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Development of a Broad System of Ordering for UNISIST Purposes

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Outline of the functions of a Broad System of Ordering (BSO) as a switching mechanism in the UNISIST Program of Unesco. Co-operation with the Fédération Internationale de Documentation (FID), Den Haag, which in 1972 has set up for the elaboration of a Subject-field Reference Code (SRC) a Working Group (FID/SRC). Structure, notation and display of the SRC as result of the first year's discussions are mentioned as well as the use of existing experience and the future work as planned for 1974. (I. C.)

1. Function of a Broad System of Ordering

The need for the establishment of a Broad System of Ordering (BSO) in the framework of the UNISIST programme arises naturally as one of the aspects in the process of achieving compatibility between existing and future information systems. Mindful of the great diversity of classification schemes used in the world, it can be stated that the main function of BSO is to serve as a switching mechanism to link different individual classifications and thesauri in the process of information transfer. To fulfill this function adequately the BSO should be:

- a mechanism for shallow indexing, whose goal is to locate and transfer large blocks of information, rather than specific documents or data, between different discipline and mission-oriented systems, using, eventually, different natural languages
- a universal scheme embracing all fields of knowledge
- a flexible system, keeping pace with the rapid progress in science and technology. It should also be amenable to the application of modern management techniques for revision, updating and further distribution of revised editions to the users at minimum intervals
- a scheme with simple structure, so that it could be adopted by different information systems without much effort and heavy financial support
- a scheme which could be easily used both by computerized and manual information systems

Besides serving as a switching mechanism, BSO will also perform other important functions in the process of the implementation of UNISIST:

- to specify the field coverage of serials in a world register (UNISIST International Serials Data System)
- to serve as a broad filter in processing inquiries on information resources through the UNISIST referral network
- to facilitate the determination of overlaps and duplications in the operational characteristics of information systems

2. Co-operation with FID

Within the framework of the UNISIST programme close working contacts have been established with the International Federation of Documentation (FID) in view of developing the BSO. The experience of FID, in developing a new super-structure of subject-fields (SRC - Standard Reference Code) which was to provide a "roof" for a reformed UDC and to serve as a switching device for achieving a certain degree of compatibility between the diverse indexing languages, has proved to be extremely valuable (SRC/CCC Working Group). At the FID Congress held in Budapest in September 1972, it was decided to set up a new FID/SRC subject field Reference Code working group whose functions would be completely dissociated from the UDC revision activities. The group has a wide international representation and is now composed of ten members.

The terms of reference of the working group were defined as follows:

For the purposes of interconnexion and co-operation among information systems as envisaged by UNISIST, the Working Group will design and develop a broad subject-ordering scheme for all fields of knowledge and usable in manual and mechanized systems to serve:

- as a tool for interconnexion of information systems, services and centres using diverse and often incompatible indexing/retrieval languages
- as a tool for tagging (i. e. shallow indexing) subject-fields and subfields
- as a referral tool for identification and location of all kinds of information sources, centres and services

The Working Group agreed on a general work programme for 1973 and the priorities nominating certain members to be responsible for specific tasks.

In March 1973, a contract was signed with FID, assuring financial support of Unesco for the completion of specific tasks of the Working Group in developing BSO or SRC.

During 1973 a substantial amount of work was accomplished by the WG. Progress to date includes some agreement on definitions, on structure and display for BSO.

3. Definitions

May be one of the most important was the working definition for SRC subject-field, which is essential for the understanding of the whole SRC scheme:

An SRC subject-field is a recognized range of activities around one or more subjects. Such recognition should be based on criteria, which include the existence of at least one *independent, organized* information source, with the indication that:

- people are engaged in the activities of the field,
- literature is produced in the field.

An information source may be distinguished as one of the following:

- supporting or sponsoring organization
- abstracting and indexing services (or periodicals)
- information collections or data-banks
- chairs of universities
- teaching of subject-fields

4. Structure and Notation

It was agreed that BSO will be a 3-level scheme including 5000–6000 subject-fields with a simpler structure and more shallow hierarchy than in existing universal classifications.

The selection of notation can be made only after establishing the structure of SRC. Nevertheless from the existing alternatives the numerical notation (with Arabic numerals) was deemed to have more advantages.

5. Forms of display

The threefold presentation of the collection of subject-fields was envisaged as follows:

1. classified arrangement, i. e. a systematic table with subject-fields arranged according to their code numbers
2. associative arrangement, i. e. in form of graphic sheets with arrows indicating relationship of terms.
3. an alphabetical arrangement, i. e. in form of a thesaurus, being the index

6. Use of existing experience

It should be underlined that while developing the first outline of SRC the WG took largely into account existing international experience in the field of classification. The first outline of SRC is based on such documents as:

- main subjects of the Colon Classification
- OECD macrothesaurus of terms on economic and social development
- classification of Bureau of Terminology of European Communities
- INSPEC classification in physics, etc.

7. Future work

The main directions of effort of the WG in 1974 were defined as follows:

- establishment of agreed 1st, 2nd and 3rd level lists of subject-fields for SRC
- consultations with subject-field specialists for completeness of coverage
- development of structure and notation for SRC
- exploring possibilities of practical testing of SRC in the World Inventory of A & I services in machine-readable form
- presentation of SRC scheme at Bombay conference on Universal Systems of Ordering in January 1975 for comments and criticism.

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A Common Classification for Swedish Research Projects

Wåhlin, E.: A Common Classification for Swedish Research Projects.

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Proposal for a universal classification system on the level of subject-fields based on the observation of a continuous interdisciplinary combination of former single subject-fields. The multitude of possible combinations is shown in a “discipline matrix” of the natural sciences and technology. For the interdisciplinary field of ecology a “geometrical display” is used, showing possible combinations of natural objects with each other and in relation to their respective fields. Concludingly the difficulty in indexing research projects is pointed out. (I. C.)

1. Objectives and basic principles

A study is currently being conducted in Stockholm for the purpose of creating a central, common classification system for all research projects sponsored by Swedish governmental research councils. This project is intended to a) provide a means for improving the flow of information to persons actively engaged or otherwise interested in a particular scientific area, b) create a background for research statistics. For each of these purposes it was found necessary to present the research projects concerned from various aspects, i. e. under different entries.

The investigation concerned was initiated by the Swedish Natural Sciences Research Council and is directed by the chairman of that Council, Dr. Martin Fehrm. The present author was requested to work out, in cooperation with Dr. Fehrm and experts from various fields, a proposal for a classification system.

So far, our studies have been devoted primarily to general aspects and systematic principles as well as to systematization within the natural sciences, agriculture, and certain fields of technology. The intention is to extend this work to all other areas as well with the help of experts chosen by the research councils. While hoping to arrive in this manner at a system which these councils and the researchers consider acceptable, we are well aware of the difficulties involved. The present paper is an attempt to evoke comment and criticism from individuals and groups in other countries where the theory of classification has been studied more thoroughly than in Sweden. The opinions presented here should not be regarded as the official point of view of the Swedish re-