen; and Arot (2000) refers, more specifically, to the ethical values of these professionals, classifying them into custody values, inter-relationship, ordering and access to information.

In another sense, Vergueiro (1994) warns of the dangers that could emerge from non-recognition of such commitments or values, from the myth of neutrality and corporation, when the excessive ethical and normative dimension lends itself to corporatism, the alienation and cover-up of unethical actions.

With specific respect to ethical issues of the information professional in the field of knowledge organization, the discussions have been more recent, but very fruitful, as they have built a whole set of theoretical presumptions that guide such action. In this scenario of discussions regarding conduct and consciousness, this paper proposes a critical discussion on possible dialogs among Antonio García Gutiérrez, Michèle Hudon, Clare Beghtol, and Hope Olson about ethical issues in knowledge organization through a comparative analysis of their most significant theoretical works. It is important to highlight that cultural diversity alone offers an understanding of knowledge organization ethics but there are certainly some other angles to investigate ethical issues (i.e., deontological approach). In this sense, this study is specifically related to the impact of cultural diversity in the knowledge organization ethics studies based on four ways to demonstrate its reach: interactive epistemology, multilingualism, cultural hospitality and the power to name.

## 2.0 Ethical issues in knowledge organization

Regarding the activities of knowledge organization and representation, the information science literature, especially in the last decades, has referred to problems such as the negligence of the indexer in choosing indexing terms (Dahlberg 1992), damage suffered by the author when his/her work is not compiled by an international publication due to inadequate or insufficient indexing (Van der Waalt 2002), bias in the representation of concepts in knowledge organization systems (KOSs) (Berman 1971; Gogh and Greenblatt 1990) and problems arising from

prejudice, dichotomous categorizations, too specific vision of the world, lack of terminological precision, polysemy and indiscriminate use of political correctness in representations (Guimarães 2006). In modern times, it can be said that this has become an important research theme in knowledge organization (Pinho 2006; López Huertas 2008; and Milani 2010).

In this context, and as a landmark of an academic consolidation in the theme, we highlight the event Ethics of Knowledge Organization, sponsored by the School of Information Studies, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, USA, in 2009, 2012 and 2015, idealized by Hope Olson and relying on a strong contribution of Richard Smiraglia.

In the first edition of the event, issues were discussed concerning: 1) the existing differences—cultural, linguistic and national—assumed by different generations of knowledge organization systems (KOSs) that led us to not assuming homogeneity of any kind, in such a way that we needed to accommodate heterogeneous information and knowledge seekers (Beghtol 2009); 2) a preliminary categorization of ethical values and problems in knowledge organization and representation (Guimarães 2009); 3) the existing ethical library standards, where to find them, how we come to know about them and how/whether we connect those theoretical standards to all areas of librarianship (Hill 2009); 4) the implications of the problematical/rhetorical approach for the creation of metadata for human users of information technology and machine interoperability (Bade 2009); 5) the need of an ethical approach to the description of resources in terms of the obligatory engagement or discourse between cataloguer and researcher as an initial step in information organization (Daniel 2009); 6) the ethical aspects of information organization as it is used for purposes of identifying threats (individual or actions) to national security (Unsworth 2009); 7) how recent improvements in the MARC bibliographic format can help extend subject access to works about racially mixed people beyond that provided by the rules for constructing *Dewey Decimal Classification* (DDC) numbers (Beall 2009); 8) a model that mixes free-for-all tagging with a Wikipedia-like system in which any interested web user could participate in organizing their own and others' idiosyncratic tags into a meaningful ontology (Bauder 2009); 9) the ethical development of standards for resource description in order to discover some of the ways in which standards for resource description might present threats to information ethics (Smiraglia 2009); 10) the questions related to how local users' needs can be met, the tensions between efficiency and customization of ethical cataloging practice, how cataloging practice can be more proactive in understanding their users and customizing bibliographic records and how/what is the "right" way of cataloging to help users and ensure equitable access to materials (Hoffman 2009);

and, 11) the decisions required of knowledge organization in relation to conceptual models of the process and products of knowledge organization, the precepts of engaged Buddhism and the questions of the ethics of knowledge organization in relation to right action advanced by the precepts, offering a set of proposed precepts for engaged knowledge organization (Tennis 2009).

