

Ethical Aspects in the Organization of Legislative Information

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Abstract: The goal of this research is to analyze ethical questions related to the organization of legislative information (bills, laws, and speeches) within the scope of the Brazilian Federal legislature (Chamber of Deputies and Federal Senate). Field research including interviews was used to collect data in order to investigate the development of knowledge representation tools, such as thesauri and taxonomies, and subject indexing for organization of legislative information (bills, legislation, and speeches). The heads of all sectors responsible for the chosen activities were interviewed in person, and the answers were compared to common ethical problems described in knowledge organization (KO) literature. The results, in part, show a lack of clarity on ethical issues in the treatment of legislative information, pointing to ethical dilemmas and identifying problems such as informational directness, misrepresentation, and ambiguity, among others. The indexers in the Brazilian Congress found ambiguity the ethical aspect faced most often in their jobs. The next most frequent issue was professional inefficiency and in third place was a tie between informational directness and lack of cultural warrant. The research also describes solutions used for various ethical dilemmas. It was found that some indexing terms used to describe bills in the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies have been subject to censorship and censored, or censurable, indexing terms have to be hidden in metadata so documents can be retrieved by users. It concludes that a greater ethical awareness of technical aspects is needed for Brazilian Federal legislative information professionals.

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1.0 Introduction

The information produced and used during the steps of the legislative process in the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies (Câmara dos Deputados) and Federal Senate (Senado Federal) has great value, for both institutions and citizens, since this process can result in changes in people's lives once legislative bills are turned into laws. Legislative information can be considered input to citizen participation in the legislative process, and its representation and organization makes access, use, and dissemination possible.

Allen (1992, 67) points out that "A fundamental tenet of American democracy is that citizens have a basic right of access to information collected and produced by the Federal government," which is also true for any democracy worldwide. Garcia Gutierrez (2002, 518) considers also that the concept of representation and access to information "should be replaced by the concept of participation in

order to remember democracy and the public property of knowledge on a global scale rather than private property and market distribution." According to Wagner, Vogt, and Kabst (2016), the information flow between politicians and the population has been opened with the use of technology, and information can now be better presented and disseminated, which allows a larger segment of the population to participate in the decision-making process.

The activities encompassed in the organization of legislative information, as in any type of information, deal with ethical questions in which the values of the professional are of great importance. A lack of neutrality in indexing and development processes of knowledge organization tools raises questions about information organization practices in different information environments. Are professionals aware of the ethical aspects related to their activities? Do they suffer from interference or influences during their information organization activities? How do

they solve ethical dilemmas that may occur during their professional practice?

The goal of this research is to analyze ethical questions related to the organization of legislative information (bills, laws, and speeches) within the scope of the Brazilian Federal legislature (Chamber of Deputies and Federal Senate). It is critical to verify the level of awareness of ethics in information and knowledge organization among the indexers of these institutions and to investigate how these ethical dilemmas are viewed within their practice.

2.0 Theory

Two main theories are considered important to this research: ethics in information and knowledge organization and legislative information. The following sections review these theories.

2.1 Ethics in information and knowledge organization

Ethics in information and knowledge organization is a subject present in library and information science (LIS) and is mainly related to the activities of the representation of information (including indexing, classification, naming, tagging, cataloguing) and the development of language tools and knowledge organization systems (KOSs). In 1992, Dahlberg wrote an editorial for *International Classification*, acclaiming the well-known librarian and classification expert S. R. Ranganathan and his work on classification studies relating to ethics in knowledge organization. Recent discussions on this issue have continued. Beghtol (2002, 507) affirms that “broad questions about the ethical dimensions of knowledge representation and organization in the context of global access to information have arisen.” Discussions of this subject have increased, especially after the first conference on Ethics in [Knowledge] Organization (EKO) that took place in 2009 followed by a second conference in 2012. According to Smiraglia (2015, 5), during the first conference, “There was general agreement that the concept of ethics in knowledge organization should assume a more prominent role in future research and development.” A third conference was also held in 2016, showing the subject continues to maintain interest. According to Mai (2013, 243), “One current pressing challenge for library classifications is to address the fundamental issue of how to handle ethical and moral issues in contemporary classifications of information.”

