INFOTERM NEWS

(compiled from Infoterm Newsletter 18)

Meeting of Experts on Terminological Data Elements, Vienna, 24–26 September 1980

In collaboration with Unesco and within the framework of TermNet this meeting was convened by Infoterm to discuss terminological data elements inclusive of the organization of data input and other problems directly related to the exchange of terminological data. The actual basis for this meeting had been provided by the "Draft Comparative Study on Terminological Data Elements", prepared by Infoterm upon the recommendation passed at the First International Conference on Terminological Data Banks, April 1979. Some 25 experts representing ten countries and several inter- and multinational organizations (such as the UN, the World Bank, the EC, etc.) were in attendance.

Mr. Löhner of UNISIST/Unesco outlined the functions of Infoterm and its relation to Unesco. He noted that considerable progress had been made in recent years in the efforts to achieve increased cooperation among existing terminological data banks. It was particularly gratifying to note that Infoterm had strengthened its advisory role with respect to new terminological data banks and that existing terminological data banks had responded so readily to Infoterm's initiative in seeking their cooperation in offering the best possible advice.

There were many other organizations who would benefit from increased harmonization among terminological data banks and for this reason the present meeting was very opportune.

The first part of the meeting was devoted to detailed discussions on basic data elements, user dependent elements, mandatory (exchange) data elements, etc. Work carried out at various institutions in relation to these problems was reported on, such as

- a feasibility study on the establishment of a terminological data bank in the U.K. (conducted by the Centre Computational Linguistics at UMIST, Manchester)
- a comparability study of data elements in a selected group of terminological data banks. This study had likewise been undertaken by a Danish expert in response to a recommendation passed at the conference on terminological data banks mentioned above.

The second part of the conference was devoted to detailed discussions of the various points on the agenda such as quality aspects of terminological data elements, compatibility of classification systems as well as guidelines for the establishment of terminological data banks, the conclusions to which are embodied in the recommendations.

In the discussions it was noted that the agreements reached in no way conflicted with the work of ISO and national standardizing organizations on the revision of existing and the formulation of new standards of relevance to the present discussions. International standards were extremely important for this work but in the meantime agreements on common goals and objectives were desirable in order to make every possible assistance available for new terminological data banks. A special session was called on "Terminology of terminological data banks" to discuss future ways and means for collaboration. A small WG is to meet at Siemens (Munich) at the beginning of January 1981 to decide upon final input format, division of labour, etc.

Recommendations

(1) For the purpose of providing guidelines for new terminological data banks it is advisable to establish a basic set of terminological data elements which are and should be common to most terminological data banks.

(Explanation: A terminological record consists of separately identifiable data elements.)

Data elements are of two major types: general and terminological proper.

The following data elements are recommended as a basic set for a wide range of purposes, including exchange of data.

general
- record identifier
- date of record input and updating
- record originator

terminological
(repeatable by language)
- subject code
- language code
- term/s or phrase
- bibliographic source
- usage note
- definition/explanation/context

(2) For the same purpose it is advisable to list and explain additional terminological data elements which serve a variety of different users of terminological data banks. (A detailed list of such elements could be obtained via Infoterm.)

(3) It is highly desirable that organizations holding or compiling terminological data be approached with a view of making these data available in a machine-readable form in accordance with the guidelines established under 1 and 2 above. Infoterm is asked to instigate such requests, to mediate and to collate information for this purpose.

(4) A survey should be undertaken into the uses and shortcomings of subject classification systems in existing terminological data banks. Such a survey should describe the elements used for subject identification and investigate their function for the benefit of new terminological data banks.

(5) It is desirable to collect and collate existing guidelines, procedures and methodologies for the validation and quality designation/determination of term records, terms, equivalents and other terminological data elements.

(6) Infoterm is requested to collect information which may be contributing to the compilation of guidelines for the decision making on and the establishment of new terminological data banks.

(7) Infoterm is requested to collate this information

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with the assistance of a small group of experts in order to produce such guidelines.
(8) Infoterm is advised to approach the authorities responsible for the recent feasibility studies for terminological data banks in France, Denmark and the United Kingdom with a view to making these studies generally available.
(9) The existing terminological data banks are requested to set up a working group for the purpose of exploring means of harmonization.
Working definitions and/or explanatory notes concerning specific data elements were also elaborated during the course of the meeting.