The second meeting had its communications published in a special issue of the journal *Knowledge Organization* (2012, vol. 39, no. 5). Among the themes covered in the event were: 1) the ethical impacts of globalization in the book market and in the information organization tasks in libraries (Kipp, Olson and Martínez Ávila 2012); 2) problems of specificity in information representation on porn sites and the gap between the classifications and folksonomies used by the sites and what the user understands by that terminology (Keilty 2012); 3) the ethical issue of image rights, specifically in information representation (Seeman 2012); 4) the ethical commitment to completeness in representation from the balance between context and content (Zhang 2012); 5) the ethical effects of disciplinary categorization of the Library of Congress KOSs in times of high inter- and transdisciplinarity (Adler 2012); 6) the ethical standards in the context of information organization from different appropriate ethical theories to assess moral dilemmas in the area (Fox and Reece 2012); 7) the issue of metaphors in indexing and how dysphemism and euphemism may lead to offensive and exclusionary connotations (Milani and Pinho 2012); 8) the ethical effects of plagiarism that, once unidentified, may result in damage to the user community and the information unit (Homan 2012); 9) how hierarchy can be seen ethically in KOSs and how semantics and the term structure can be studied to achieve an ethical goal (Tennis 2012); 10) the need for assessment standards for professional librarian activities, and how professional practices should find their ethics far beyond the market's speech (Cope 2012); 11) the document creator's role in the assessment of metadata used in archival representation on documents related to indigenous communities (Gilliland 2012); and, 12) the mismatches between natural language used by the scientific community and the terminology of indexing languages about issues related to male homosexuality, which leads to a user distancing (Pinho and Guimarães 2012).

In the third and latest meeting, whose communications constituted a special issue of the journal *Knowledge Organization* (2015, vol. 42, no. 5), the discussions were concerned with: 1) taxonomy of attacks on knowledge organization: embracing austerity, advocating parasitism, disregarding quality, imputing pedantry, trivializing, vendor mystification, search technology mystification, distorting user behavior, change cudgeling and doomsaying (Gross 2015); 2) the inconsistencies in indexing and misrepresentation in

databases in the field of ethics of knowledge organization (Martínez-Ávila et al. 2015); 3) censorship and awareness of potentially controversial areas in tagging of banned and challenged books (Kipp, Beak and Graf 2015); 4) the search for the children's voice in KOSs (Beak 2015); 5) the attribution of ownership, secrecy and privacy as challenges for knowledge organization in the field of traditional musics (Weissenberger 2015); 6) the analysis of bibliocentrism and other book-like considerations in Resource Description and Access (RDA) and the object-oriented Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records (FRBRoo) (Smiraglia 2015); 7) the mutual influence between culture and classification schemes demanding a working definition of culture for knowledge organization research (Lee 2015); 8) the ethical questions occurring in everyday life classifications and dietitians' points of view about the subject representation in food guides (McTavish 2015); 9) the ethical issues involved in potentially problematic scholarly practices (Oravec 2015); 10) the possibility of dialogue between the socio-cognitive approaches in knowledge organization and the Bakhtinian concepts as a starting point to an ethical and democratic attitude of the indexer/classifier in order to represent the social pluralism and the equipollence of social voices (Arboit and Guimarães 2015); 11) the ethical values of archival representation in the digital environment (McQueen 2015); 12) the ethical values in archival arrangement and description (Silva, Guimarães and Tognoli 2015); 13) the ethical commitment of cataloging practices to assess user needs (McCourry 2015); 14) the need of a code of ethics for catalogers (Shoemaker 2015); and, 15) the rhetorical elements and potential ethical issues of alt-genres classification in Netflix (Lawrence 2015).

In this rich context of theoretical reflection about ethics in knowledge organization, we highlight the ideas of Antonio García Gutiérrez, Michèle Hudon, Clare Beghtol and Hope Olson, who convey a concern for enunciation and theoretical systematization of principles that can meet the challenges in the area of knowledge organization to promote processes, tools and products that are not prone to a given dominant ideology, which respect the varied forms of knowledge. Thus, we present these authors' ideas and the extent to which they are in dialog with each other.

## 2.1 Antonio García Gutiérrez and interactive epistemography

The theoretical construction of interactive epistemography proposed by Antonio García Gutiérrez promotes the inclusion of different cultural views and their relationships, establishing a transcultural ethics of mediation. In knowledge organization, that proposal opposes the development of logical-semantic tools in a positivist paradigm. Thus, the limits imposed by the positivist paradigm where, for exam-

ple, each object is classified in one determined place, reduce the complexity of human knowledge; therefore, there is a need to break with the conventional rules that do not reflect the concern with social and technological changes.