Ethics in information and knowledge organization are related to the bias humans have about everything, which is particularly expressed when organizing information:

classification, indexing, naming, tagging, cataloguing and building KOSs or representation and language tools. The choice of a category for a book, a keyword for a paper, or class content is always subjected to a personal point of view. Fox and Reece (2012, 377) point out that “the creators of tools such as OPAC interfaces, classification systems, and thesauri that provide access to information, and those who apply those tools, such as catalogers and indexers, are all subject to ethical decision making and consequently to ethical lapses, both intentional and unintentional.” This means that even the professional who is committed to being as impartial as possible will always present world views and beliefs to some degree when organizing information. As Mai (2013, 246) states: “Values do come in conflict in the library. Librarians do make decisions about which material to provide access to, how to classify that material, and which terms to use when naming ideas and subject matter. There is no view from nowhere. Any act of naming or classifying is an act of saying something about the world, and such an act is always done from a particular perspective.” Baptista (2013) also agrees that there is no way to avoid ethics in knowledge representation, although not always enough attention is paid to it. She states that all decisions are necessarily ethical, and the activities of information organization demand decision making when applying technical processes.

Professionals who work with information and knowledge organization must be guided by ethical principles. Beghtol has said (2002, 527) that “the duty of securing diversity of cultural and personal information access, then, falls to information professionals, who have an obligation to design, evaluate, maintain and revise knowledge representation and organization systems so that they conform to these ethical principles as closely as possible.” Regardless, many ethical dilemmas are not seen as such. Some principles present in information organization tasks are seen just as technical issues and the ethical perspective is ignored. Smiraglia (2015, 2) states that “the notion of ethics as a component of knowledge organization occupies a sort of background position, or perhaps it could be termed a substrate.”

According to Guimarães and Pinho (2006), aspects like precision, time, specificity, literary warrant, recall, and others are not only technical aspects of information retrieval processes but also reveal the values of the professional. Like Fox and Reece (2012), Guimarães and Pinho highlight ethical issues in the development and application of information organization tools. According to them, biases are found from the moment tools are created for information representation to the moment of using them for indexing documents. For Smiraglia (2015, 3):

The idea that KOS should be free from bias is commonplace, in that sense it forms a substrate, but rarely is the concept of ethical decision-making in either the identification of atomic concepts or the means of naming and ordering them explicitly approached in the literature.

Researchers concerned with ethics in information and knowledge organization agree that no neutrality in the processes related to information organization exists. Mai (2013, 243) affirms that the discussion about classification needs to change: “it requires a re-classification of library classifications from being thought of as neutral, hidden, embedded tools to being sites that expose assumptions and perspectives on the world and society.” Olson (2002) summarizes the research of Berman (1971), Foskett (1971), Marshall (1972; 1977), and Steinberg (1974), pointing to the evidence of bias in indexing and in subject classification tools. According to Olson, biases are generally related to gender, sexuality, race, age, ability, ethnicity, language, and religion. Garcia Gutierrez (2002, 518) also affirms that the operations on knowledge organization are “far from being neutral, banal or aseptical, [they] are, all of them, deeply mediated”; the theory and practice of classification and knowledge organization are biased by the positivist model.

As a real-life example, the Library of Congress (LC) in the United States has recently suffered interference in its *Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH)*. In response to requests, librarians examined and discussed the status of the headings “aliens” and “illegal aliens” and decided “the heading *Illegal aliens* will therefore be cancelled and replaced by two headings, *Noncitizens* and *Unauthorized immigration*, which may be assigned together to describe resources about people who illegally reside in a country” (Library of Congress 2016). But, according to Peet (2016), “members of the U.S. House of Representatives have voted to attach language to a funding bill which would require LC to switch back to the original term.” So, members of Congress voted on a bill to maintain the old headings, which was approved: “the House voted 237–170 to order LC to continue using the term “illegal alien.” The Library of Congress then had to keep the old headings. Ethical problems and bias are clear in this case.

