The Founding of the International Society for Knowledge Organization Frankfurt, 22 July 1989

1. The Fact

Yes, on this very day of July 22nd, 1989, a group of German and non-German members of the German Society for Classification founded the International Society for Knowledge Organisation (ISKO) at the Intercity Restaurant of Frankfurt's central Railway Station.

In the presence of attorney-at-law Dr.Wilhelm Bresser, Frankfurt, who had already assisted in the founding of the Gesellschaft für Klassifikation twelve years ago (Febr.12, 1977), the participants in this meeting discussed the draft Charter (prepared by R.Fugmann and I.Dahlberg with the assistance of Prof.Dr.D. Soergel, University of Maryland and Dipl. Volksw. O.Gekeler, Ulm, FRG) and finalized it. The participants were: Dr.I.Dahlberg, Frankfurt; Dr.R.Fugmann, Idstein; Dr.A. Gerstenkorn, Darmstadt; Doz.G. Greiner, Karben; BDir.B.Kelm, Frankfurt; Dr.N.Meder, Cologne; Mrs. Padmini Raj, Bangalore, now Düsseldorf; Dr.W.Schmitz-Esser, Hamburg; BDir. I.Stoltzenburg, Frankfurt; and Dipl. Ing. R.Ungvary, Budapest. The participants then acted as a first membership assembly by electing the founding members of the presiding body. Here are the results of this election:

Dr.Ingetraut DAHLBERG, president
Dr.Robert FUGMANN, vice-president
Dr.Norbert MEDER, vice-president
BDir.Ingeborg STOLTZENBURG, treasurer
BDir.Barbara KELM
Prof.Dr.Elaine SVENONIUS, Los Angeles (in absentia)
Dipl.Ing.Rudolf UNGVARY

2. Purpose and Advantages of the New Society

The Society is meant to unite nationally and internationally personal and institutional members interested in "research, development and application of all methods for the organization of knowledge in general or of particular fields by integrating especially the conceptual approaches of classification research and artificial intelligence" (Charter Art.4,1). The Society is not meant to be a federation of any existing societies or groups, like the International Federation of Classification Societies founded by numerical taxonomists in 1985.

The advantages of such a society of personal members are:

1) People belonging to one and the same group are more inclined to help each other, thus the members of this society can mutually assist each other in professional questions.
2) Understanding each other's problems on a national and international level will grow and fruitful cooperation can be started in projects of common interest in the field of classification, indexing and knowledge organization.
3) Members will become more conscious of the fact that they find themselves in a community of peers in their efforts toward a further development of the science of classification and indexing/knowledge organization.
4) The formation of membership associations in this field on a national level will be facilitated in all those countries which have no such groups as yet.
5) A cooperation between librarians, information science people working in the field of classification and indexing as well as persons working in computer science and other relevant fields related methodically to the problems of knowledge organization will be facilitated in any country where these groups are still working separately from each other.
6) In this way, the state-of-the-art of the science of knowledge organisation will be improved and the quality of work and work results will be advanced.
7) New developments in artificial intelligence can thus be more effectively considered for the utilization in our work, yet not in isolated projects but in international cooperation.
8) Possibilities for teaching the subject field of knowledge organization will be improved, as well as its presentation with generally acceptable contents.
9) Knowledge organization as an autonomous subject field will thus become internally consolidated and externally made better representable.
10) International conferences will be held more frequently (proposal: every two years in a different country) which will bring people together personally and on which occasions the necessary exchange of knowledge and opinions too will be possible.

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3. The Common Basis

The common basis for information and communication will be the journal INTERNATIONAL CLASSIFICATION. In view of this fact, the INDEKS Verlag has agreed to change this journal as of Vol.17(1990) into a quarterly for a slightly higher price (DM 94.00/ann.). However, members of the INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR KNOWLEDGE ORGANISATION will receive the journal free of charge, as it was decided to include it in the membership fee of US$ 25.00 for personal members and US$ 50.- for institutional ones.

4. Some Specific Points from the Charter

The entire Charter adopted on July 22, 1989 will be published in the next issue of Int.Classif. Here are some points of particular interest:

(a) The Charter provides for the establishment of a Scientific Council of 21 members to be determined initially by the presiding body. "It will give advice to the Presiding Body and to the Working Groups in planning and carrying out their tasks and projects." (Charter, Art.10,1). It is hoped that the proposed members of the Scientific Council can be contacted soon; their names could then be published in International Classification 1989-3.

(b) The Charter provides also for the establishment of regional chapters and working groups, both on a national and an international level according to the interests of its future members (Art.11). If there are groups in different countries trying to solve the same problems, a positive competition or fruitful cooperation could be started which will certainly help in the solution of the problems to be tackled.

5. Reasons for the New Society

The founding of the new international Society had been considered for many years already, however, its realization became a necessity only recently as it turned out that the progress of the work of those members of the German Society for Classification who are not so much interested in mathematical-statistical procedures is seriously hampered by the fact that the council elections at the membership assembly at Augsburg, April 11, 1989, resulted in an almost total "victory" of mathematicians and statisticians over the experts from library and information science. Since a number of years already it was becoming harder and harder to persue the aims set forth at the founding of this Society in 1977 when only a single person from this "numerical approach" was present. Therefore a solution had to be found to prevent a steady trickling-away of the members following the conceptual approach being disentchanted by the growing emphasis of the Society on the numerical approach. The founding members of the new International Society for Knowledge Organization envisage the establishment of a German ISKO-Chapter as a possibility to clarify and improve the situation in the German speaking countries. At the same time a good chance seems to be provided to all those colleagues in other countries where such a possibility to associate under the roof of an international society did not yet exist.

6. The Immediate Future

In order to provide for a first international conference of the new International Society for Knowledge Organization the founding members advised to undertake the necessary steps for a conference to be held in the Frankfurt area under the title

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from 14-17 August 1990, shortly before the IFLA Conference (at Stockholm, Sweden). A call for papers is to be distributed soon. The German Chapter, to be founded in October 1989, will – together with the Founding members of the Presiding Body – be in charge of this first international conference.

7. Cooperation and Invitation to Join

The new International Society for Knowledge Organization is open for any feasible cooperation with related groups, as e.g. FID/CR, the IFLA Section on Classification and Indexing, Infoterm, or with any other international or national organizations. It invites everybody with an obvious and evident interest in the aims of the Society to become a member. The Society accepts persons of all countries and nations as members. According to its statutes it has regular members (every natural person or legal entity) and sponsoring members. Please, request membership application forms at the ISKO General Secretariat, Woogstr. 36a, D-6000 Frankfurt 50, FRG.

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