For this reason, there are, on the one hand, rules of knowledge organization and representation based on a positivist paradigm which utilize dominant styles and vices—and sometimes are biased—and, on the other hand, a cultural universe, which, when represented in these systems through these rules, is reduced in such an unethical way that it does not refer to or reflect the reality of many societies and cultures.

Therefore, we highlight the need to reflect on the relationship between knowledge organization and representation processes, products and tools that worked well in the positivist paradigm, and what García Gutiérrez (2002, 516) proposes as a new paradigm combining critical theory and hermeneutics, whose starting point is the theory and practice of classification and knowledge organization, i.e., interactive epistemography. The fact is that the socio-cultural universe cannot be reduced by a positivist paradigm, otherwise reality may not be transpired and, its place instead is the vision of a dominant position, which cannot go unnoticed or remain alien to a professional acting critically and ethically.

Thus, cultural discourses related to ethnicity, sex, religion, etc., beyond the prejudices that follow these discourses, do not escape knowledge organization discussions, even if mediated by a professional who believes in its neutrality. It is the mediator's role, that seeks to work with an ethic that promotes the reliability of a KOS to alert to these discriminatory discourses. Among other factors, KOSs need to have fundamental ethical principles that promote a cross-cultural view, and thus, provide disclosure of the various aspects related to knowledge.

Thus, ethics and critical engagement will provide KOSs that overcome dominant views and then prevent practices of power. This scenario reinforces the opposition that García Gutiérrez proposed in relation to the linear classification and to the conceptual purification, which are reductionist and characteristic of a positivist model, to the declassification and disorder, as this situation would lead to new possibilities of ordering.

So, the concept of cross-cultural ethics of mediation is inserted in knowledge organization and representation, which, in the view of Guimarães et al. (2005, 283) would act "as the foundation, not only of deconstructions occurred in theory, but also of the possible emergence of a new paradigm able to ensure the necessary support for new constructions."

In this regard, García Gutiérrez (2002a, 521) reaffirms the need to adopt a new social, ethical, and epistemological structure, as well as technical principles in knowledge or-



ganization, where no discourse prevails over others, which demonstrates the unnecessary domination of hierarchy; where no cognitive process prevails over others, except for the due need, admitting hierarchy in such cases; where no culture prevails over others; where no user is privileged over others; and even where no system ignores the anti-gravitational and flow forces, respecting the necessary cohesion.

Therefore, and based on a new paradigm, in which critical theory and hermeneutics remodel the area of knowledge organization, García Gutiérrez suggests a “disorder of knowledge” so it can be reordered, and enabling logic-semantic tools to receive theoretical support of a cross-cultural ethics of knowledge mediation, interactive epistemography proposes that it is the name of the problem-object and the transdisciplinary theoretical and conceptual conglomerate created for its resolution and not denomination of dogmatic order. Thus, epistemography is a theory that studies ways of solving problems regarding the ordination of knowledge with methodologies and transdisciplinary corpora convenient to discursive heterogeneity to the relationship of users with these discourses and to the way the mediator acts in these relations.

The interactive model, as one of the principles of epistemography, is favored by the Internet, providing pluralism and diversity of interactions despite commercial interests and the expansion of the single thought. This model proposed by García Gutiérrez (2002b) acts in three directions, namely: 1) in the process of understanding existing cognitive exchanges within the network; 2) in the proposed procedures and tools for document organization; and, 3) in new focus for network assessments, identifying growth, application and new alliances with other areas.

## 2.2 Michèle Hudon and the multilingualism in knowledge representation

Research involving multilingual thesauri in the knowledge organization field lead to the need for discussion about the ethical approach that permeates the construction of the structure of professional tools and practices. Regarding ethics in knowledge organization activities, there are various types of idiosyncratic reasons why professionals can move beyond their own borders, especially because their professional practices, such as categorization and representation of subjects, are based on language and culture, moving towards an ethical performance. This issue can be exemplified when a product or service targeted to a determined audience, whose language is French, for example, can request semantic structures and terminologically distinct from its equivalent in English or another language. As a result, the barrier imposed by language has become a critical point in the transfer of information and especially

in the analysis and representation of informational content. The indexing languages of controlled access, such as multilingual thesauri, have contributed to overcome this language barrier by providing informational access for users belonging to cultures that have different languages.