Guimarães (2000) proposes levels of ethical commitment: the user, the institution, the information, the librarian as individual, and the profession. All those levels may conflict when facing an ethical problem in information and knowledge organization: the user, someone who uses the information and potentially gives some new information back to the system; the institution, or the information environment, with all its values and goals; information, meaning its content and creators and the informa-

tion professional or librarian, who have their own values and personal beliefs; and the profession, as a broader institution to which professionals are committed.

2.2 Legislative information

As the information environment studied in this research is located in the Brazilian Federal legislative institutions of Chamber of Deputies and Federal Senate, it is necessary to conceptualize legislative information for this research. According to Alarcão (2011), legislative information results from legislative processes and legislative oversight functions. Alarcão thinks of legislative information in a broad sense, where all the information produced or received by the institution and processed according to the institution policies, rules, and guidelines is included.

On the other hand, in an earlier study, Passos and Barros (2009) consider legislative information the information resulting from the steps of the legislative process. They distinguish legislative from legal information and consider laws as legal information, not legislative information. However, many authors do not recognize that difference, treating both synonymously, and this research also takes that view. Since both institutions studied in this research have specific sectors to index bills, laws, and speeches, those are considered legislative information for the purpose of this research.

That said, the importance of the meaning of this kind of information to society must be highlighted. According to Yannoukakou and Araka (2014, 334), “Access to government information is an institutional right, which constitutes a precondition for the proper exercise of civic rights whereon the democratic governance springs.” Legislative information is an important part of government information. It shows what congresspeople think about national issues (speeches), what they are doing about them (bills), and how to manage them (laws). It also allows people to be on the same page and discuss subjects of interest within legislative processes so they may be disseminated: “The issue of public access to government information has another important dimension: that of dissemination. The Federal government has a critical and legitimate responsibility to provide basic information products and services to our nation. This includes information such as laws, judicial decisions, economic statistics, census data, and scientific research” (Allen 1992, 73).

Providing access to legislative information is a fundamental right, and it is only possible by organizing it according to policies, rules, and guidelines. According to McClure and Jaeger (2008, 257):

Information policy therefore affects the everyday use of information in myriad ways, including the

amount and types of government information available for access by individuals, the privacy protections for personal information, government transparency, and the collection of national security information, among innumerable other contexts.

As Beghtol (2002, 507) states, “we need now to add problems of providing access to information globally and locally in any language, for any individual, culture, ethnic group or domain, at any location, at any time and for any purpose.” That is why knowledge representation and organization systems need to consider cultural warrant and ethical warrant, meaning that appropriate fields, terms, categories, or classes are established. Naming subjects in bills, laws, and speeches is a task that can provide or deny access to its content and create other kinds of distortion like bias, prejudice, or misinterpretation. That is why ethics in the organization of legislative information need to be considered.

3.0 Material and Methods

Field research was used to describe the characteristics of the legislative information indexing process and creation of tools for indexing—especially thesauri—regarding ethical issues. Interviews with the professionals responsible for organizing legislative information in the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies and the Brazilian Federal Senate were used to collect data. Along with the interviews, the professionals were requested to check, from a list of ethical problems in information and knowledge organization and representation, ethical issues they have experienced in their job activities. In the Chamber of Deputies, the interviews were performed individually with the responsible person for each sector that indexes legislative material. In the Senate, on the other hand, the interview was performed with all the sectors together, plus the head of the department, as they requested. Interviews were performed in person between May and June of 2016. All interviews were recorded with authorization of the participants.

The research is focused on the analysis of ethics in indexing and the development of knowledge organization systems. Therefore, ethics in indexing of legislative information and tools for its representation were the foci of this study and the core subject of the interviews. Although no clear definition or boundaries about what is considered legislative information exists, bills, laws, and parliamentary speeches were considered to constitute legislative information in the present study. The main reason for this choice is that both institutions chosen for this research have specific sectors for each of these types of information. This allowed the possibility to compare ethical

aspects in the indexing of the different legislative information (bills, laws, and speeches).

