Reports and Communications

British Classification Society

On March 25, 1986 a joint meeting of the British Classification Society together with the British Society of Soil Science was held at University College London. It was organized by R.WEBSTER (Rothamsted Experimental Station) and its topic was "Statistics and computers in soil science". After an introduction by R.Webster, the following papers were presented (as scheduled in the provisional programme): A.D.GORDON (Univ.of St. Andrews): Multivariate analysis and classification. - M.A.OLIVER (Univ.of Birmingham). Geostatistics and its application in the Wyre Forest. - A.P.WHITMORE (Rothamsted Experimental Station): Simulation modelling and the prediction of nitrate in soil. - P.F.FISHER (Kingston Polytechnic): Automating soil descriptions. - M.E.PROCTOR (Soil Survey of England & Wales): Design of a soil information system. - P.A.Burrough (Univ.of Utrecht). Mapping and map analysis. - S.P.McGrath (Rothamsted): Computerized quality control, statistics and mapping of trace elements in soil. - G.GOODLASS (Agricultural Development and Advisory Service): Computers in farm advisory work. - D.BARRACLOUGH (Imperial Chemical Industries): Computer simulation for interpreting fertilizer experiments.

The officers of the British Classification Society are at present:
Mr.J.C.Gower (President), Dr.A.J.Boyce (Secretary), and Mr.R.W.Payne (Treasurer).

4th Conference on the Scientific Application of Software for Statistical Purposes, March 1987

The German Zentrum für Umfragen, Methoden und Analysen e.V. (ZUMA) in 6800 Mannheim 1, Postfach 5969 invites contributions to the following topics: New items in SPSS, BMDP, SAS a.o., Comparisons of programs, implementation of graphics, software for statistics in the PC-area, expert systems for statistics, software for statistics in research and education. The date for abstracts is Sept.1, 1986.

Symmetry Symposion

The City of Darmstadt and the Technische Hochschule Darmstadt are jointly organizing a broad project on the theme of symmetry which will be held from May to June 1986. The main events of the project are an extensive exhibition at the Mathildenhöhe and an interdisciplinary scientific symposion at the Technische Hochschule. The symposion is mainly concerned with the scientific discussion of forms and meanings of symmetry in all fields of life and science. It will take place on June 13-17, 1986.

For the main lectures and consequent panel discussions the following scholars have promised to come: Rudolf ARNHEIM, Ann Arbor, MI, Sir Ernst GOMBRICH, London (Art); Nicolaas G.de BRUIJN, Rene THOM, Bures-sur-Yvette (Mathematics); Michael GAZZANIGA, New York (Brain Research); Hermann HAKEN, Stuttgart (Synergetics); Istvan HARGITTAI, Budapest (Chemistry); Elmar HOLENSTEIN, Bochum (Philosophy and Linguistics); Eberhard JÜNGEL, Tübingen (Theology); Louis MICHEL, Bures-sur-Yvette (Physics); Helga de la MOTTE-HABER, Berlin (Psychology of Music); Otto FREI, Stuttgart (Construction Engineering); Adolf Max VOGT, Zürich (History of Architecture.

Applications for the symposion should be sent in by the 30th of April 1986 to the organizer: Prof.Dr.Rudolf WILLE, FB Mathematik, Techn.Hochschule, D-6100 Darmstadt. A registration fee will not be required. The complete program will be sent to all registered participants.

Current Situation of Library Subject Analysis. Report on a Working Session

On January 16, 1986, members of the Special Interest Group on Library Classification (SIG-BK) within the German Society for Classification, and some guests, met in Darmstadt to exchange ideas about the situation of library subject analysis, and to discuss current problems bearing on this. The following is a summarized report of this meeting to inform a wider public about the results of the discussions. The members of the SIG-BK found that a continued exchange of ideas on the basic problems of this discipline is of great importance. Seven papers on the subjects "Shelving Systems in Scientific Libraries" and "Problems of Verbal Indexing Languages", formed the basis for this exchange of ideas.

Following the theses of B.Fabian, B.LORENZ (UB Regensburg) expounded the role that library shelving systems can play in an integrated library system with a wide range of freely accessible stock as a tool, not only for research, but also for teaching. The result of the discussion was that for this classic problem of library classification - independent of the possibility of the associative search for literature on the shelves on the part of the user which, in principle, is to be assessed positively - important questions are still open, such as -

- the search behaviour of user groups, dependent on subject, stage of training or research processes
- the optimal number of books per system class, also dependent on the subject
- personnel-economic calculations comparative for closed and open-access libraries.

Even in this circle, the impression prevailed that, up to now, the Federal Republic of Germany - despite all the theoretic preliminary work - has not succeeded in establishing generally accepted research procedures and rational criteria for the examination and evaluation of library classification systems and that hitherto, for the most part, reference is made to the opinion of so-called "authorities".