However, the challenges are turned towards the development of multilingual thesauri that provide respect to the languages involved, resulting in better reflexes to various terminological and conceptual structures, providing the necessary end-user familiarity with the tool. This is where the ethical dimension of Michèle Hudon's work stands, which is relevant to broaden the discussion about its application in knowledge organization as it highlights the development of multilingual thesauri imbued with a cultural and political dimensions in its process (Hudon 1997, 85).

Providing equal treatment to the languages involved in multilingual thesauri is not limited to the identification of a similar concept, but includes thinking of possible solutions to problems of administrative, linguistics and semantics, as well as technological nature. Therefore, Hudon (1997, 85) highlights the importance of a multilingual thesaurus having a complete semantic structure, where equal treatment of the languages involved can be provided, allowing documents to be indexed in one or more languages (other than the document or information center), making it a tool that will connect cultures and facilitate interlinguistic communication.

For Hudon (1999, 156), there is a predominance for the dominant nation's language, as language is one of the factors influencing scientific, cultural and business proposals. Thus, the authorities' interests are available in an elite language, most of the time, not understood by the masses.

It is understandable that the promotion of multilingual access is maximized due to several existing factors, including science communication, otherwise understanding the evolution of knowledge and consequently of science would not occur. In addition, Hudon (1999, 157) warns that the fact of not having access to scientific productions in less read and known languages could be considered a delay in scientific advancement and also a waste of time and money due to the re-conducting of research. Regarding this issue, Hudon (1999, 158) highlights that languages are more than just a set of words and rules put together, “languages are above all organized conceptual and lexical structures which reflect the way their speakers see and interact with the realities of the world.” Thus, “it is simplistic to believe that everything in the world can be organized in categories or classes distinct from one another, recognized in every culture, and adopted as a basis for each language.”

Certainly these factors and difficulties influence the translation of terms from a natural language to another and which are present in the performance of information professionals. Accordingly, it is known that the passage

from one language to another causes ambiguity when a term has more than one equivalent in other languages, such as, for example, the term *beau-père* in French, which has two equivalents in English, stepfather and father-in-law (Hudon 1999). In this example, in which the terminological issue rescues cultural elements, as the qualifier assigned to father is of a different nature: beautiful (*beau*), in French, *versus* substitute (*step*) or legal (*in-law*), in English. In this sense, equal treatment to languages involved, either in controlled vocabularies or in automated translation systems, is one of the ethical issues that permeates the issues of knowledge organization.

A multilingual tool should respect the essential equality of all natural languages involved, as well as the representation of their concepts, for these structures reflect how speakers represent their own world, which, as a cultural issue, must be permeated by KOSs so that the user belonging to that culture can perceive his/her beliefs represented in that system (Hudon 1999, 159). Therefore, Hudon points out that the indexers have a major role in information transferring as well as their representation in the systems they develop not only for what they do but also for what they believe about the importance, quality and equal access to information.

### 2.3 Clare Beghtol and cultural hospitality

Clare Beghtol's contribution is directed to the issues of global KOSs, especially regarding access, culture and ethics, as organizing and representing knowledge are not direct processes. In this sense, Beghtol proposes theoretical concepts to support a knowledge organization system, and whether it is ethically acceptable, focusing on globalization, culture and knowledge representation. In globalization this is because it is closely related to the dissemination of information technologies and capitalism. In culture this is because of shared values, history, language, collective memory, social attitudes, preferences and practices, among others.

Because of this, Beghtol describes that in knowledge organization literature, the assumption that individuals in different cultures require different types of information is known as cultural warrant. Cultural warrant is an analogy to the term literary warrant coined by Hulme (1911, 1912), and first used by Lee (1976), meaning (Beghtol 2002, 511) that "any kind of knowledge representation and/or organization system can be maximally appropriate and useful for the individuals in some culture only if it is based on the assumptions, values and predispositions of that same culture." For this reason, KOSs can be considered cultural artifacts.

Cultural warrant increases, in turn, the complexity of organizing and representing knowledge, and consequently,

makes it available globally for users of other cultures in different situations. Such facts lead to some issues, for example: how to propose solutions to the tensions between access methods, or yet, how to incorporate different cultural warrants in KOSs by integrating them and negotiating between their distinct priorities. The result would be a multi-ethical foundation that would build warrants for globalized systems of knowledge organization, allowing the integration of information and knowledge across cultural, social, national, spatial, temporal, linguistic and domain boundaries.