4.0 Results and Discussion

4.1 Information environment

To start with an overview of the information environment, the following question was asked of the institutions: “Which area is responsible for indexing bills, legislation, and speeches?” It was found that indexing is done by specific sectors for each type of information in the Chamber of Deputies and in the Federal Senate. They have one sector for indexing bills, another for indexing laws, and yet another that indexes speeches. Specific sectors also are responsible for developing and maintaining the controlled vocabularies used for indexing in both institutions. The following sections will describe each of the sectors in order to provide a panorama of the information environment studied.

4.1.1 The Chamber of Deputies

In the Chamber of Deputies, three different sectors index documents, one for each type of legislative information (bills, legislation, and speeches). Two sectors, for bills and legislation, are located in the Information and Documentation Centre (Centro de Documentação e Informação). The indexing of speeches is accomplished by the shorthand department in a specific indexing sector. The departments were questioned about the professional background of the indexers. At least one information professional (a librarian, in all cases) is employed in each sector that indexes legislative documents in the Chamber of Deputies. Among the indexers, 41.7% of the professional degrees are in librarianship. Besides those, there are indexers who graduated in law (17.64%) and in Portuguese, journalism, history, business administration, accountability, psychology, and philosophy, representing 5.88% each. Some indexers have graduated in more than one area among those. The interviewees have worked as indexers for at least five years in the Chamber of Deputies. A sector in the Information and Documentation Centre is also responsible for developing and managing controlled vocabularies such as taxonomies and thesauri. The sector has been led by a librarian, who is also an anthropologist, for the last seven years. The team also includes another two librarians, one librarianship student (an intern), and another three collaborators who graduated in journalism, business administration, and archives.

The next question was about the use of knowledge organization systems for indexing. All of the sectors use the Chamber of Deputies’ thesaurus “Tesauro da Câmara

dos Deputados” (TECAD), as their main tool for indexing legislative documents. They also use the Federal Senate’s thesaurus (THES: “Thesaurus do Senado Federal”) and the Basic Controlled Vocabulary (“Vocabulário Controlado Básico”) for indexing speeches when needed. The legislative sector uses non-controlled terms if the term is not included in TECAD yet. The sector responsible for indexing bills also uses non-controlled terms when necessary, but in a different field in the system (the notes field).

After that, they were asked whether an indexing policy existed in the institution, and if so, how was it developed. According to McClure and Jaeger (2008, 257), an information policy “can best be understood as the set of specific goals created by governments to shape the creation, access, management, exchange, security, display, collection, and other uses of information.” The indexing policy is then a guideline for information management in the institution and was developed as a project led by the Information and Documentation Center. The Chamber of Deputies has an indexing policy, enforced in 2013 by Act 80/2013, that established TECAD as the official tool for indexing information contents in the Chamber.

4.1.2 Federal Senate

In the Federal Senate, all sectors responsible for indexing bills, legislation, and speeches are coordinated by the Legislative Information Secretariate (Secretaria de Informação Legislativa). They have one sector responsible for each kind of legislative document. Unlike the Chamber of Deputies, the composition of the teams in the Federal Senate is very different: 77.3% of the indexers have degrees in law. Only one library student works as an intern in one of the sectors, representing 4.54% of the degrees, and no one graduated with a librarianship or other information science degree. Other graduates among the indexers include history, engineering, computer science, and physical education, at 4.54% each. The interviewees have at least three years of experience indexing in the Senate.

They use the Federal Senate’s thesaurus for indexing their bills, legislation, and speeches, and if necessary, non-controlled terms are used in other system fields. The Senate has no indexing policy or guidelines, and, according to the head of the department, each sector creates its own policy. The sector that indexes legislation is also responsible for managing THES. Only one professional, who graduated with a history degree and trained in thesaurus elaboration and indexing, is responsible for thesaurus maintenance.

4.2 Ethical aspects

The ethical aspects were assessed by the following research questions, which were asked in the interview:

- Are ethical values considered in indexing tasks? What about in the index policy?
- Do you face ethical dilemmas? If so, how are they solved?
- Is there any interference in the indexing process?

While answering, those interviewed were encouraged to talk about the issues freely.