Guidelines for quality assessment
(1) Quality indications can be attached to a term record as a whole or to individual data elements. The reference of the quality indicator should be clearly established. A quality indicator for one equivalent term pair is very important.
(2) The quality of equivalents is enhanced by close matches between language dependent data elements.
(3) Quality can be assessed by correlation of such data elements as source, note usage and subject code.
(4) The intrinsic quality of a term record is influenced by the number of data elements in the record and the cohesion among them.
(5) Terms should not be validated individually but in coherent groups.
(6) Terms should not be validated by individuals but by groups of experts who should preferably be subject specialists.
(7) It is desirable to extract related terms from related documents or to obtain them from subject specialists.
(8) The chief criteria for the quality assessment of a term are their appropriateness to the purpose of use, the width and frequency of usage by relevant user groups and the authoritativeness of the source.
(9) Primary sources of information such as text books, journals, manuals are preferable to secondary sources such as bi- or multilingual dictionaries.
(10) Generally speaking a good translation equivalent is independent of context and function.
(11) Good practice for the selection and creation of terms is established by the existing ISO-Recommendations 704 and 860 (under revision).

Fifth Full Session of the Inter-Agency Meeting on Language Arrangements, Documentation and Publications, Paris, 1–5 September, 1980

More than fifty representatives from some twenty organizations gathered in Unesco for a week's session to discuss matters of mutual concern in the fields of language arrangements, documentation and publications.

Discussion ensued on the application of technology dealing with word processing and applications in translation and document production.

Other subjects discussed included the exchange of language personnel, the development of terminology systems and organizations' experience with the Eurodicautom system of the European Communities. There was also an exchange of views on two recent reports dealing among others with the evaluation of Translation Services.

Subjects prepared for discussion at future sessions in 1981 and 1982, respectively, include the training and recruitment of translators and interpreters as well as an assessment of automated or machine assisted translations (Extract from IOB Newsletter, September 1980).

TermNet News

At its last meeting in Vienna in April 1979 the Infoterm Advisory Board proposed to create a link between all those co-operating in TermNet. This medium, i.e. a newsletter, was to present individual terminological agencies and data banks to the public and to provide information about new developments, future and past meetings, new publications, projects, research etc.

TermNet News is to be published four times a year; publication of the first volume is pending.

It is hoped that this new periodical will foster national and international co-operation in terminology. The Direction Generale de la Terminologie et de la Documentation, Secretariat d'Etat du Canada in a most co-operative spirit provides valuable assistance related to editing, publishing and distributing of TermNet News.

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CONTA

The Conference on Conceptual and Terminological Analysis in the Social Sciences will be held at Bielefeld, FRG, Zentrum für Interdisziplinäre Forschung, May 24–27, 1981.
The program, outlined in Intern. Classificat. 7 (1980) No. 2, p. 83 comprises the following six sessions:
(1) Theory and practice of concept analysis
(2) Evaluation of descriptor languages
(3) Concept comparison and compatibility
(4) Generation of integrated thesauri
(5) Establishment of glossaries
(6) Termbank implementation
The speakers are: Erwin Scheuch (Key note), Janos S. Petöfi, Jean Meyriat, Dagobert Soergel, Jean Aitchison, Fred Riggs, György Rozsa, Henry Teune, Jonathan Pool, Helmut Arntz, Henry G. Burger, Ingetraut Dahlberg, Tamas Földi, Anthony J. N. Judge, Magdalena Krommer-Benz, Walter Krumholz, Henri Leclercq, Juri Litoukhin, Hans Peter Ohly and many others.
Conference fees: DM 90.– (approx. $45.–) for regular participants, DM 60.– (approx. $30.–) for members of sponsoring organizations. Registration until April 15, 1981. Thereafter DM 20.–/$10.– in addition.
The program is available at the following address: Ges. f. Klassifikation eV, Woogstr. 36a, D-6000 Frankfurt 50.

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