KOSs need a precise standard in order to improve the representations contained therein, avoiding biased practices of classification and cataloging under dominant aspects, or even avoiding damages in representing subjects about politics, religion, culture and language. However, the subject and the issues on prejudice in knowledge organization and representation have not been extensively explored and discussed (Beghtol, 2002, 516). Thus, the concept of cultural warrant provides theoretical support to the ethical framework for KOSs as it means that professional and personal cultures of the user and the information professional ensure proper establishment of fields, terms, categories and classes in these systems.

Beghtol (2002, 45) explains that, in general, KOSs need to incorporate various syntactic (structure) and semantic (meaning) fundamentals from the different cultures of the world, but this ideal requires the creators of these systems to develop resources for polycultural information retrieval beyond theories and techniques to incorporate all culture assumptions to the system. Conflicts between different cultures and KOSs, which are intended to be global, can find a possible solution in hospitality. Within knowledge organization, regarding bibliographic classification, Beghtol (2002, 518) describes hospitality as "the ability of a classification notation to incorporate new concepts and to establish appropriate semantic and syntactic relationships among the old and the new concepts."

Notational expression is specifically peculiar to bibliographic classification but not to other KOSs. In this sense, a system should be prepared for the addition of new concepts and also for cultural warrant accompanying them, because this system must be permeable to other cultural warrants (Beghtol 2002, 518).

The concept of hospitality is extended to cultural hospitality, which according to Beghtol (2005, 905), "means that a knowledge representation and organization system can ideally accommodate the various warrants of different cultures and reflect appropriately the assumptions of any individual, group or community." The extension of the concept to include cultural warrants, explains Beghtol (2002, 519), would encourage the professional to consider his/her position with ethical desire, since cultural hospitality is an

ethical warrant of respect for individuals and cultures at a level that allows ethical debates on these individuals and cultures. Problems of access to multilingual and multicultural information thesauri with prejudiced concepts and relations in addition to subject headings that do not properly represent the domain need to be identified through a coherent, applicable and acceptable, ethical framework. Cultural hospitality is a mechanism of choice for the user in addition to being a theoretical foundation to establish methods for developing systems and theories to knowledge organization, creating an ethical intersection between subjects.

## 2.4 Hope Olson and the power to name

Libraries as institutions reflect marginalizations and exclusions that take place in the society for which they provide service, setting limits to the expression of diversity when naming information for retrieval purposes. The practical consequences of these limits fall on the libraries' users (Olson 2001, 639), who "in their searches for information, can be aided or impeded by the arrangement of the catalog and the physical locations of books." This concept goes beyond the materiality of documents reaching the virtual environment more subtly but also dangerously. The representation of information itself presupposes a power, which, making use of processes and tools that are not neutral, but rather constructed and agreed, leads to constructing products that will act as a semblance of the document or as documentary surrogate (Olson 2002). It will be through these document surrogates that the user will have access to the desired information and will appropriate it, more specifically, from the subject topic in the cataloging record. These document surrogates, also called labels, act as bridges between what the user needs and what the collection offers. So, naming the information means creating document surrogates and that term was chosen because "it connotes the power of controlling subject representation and, therefore, access" (Olson 2002, 4).

By stating that naming nature is a science speciality, Keller (1985, 193 cited by Olson 2002, 4) states that "theories, models, and descriptions are elaborated names. In these acts of naming, the scientist simultaneously construct and contains nature." Thus, for the author, naming information is a special function of librarians, who act on a field whose products can be presumptuous and controlled, revealing non static constructions. In this sense, to name (Olson 2002, 4) appears as "the act of bestowing a name, of labelling, of creating an identity. It is a means of structuring reality. It imposes a pattern on the world that is meaningful to the namer." People give names to things for communication to occur, and therefore, the au-

thor clarifies that naming is a means of interpersonal communication via language. When we assign names to things, efforts are made so that an authority is imposed under language. This control imposed on language is not based on the characteristics and needs of each individual but in a pattern that encompasses a community.

In this context, it is necessary to understand the different power relations involving librarians and information organization processes, and how the subject representation stage comprises at the same time the premises followed and taken for granted by librarians and their presumptions. Olson (1996) states that a presumption is an unstated premise and consists in assuming or taking something for granted, i.e., a not questioned principle that leads to action. Premise is an assumption that is stated and recognized as open to question. Both concepts are characterized by the absence of evidence, which does not mean that there is nothing implicit, but they have not yet been proven. One of the assumptions of library and information science is to consider that universal languages would always be our most right options, explains the author.