The results showed that ethical aspects in information and knowledge organization are not so clear to the professionals in both the Chamber of Deputies and in the Federal Senate. In the Chamber of Deputies, even with degrees in librarianship, the professionals felt a bit insecure when talking about the theme in the beginning of the interviews. They were unsure if what they were saying corresponded to the proposed questions.

In the Federal Senate, when asked about how they consider ethical aspects in indexing, they asked if it was possible to elaborate a little more, to clarify what was meant by ethical aspects. The institution has no librarian or LIS-related professionals in the interviewed areas, which is possibly why they possess even less awareness about the ethical issues in knowledge organization than in the Chamber of Deputies.

Despite the lack of awareness about the topic, no formal definitions on ethics in information science or its related concepts were provided so as not to bias the answers. The idea was to let participants speak freely about their indexing activities. I considered it a sensitive issue and that too much explanation could prevent the participants from answering openly. The following sections will describe in more detail the results of the interviews, by institution.

4.2.1 The Chamber of Deputies

The first section of the interview addressed how the legislative information professionals see ethics in information organization activities and whether the indexing policy of the institution includes reference to ethical values. The sector that indexed legislation related ethics to the concepts of information retrieval, the principles of librarianship, a document’s trustworthiness, precision, commitment to your job, commitment to controlled vocabulary, indexing policy, and user services. They highlighted the ethical commitment to the document, as identified by Guimarães (2000) by an ethical commitment level to the information—its creators and its content.

They believe ethical values are contained within the institution's indexing policy but implicitly.

For the sector that indexes bills, the question about ethics raised the notion of objectiveness in indexing as a guide but without forgetting that the job is accomplished by humans and the objectiveness exists in the only way it is possible. They too recognized the lack of neutrality in indexing, as seen in KO theory (e.g., Olson 2001; Garcia Gutierrez 2002; Mai 2013). The sector believes that ethical values are in the indexing policy in a general way. The sector that indexes speeches related the ethical aspects of indexing to the indexer's subjectivity. They say indexers bring with them their beliefs, preferences, opinions and so on, and they are aware people should be as impartial as possible when indexing documents. In spite of that, they do not believe in neutrality in indexing, once again corresponding to KO theory. About the indexing policy, they consider the institution of TECAD, as the official tool for indexing, as a great beacon of ethical values. The sector responsible for TECAD's development and management reported that ethical aspects are observed in everyday tasks, because their thesaurus is developed for a political institution and reflects the politics of the country. They highlighted ethical issues in terms related to human rights, like black people, woman, disabled people, and so on. A greater awareness of ethics was evident in this sector's responses.

The second section of the interview covered ethical dilemmas, whether they face them or not, examples of conflicts they have encountered, and how they have been resolved. The legislation sector recognized the ethical commitment to the document versus the ethical commitment to the institution as a dilemma, when the latter discourages the use of particular terms for indexing. In those cases, the commitment to the document prevails. They do not suffer from interference in their job, and they believe it happens due to the type of document they index; legislation is already published and deputies cannot affect it anymore. As for the speeches sector, no interference was cited. The main dilemma they face is related to whether or not content in a speech is relevant enough to apply an indexing term for it. In this case, the ethical commitment level with the document conflicts with the ethical commitment level of the indexers. They usually resolve those cases by having a group discussion among all the indexers of the sector.

Contrasting the other sectors, the bills' indexing team spoke about interference in their job starting with the first question of the interview when they were asked about ethics. They cited examples of requests, which came from deputies' and committees' offices, to remove indexing terms from specific bills. The knowledge organization activities for bills in this sector go beyond indexing. They also explain the abstract of bills when it is un-

clear and attach a bill's nickname. Nicknames, often given by the media, are the terms by which bills get known by society and they end up being frequently used as search terms by users. Consequently, it must be registered. However, these nicknames are not always desired by the sponsor of the bill, and, often, the deputies' offices request to remove the terms.

The indexing also serves as an abstract of the document in the Chamber of Deputies. They are accustomed to reading indexing terms in place of the full text. Because of this, exhaustive indexing is done. For this reason, even committees have interfered in the indexing, questioning if a bill was not being approved because one of the indexing terms, even though the content explicated by that term was present in the full text as well. Two other cases of interference were also cited: one by a deputy's office that requested the removal of a bill explanation (that had just been copied from the bill's justification) and another by a user that questioned the indexing of a bill.