If classification systems are considered as tools for research, then a further question arises: what correlations could exist between research results or teaching quality and library subject analysis? In two-level library systems, departmental libraries are primarily the tools of research; but surprisingly little is known about their methods of subject analysis.

O.OBERHAUSER (UB TU Vienna) reported on the old, but nevertheless recurringly topical and difficult problem of developing or selecting a shelving system according to which former stack holdings may be made freely accessible. Oberhauser demonstrated this, using a

new building for the university library at the TU in Vienna as an example. In Vienna, it was decided to adapt the location-independent catalogue of the UL in Munich. This, once again, showed clearly that there will never be a system which is optimal for all libraries; there are always some building, subject, personnel, or other conditions which allow imitation, but only rarely completely identical adoption, unless these peripheral conditions are thrown overboard in favour of the extensive adoption of external services.

A.VASILJEV (BTH Delft) painted a picture of the possible world of tomorrow's library catalogues: the microfiche catalogue as an interim solution will disappear and will be replaced by the consistent continuation of some EDP-supported cataloguing system, the online catalogue. On consideration of these problems, innumerable interfaces appear between problems of library subject analysis and other library disciplines, such as:

- how shall bibliographical elements be coupled with the data of subject analysis?
- how shall the requirements of bibliographical description be made compatible with the requirements of subject retrieval?
- which fields in the format of a document description shall be made searchable?
- shall a free or a fixed indexing vocabulary be used or a mixture of the two?
- how shall search indexes be processed: shall every possible search index be retrievable or a combination of several search indexes?
- which search functions shall be offered to the user and which to the librarian?
- which search aids must be offered to the user?

A cooperative answer to these questions is an absolute necessity; much more can be done technically - even solutions which perhaps do not meet the desired intellectual standard.

H.SCHNELLING (UB FU Berlin), continuing his research on Shakespeare in the subject catalogue, once again took up the question of what requirements can be derived from the establishing of subject structures for indexing languages. He chose literary sciences as an example. In investigating literary categories, he developed a "pattern" of standardized terms which may serve as a standardized vocabulary for the subject cataloguing of relevant texts. If this approach is used, the well-known question from the field of facet classification still remains unanswered, namely, the question whether this pattern can be applied in other disciplines. It would be desirable to carry out a project in which this approach to subject cataloguing could be tested on larger holdings.

One approach to the possible production of qualitative criteria for the assessment of verbal indexing languages was introduced by U.KRÖMMELBEIN (BIS Oldenburg). For this, she uses a grammar model for the description of natural language, N.Chomsky's generative transformation grammar, and also applies this model to artificial indexing languages. In this way, similarities between an indexing language, with regard to its syntactic characteristics, and natural language can be established. Statements about the quality of an indexing language can be obtained with the additional postulate that the more an indexing language resembles a natural language, the better the indexing language is.

In the discussion on this approach, the question arose whether such theoretic criteria can be the only ones for the assessment of indexing languages in German libraries, or whether there are not, above and beyond such comprehensible criteria, other factors, too, which determine the acceptance of indexing languages. This question, again, touches on the rationality of decisions in library subject analysis.

G.HARTWIEG (Berlin) was concerned with the question whether the fixing of subject categories in the RSWK (in person headings, subject headings, geographical headings, time headings, form headings), can be seen under the claim of the fixing of fundamental categories. She follows work done by I.Dahlberg, and arrives at the conclusion that, in particular, the fixing of the category subject heading in the RSWK is unsatisfactory.

In the discussion, various attempts to establish, in the future, a concordance between the RSWK standard subject headings list and the different classification systems (UDC, SfB, ASB, SSD) were mentioned. In this connection, it was deplored that there were hardly any criteria for the requirements a classification system should meet which is to be used to bring about such a concordance.

In the last lecture, L.KALOK (UB Gießen) pinpointed the problems of subject cataloguing of literature in the fields of astronomy, biology, physics, engineering, and geology using RSWK. The treatment of the examples made it clear that it is not only difficult to index such literature using RSWK, but that the isolated-case-casuistry of the RSWK leads to considerable confusion. The question poses itself whether an "RSWK roof" with a subject-oriented partial set of rules (in some subjects, this procedure is used in RSWK) would not better fulfil the requirements of a practical application. Using geography as an example, Kalok demonstrated that there are cases for which a great deal of time-wasting effort must be used to find a "narrow heading", although it is not adequate for the subject retrieval.

The programme was rounded off by G.GREINER's report on the subject "Subject Analysis at the New Department for Information and Documentation at the Polytechnic of Darmstadt", a report which gave the lecturers present from various library schools the opportunity to deal with comparative training problems in this subject.

The participants at this session welcomed the opportunity to exchange ideas and experiences in a limited field with their colleagues for a whole day, a form of communication which is not often to be found in the library world.

Acknowledgment: My thanks are due to my colleagues L.Kalok (Gießen) and H.Puhlmann (Hamburg) for their collaboration in drawing up this report.

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