In her doctoral thesis, later published as a book, Olson questions the "presumptuous assumption" of universality in opposition to the desired diversity in library catalogs. The *Dewey Decimal Classification*, for example, was built "on the unquestioned presumption that universality is not only desirable, but necessary. This universality is characterized by the focus on sameness—privileging it over difference and diversity" (Olson 2002, 18). This presumption directly affects information construction. Both classifications as the subject headings lists and thesauri reflect the mainstream culture of a society and, therefore, play a key role in the context of libraries. By having a dominant feature, once most of these tools have been built and maintained by the mainstream, they allow librarians to work in the margins or in the social and epistemological limits aiming to include different points of view (Olson 2000).

To work in the margins or limits, librarians will have to take risks in representing concepts sometimes unfamiliar to their specific users community (Olson 2000), but these users will recognize such concepts once they are placed on useful syndetic contexts, providing scope notes and actively and appropriately applying them. It is not expected (Olson and Schlegel 2001) that different groups of users and different subject topics face the same problems when in contact with the document surrogates created by the librarians, but there are some similarities probably because of the assumptions that underlie these groups in the existing tools. Because they are built, those subject representation limits could be negotiated, making them permeable in the context of libraries.

When analyzing how marginalized groups and topics are represented on the document surrogates used by knowledge organization systems, Olson (2002, 9) specifies three problems:

First, pleasing the majority of library users sometimes results in biased subject representation; second, attempts at objectivity can result in *equal* treatment when what is required is *equitable* treatment to accommodate differences; and third, that standards homogenize the results of cataloging and, thus, impose a universal language in diverse contexts.

These problems can be understood as consequences of presumptions inherent to library and information science. One way to reflect upon these presumptions would be to consider that users should not be treated as a homogeneous group, which evoke the concept of “majority” or singular community. When it comes to objectivity in subject representation, Hope Olson warns that as we try to include certain aspects of a knowledge domain or discursive community, we often end up in the limit, highlighting certain prejudice. Finally, Olson and Schlegl (2001) emphasize that the effectiveness of using the tool in subject representation will depend on careful and active use by librarians, which include adaptations to local needs.

The discursive community studied by Hope Olson, which has provided examples to her major theoretical statements, relates to women. Problems of marginalization and exclusion and inconsistencies found on the subject topics assigned to documents related to women can be attributed both to the presumptions of library and information science, and the desired universality by the classifications and subject headings lists, or even to neutrality pretension regarding the more technical issues such as sexist characteristics of vocabularies, rigidity of languages and lack of sensibility by catalogers in relation to the Other. When representing women and women’s issues, languages usually (Olson, 2002, 9) “treat women as exceptions to a masculine norm, they ghettoize women’s issues by separating them from the rest of knowledge, or they omit women’s issues altogether.”

Reflection on presumptions inherent to our theoretical field and the mention of the existence of marginalizations and exclusions promoted by knowledge organization systems are Hope Olson’s legacy core, and she herself, offered defensible *techniques* (a French term that encompasses techniques and technologies) to ameliorate this scenario (2002, 238-239):

1) make breaches in the limit—make it permeable rather than redefining it or constructing a new limit,

2) make spaces, rather than filling them—the spaces are for the Other to fill should she/he desire to do so,

3) be dynamic; address the relevant discourse in a given context—*techniques* must be reflexive, changing responsively over time and space defined in the broadest sense.

For implementing such *techniques*, librarians need to desire an active stance, an ethical stance, as this would require language updates, reclassifications of collections, questioning presumptions that have been taken for granted for a long time; these stances in addition to demands on time and financial costs would require the cataloger her/himself to realize the existence of the Other and she/he could not do it solely from her/his own truths.

### 3.0 Elements for an ethical dialog in knowledge organization

The library catalogs and other similar tools of knowledge representation are not neutral, and because they are built, values are selected to represent the users to whom they shall serve. This combination of values generally reflect the dominant values of society. Some dialogs among the mentioned authors can be pointed out in such a way to evidence possible theoretical convergences. It is observed that interactive epistemography as a new paradigm, a theoretical and conceptual transdisciplinary framework that assists in the analysis in relation to the representations in the context of a pluralism of cultures and discourses, finds fertile ground when linked to the construction of multilingual thesauri; for a commitment is formed with the construction of logical-semantic tools that follow the updating of knowledge, considering the contents, languages, cultures and societies as well as ideologies, assuming a modal logic whose organization is made from local to global.