This situation shows a clear dilemma between all levels of ethical commitment: the document, the indexer, the user, and the institution. The sector solves those conflicts by asking for a formal request from the offices and responding to it. They currently try to avoid those issues by using hidden metadata to register terms they think may be censored. Then the document can be retrieved, but the term is not shown in results page and offices do not complain—because they cannot see the term. These previous examples illustrate some of the ethical problems identified by Guimarães et al. (2008) such as surveillance, censorship, information directness, misrepresentation, and inaccessibility to information.

A final ethical question raised by the sector was related to the evolution of language in terms like "homosexual" and "homo-affective union." They said the terms were adequate due to modifications in language, culture, and society, and indexers should use them without judgment.

The sector responsible for TECAD and other controlled vocabularies tools were asked two questions:

- Do you observe ethical decision-making in your daily job? Are there any ethical dilemmas? How are they resolved?
- Has there been any interference in relation to the terms used in the vocabularies, like criticism or censorship?

They answered that they face ethical dilemmas mainly in discussions of polemic terms like "single mother," "illegal son," "honest woman," "gender ideology," and "rape culture." To resolve these questions, this sector adopts a methodology of studying the terms based on specialized

technical literature from which the term originated, and, if needed, they also consult specialists in the area, often from the Chamber of Deputies staff. They did not report any external interference in their work, only questions related to some terms but in a cooperative and not in an imposing way. Ethical values are not considered explicit in the indexing policy by that sector. They point only to access to information as the most obvious value but not as an ethical value specifically, more of a general principle.

4.2.2 Federal Senate

As in the Chamber of Deputies, the interview started with a general notion of ethics in organization of information. The same questions from the previous interviews were used. It was necessary to provide a basic explanation about ethics in organization of information—they were graduates from different disciplines, and there was no LIS graduate among them; so they asked for more details about it so as to put everyone on the same page. The main ethical values were cited: privacy, freedom of speech, access to information, authorship/copyright, safety, equity, diversity. After that, the sector responsible for indexing laws related ethics to the concept of objectiveness in indexing and the commitment to the document and to controlled vocabulary. They find the value of access to information as the most obvious.

The sector responsible for indexing bills related ethics to conflicts and decisions the team has to make. The sector indexing speeches emphasized faithfulness to the document—in that case, the content of what was said in the speech. The Federal Senate does not possess an indexing policy, so the question about ethical values in the policy was removed.

In the second part of the interview, the sectors were questioned about problems and ethical dilemmas and how they resolve them. The legislation sector identifies nicknames for laws as a major problem; like bills in the Chamber of Deputies, laws are also given nicknames, which usually become how they are known by society. They say that because nicknames originate from outside of the Federal Senate, in most cases they do not agree with them. They usually question the nicknames and the resolution is similar to what they do in the Chamber of Deputies. A requisite for any new system that is being developed must have a metadata field that is hidden from the results pages. Therefore, data can be retrieved but not shown in the document's record.

In the sector that indexes bills, the situation is very different from what happens in the same sector of the Chamber of Deputies. No interference in their work has been reported, and they cited only one case of terminol-

ogy adjustment. The request was the switch of the term “gay marriage” for the term “homosexual union.” The term was non-controlled and was used as a nickname for the bill. I believe the difference between the interference in the bills indexed in the Chamber of Deputies and in the Federal Senate happens due to three factors: number of congresspeople in the Chamber is greater than in the Senate (513 versus 81), the number of bills is also much larger in the Chamber (82% of the total), and sponsorship of more than 80% of the bills are from deputies and only 6% from senators. In other words, there are more deputies than senators; therefore, the probability of interference occurring tends to be larger in the Chamber of Deputies.

As for the sector indexing speeches, they affirm they have never suffered from interference, but they report that in other sectors, work with the information management of speeches, a certain apprehension about terms used exists because of concerns of being questioned by the speaker. The coordinator of the sector in the Senate recalled an interference case during the military government in Brazil. It did not refer to the indexing of a speech, but rather the whole content of a speech that criticized the government. The document was removed from the files by that time and does not exist anymore.