In this context of pluralism of cultures and discourses, the focus of subject representation would fall on users (Olson and Schlegl 2001), a desired objectivity and the languages used to achieve these goals and would bring to the librarians, at least partially, the responsibility for systemic problems that may occur in libraries or information systems. Thus, the linguistic issue, while an interactive epistemography variable by García Gutiérrez, finds in Hudon and Olson, more specific conditions to be addressed such as the literal translation of terms, which can result in meaningless expressions: “it is raining cats and dogs” and its equivalent in Portuguese in Brazil, “it’s raining pocket knives” or even “I slept like a log” and “I slept like a rock.” In relation to marginalized groups, more specifically in relation to women, some concepts still do not find space in languages built under the mainstream perspective. In this



sense (Olson 2002), concepts such as voice, unpaid labour, paid domestic labour, career patterns, sexual harassment are still not subject to defensible representations. Interactive epistemography, ethics in multilingual thesauri and the negotiation of spaces that shelter the specificities of marginalized groups find their possibility to materialize in ethically acceptable global knowledge organization systems by researcher Clare Beghtol imbued with cultural hospitality.

It is noteworthy that the very construction and maintenance of global knowledge organization systems as well as their practical policies involve a context that shape them. Indexing languages, for example, can play the role of a change agent as they are widely used tools, but for this, Olson (2000) warns that some discourses that permeate them cannot be ignored, as exemplified below. The *Library of Congress Subject Headings* is a controlled vocabulary with strong historical connection with Cutters's *Rules for a Dictionary Catalog* and hence the concept of "the public," which evoke the idea that users who use these subject headings list make up a homogeneous group; supports the concept of literary warrant, which places the literature produced by the disciplines or the fields of knowledge in command of the tool; and it is managed by the Library of Congress that mediates domains of knowledge and the public, addressing the application of policies and procedures and cooperative cataloging.

It is understood that the deontic statements of Antonio García Gutiérrez, expressing that no aspect should prevail over the others, whether discourses, cognitive processes, culture or user, find convergence with the concept of cultural hospitality proposed by Clare Beghtol, as in this, the idea of privileges over focused aspects is also inconceivable since classification is imbued with cultural warrants. The semantic treatment proposed by Michèle Hudon is convergent on a multilingualism issue, respecting differences of language in their non-identical and not symmetrical structure approach of multilingual thesauri as it does not force the existence of a term that has no equivalent in another language.

Such an aspect also converges with Hope Olson's ideas, which search spaces for negotiation between knowledge organization tools and the inherent specificities of the different users' communities, showing that information organization may try to solve or minimize the problems inherent in each culture from the moment it considers the users. Even those from the same culture should not be considered as a homogeneous group. In this case, the notion of equality as a means for objectivity can result in a separate treatment, although equal, of differences. The technical solutions in this sense (Olson 2001) shall result in beneficial effects only if they have local, dynamic and partial stances.

In a common understanding, Antonio García Gutiérrez, Michèle Hudson, Clare Beghtol and Hope Olson focused on the role of professionals who work with representation be it as a tool or activity. This professional must act ethically, possessing critical competence on the object or theme to be represented. This mediation, attributed to the professional, cannot be naive or mechanical, for a process of reflection on the cultural and ideological interests in the contents to be represented is necessary. The professional must be aware of her/his actions and consequent effects.

Clare Beghtol, in turn, is specific in discussing the matter of reading, directing this activity towards the identification of ethical problems in organization systems. Antonio García Gutiérrez conceived reading as a factor that goes beyond structural understanding of the text, since this activity must be so broad that it allows an understanding of the discourse used by the producer. Likewise, Hope Olson encourages professionals to work in the margins or in the social and epistemological limits aiming to include different points of view. In this context, Michèle Hudon understands reading as an essential requirement for understanding different linguistic versions bound to the linguistic competence of the professional.

On knowledge organization systems, the authors are categorical to state that such tools are not neutral since they are imbued with the values and positions taken by their creators. The essential point in representation may lie on cultural differences. The authors in this study addressed culture and hence the different existing cultures as a decisive factor for biases occurring in representations, requiring both from the professional and the tool used an understanding regarding the peculiarities and differences of each culture. Clare Beghtol emphasized the global use of knowledge organization systems, i.e., the utility of these systems by different cultures. Antonio García Gutiérrez studied the issue and named it miscegenation giving as an example the Brazilian culture. Michèle Hudon, in turn, in the diverse range of cultural issues was more specific in discussing the issue of language. Hope Olson has traditionally been studying how women have been represented in knowledge organization systems and how spaces within those systems could be negotiated in order to give them a voice.