Conflicts that may occur in the Federal Senate are resolved by discussing the issue in order to come to a consensus in the group. Then, they take the decision to the superior body (Department of Legislative Information). What is decided there is followed by all sectors under the coordination of the department.

Regarding tools for indexing, such as the thesaurus, they are developed in the legislation sector in the Senate, as previously mentioned. The team did not demonstrate knowledge about ethical issues and did not cite any interference or ethical conflicts during the development of the Federal Senate thesaurus. They commented, though, that terminology changes through time, like the term “deficient,” that was previously known by such terms as “deaf,” “mute,” “paraplegic,” and so on. Then they started to use “person with disabilities” to adapt to what is considered politically correct at each time. The thesaurus is then adapted to terminological changes with no further concerns by the institution.

4.3 Ethical problems

At the end of the interview, participants were asked to fill out a table on ethical problems in information and knowledge organization found in LIS literature with topics listed in the research of Guimarães et al. (2008). They had to identify whether they have faced those specific problems. The results are in Table 1.

| | Bill S | Bill CD | Leg/Thes S | Coord S | Leg CD | Spee S | Spee CD | Thes CD |
|--|--------|---------|------------|---------|--------|--------|---------|---------|
| Surveillance | | × | | | | | | |
| Censorship | | × | | | | | | |
| Lack of cultural warrant | | | | | × | | × | × |
| Negligence | | | × | | | | | |
| Informational directness | | × | | | | | × | × |
| Professional inefficiency | | | × | × | | × | × | × |
| Misrepresentation | | | | | | | × | × |
| Racism | | | | | | | | |
| Ambiguity | × | | × | × | × | × | × | × |
| Marginalization | | | | | | | | × |
| Pornography | | | | | | | | |
| Impartiality or neutrality belief | | | | | | × | | × |
| Defamation | | | | | | | | |
| Idiosyncrasy | | | | | | | | × |
| Inaccessibility to information | | | × | × | | | | × |
| Discharge of electronic garbage | | | | | | | | |
| Professionals being replaced by technology | | | | × | | | × | × |
| Prejudices in terminology | | | | × | | | | × |
| Biased translations | | | | | | | × | × |
| Violence | | | | | | | | |
| Digital segregation | | | | | | | | × |
| Key: Bill S: Sector that indexes bills in Senate Bill CD: Sector that indexes bills in the Chamber of Deputies Leg. S / Thes. S: Sector that indexes laws and manages the thesaurus in the Senate Coord. S: Legislative Information Coordination in the Senate Leg. CD: Sector that indexes laws in the Chamber of Deputies Spee. S: Sector that indexes speeches in the Senate Spee. CD: Sector that indexes speeches in the Chamber of Deputies Thes. CD: Sector that manages thesaurus in the Chamber of Deputies | | | | | | | | |

Table 1. Ethical problems.

Ambiguity was the problem most identified by the interviewed indexers of legislative information within the federal scope, followed by professional inefficiency. Informational directness and lack of cultural warrant came in third place, chosen by three sectors as shown in Figure 1.

The sector that showed the greatest knowledge about ethical problems in information and knowledge organization (TECAD management in the Chamber of Deputies) is also the one that pointed out more ethical issues from the proposed list.

5.0 Conclusion

The interviews performed show that ethical issues in information and knowledge organization are not so clear to the professionals that work in organization of legislative

information in the Brazilian federal scope. It does not mean the professionals do not observe ethical dilemmas in their professional activities, but rather that the information and knowledge organization tasks are not seen as directly related to ethics. Issues like precision, objectivity, access to information, and completeness, among others, are still seen as just technical aspects of information indexing, as theory also notes. Also, as seen in the theory of Guimarães (2000), the conflicts in levels of commitment when facing ethical problems could be observed in the interviews.