In short:

- transcultural ethics of mediation considers culture as a dialogical and interactive system, overcoming dominant and reductionist views;
- cultural hospitality enables a single bibliographic notation to add various cultural warrants;
- multilingualism endorses the equal treatment among languages involved in a multilingual thesaurus; and,

- the power to name evokes the situational and political stance of knowledge organization systems and indexing languages and classifications and emphasizes the figure of heterogeneous users in search for voice in library catalogs.

All those concepts allow cultural diversity to be expressed in a representation system while ensuring identity to each one of them, not through confrontation but through accepting the difference. Olson (2001) teaches that a classification system postulates which differences will be used as dividing lines between the subject topics; after all, a classification system would not cover simultaneously all aspects or facets of a work.

The four authors warn that organization tools also serve for digital environments, and this point is converging both for Clare Beghtol's understanding of global systems and Antonio García Gutiérrez of digital network as exomemory preservation. Even Michèle Hudon whose warning is focused on the understanding of informational sources available in several languages, and therefore adding elements to the development of knowledge organization systems. Hope Olson (2001, 659) presents three ways to make our systems permeable: "to apply technology in innovative and subversive ways, to stretch standards such as *LCSH* and *DDC*, and to adopt an active stance by creating spaces in our boundaries for the voices of those who have been excluded." Hence, these global access systems should permeate cultural warrants, and are guided by ethics. Hope Olson argues that making systems permeable goes beyond the action of crossing vocabularies of the same area or crossing language barriers involving the construction of linguistic variants or supplements in order to extend and adapt the existing mainstream standards of subject access.

The authors contributed to the construction of concepts that allow theoretical background of the area in relation to ethical aspects as well as the framework that enable identification and resolution of ethical problems in relation to knowledge organization systems. Actions to reflect on these systems and indexing and classifications languages must be encouraged not only to highlight the qualities or flaws of these tools but also to reflect on them; after all, we librarians (Olson 2002, 4) use them and "decide what to represent and what to leave unnamed" in the library collection or information system.

#### 4.0 Conclusions

By studying the theoretical landmarks in the knowledge organization domain, Guimarães (2015) realized that this domain, and especially from the creation of ISKO, has come, over time, migrating from a conceptual basis—originally more ontological, especially since the concept

theory so well developed by Ingretraut Dahlberg—to a more socio-cognitive approach, incorporating issues related to the user and knowledge organization contexts led by Birger Hjørland.

More specifically in the socio-cognitive approach, Guimarães (2015) highlights three areas that complement each other and which strongly dialog: the perspective of domain analysis (by authors such as Birger Hjørland, Hanne Albrechtsen, Joseph Tennis and Richard Smiraglia, among others), linked to context and to discursive communities in which knowledge organization operates; semiotic perspective, strongly concerned about reception issues and significance in the context of knowledge organization (by authors such as Jens-Erik Mai, Torkid Thellefsen and Carlos Almeida, among others) and a cultural perspective, in which historicity, time and space conditions and idiosyncrasies of the communities involved in the production and use of knowledge takes on a leading role (by authors such as Hope Olson, Clare Beghtol, Michèle Hudon, Antonio García Gutiérrez, Grant Campbell, Sanford Berman, Maria José López Huertas, Widad Mustafa el Hadi and José Augusto Guimarães, among others). In this cultural perspective, the issue of ethics decisively emerges and knowledge organization and representation takes the role of assigning surrogates to informative content, coming from a "power to name" (Olson 2002) that has been granted by society for the information professional.

From this perspective, in which Hope Olson plays an effective central role, Guimarães (2015) highlights the following characteristic elements: 1) the recognition of diversity as something inherent to knowledge organization systems; 2) the recognition of the impact of human and social factors into the knowledge organization activities; 3) the conception of knowledge organization domain as a social product; 4) the suggestive (and not prescriptive) nature of knowledge organization systems; 5) the knowledge organization systems as tools to promote a global dialog; 6) the historical migration from universal systems to global systems; and 7) the movement from standardization to the promotion of intercommunication and, as a consequence, from the vocabulary control to the promotion of interoperability.

Considering these aspects, we believe that the intervention of an ethical analysis in knowledge organization systems is not only appropriate but especially necessary as it tries to intervene in represented and possibly disseminated biases practiced so far in addition to improving representation tools so that an awareness of how and why they are made is risen.

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