A great concern with objectivity was evident in document representation and with impartiality of indexing professionals, although they recognize that it is impossible to achieve complete neutrality, since the job is accomplished by humans, not machines. The professionals in-

Ethical problems

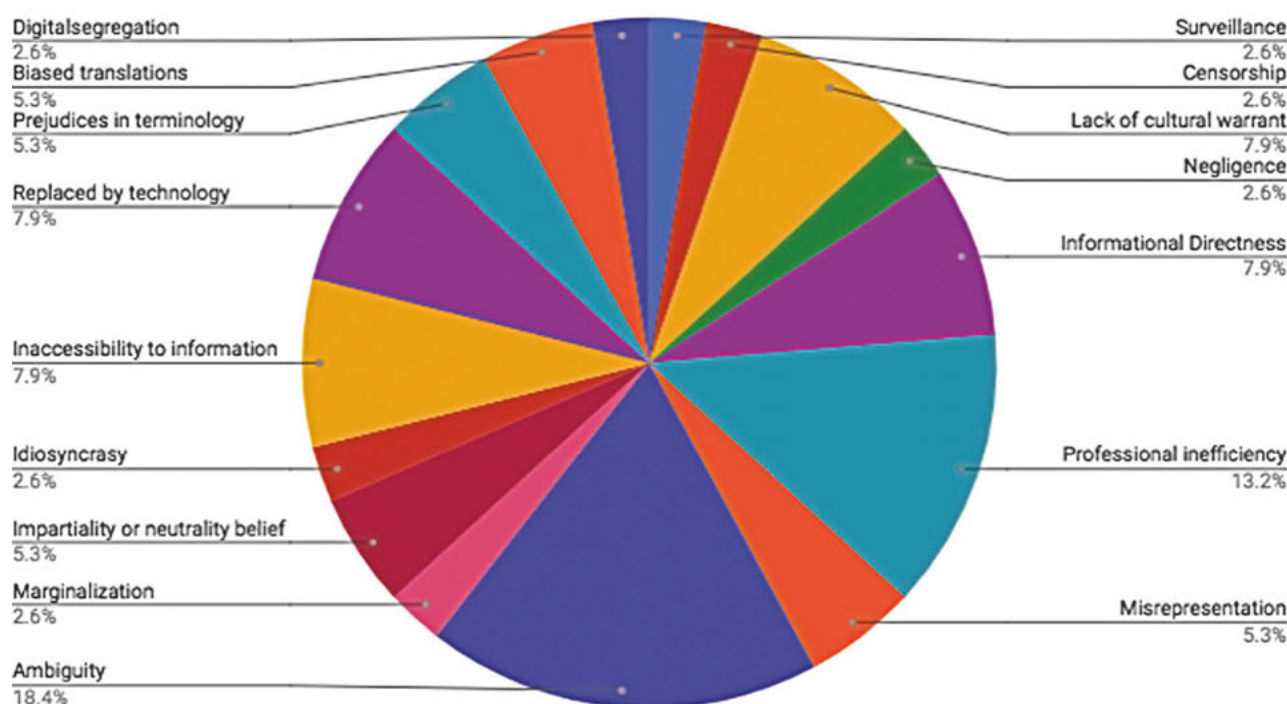


Figure 1. Identified ethical problems.

terviewed recognize bias and admit that their perspectives on the world can influence indexing tasks.

The main issue found in this context is interference in indexing bills in the Chamber of Deputies. This situation is considered the most serious, because bills are a type of information that should be highly accessible, in a transparent and unrestricted way, for two main reasons. First, a bill can be converted in law and it will affect people's lives, and so the whole of society should be able to access all this information prior to the final decision. Second, the information from bills is extremely important to citizens who want to participate in legislative debates.

A further interesting research question would be to assess possible ethical impacts of information processing and retrieval when descriptors are indexed by the systems and function as keywords for retrieval, but they do not appear in the presentation of the retrieved document, such as bills and laws with popular names/nicknames. How can a document's representation be considered reliable when there is no transparency in the presentation of it to the user?

Ethical aspects can be considered even more important to legislative information management due to the impact this information can generate on all society. In this sense, it is recommended that legislative houses promote awareness about ethics in the organization of legislative information among their information professionals.

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