

# ISKO News

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## 4th ISKO Italy Meeting: Report

About 40 people attended the fourth national meeting of the Italian chapter of ISKO. This time the event was organized in the historical centre of Turin, thanks to technical collaboration by the Digital Bibliographic Service Staff of the University of Turin, led by Paolo Gardois. In the morning, the discussion focused on the role of traditional cataloguing techniques in the extended context of knowledge organization. The special guest was widely estimated librarian Carlo Revelli, who shared his views and long experience on the topic. Other classical library tasks were addressed by Emanuela Casson, reporting a case of collection reclassification in a mathematics library, and by Ilde Menis, discussing indexing questions in a university OPAC. The scope of cataloguing issues was then broadened by Stefania Vecchio, who is working with cultural heritage records, considering similarities and differences with the librarians community. Barbara De Santis illustrated her PhD project on multilinguality in thesauri; then, together with Casson and Claudio Gnoli, she reported on the advancement of organization work for the next international ISKO conference, to be held in Rome in February 2010 [<http://www.iskoi.org/rome2010/>]. This is now the main task for the Italian chapter, after a series of more specialized events, and besides the continued efforts of various working groups and collaborations.

The afternoon saw a markedly technological shift, with illustration of research and many applications at the University of Calabria (Roberto Guarasci) and at the Food and Agriculture Organization (Margherita Sini). Mela Bosch introduced the different strategies used to make search engines more semantic. Information architecture issues were discussed by Andrea Cuna, focusing on the approach pioneered by the Flamenco project, and by Luca Rosati and Andrea Resmini, speculating on how in a close future digital semantics could pervade everyday life, e.g. product search and evaluation in a retail. Eugenio Gatto was charged with final comments to many of the issues mentioned along the day. As usual, the meeting took

place in an informal and lively environment, and was continued nearby with an aperitif. Some texts, presentations, audio recordings, and photos are available from the event webpage <http://www.iskoi.org/doc/torino09.htm>.

Claudio Gnoli

[The report originally appeared on ISKO-L on 4 July 2009]

## IFLA Classification and Indexing Satellite Pre-Conference: Report

Among the satellite meetings organized around the main annual IFLA conference in Milan, of particular interest for knowledge organizers was that sponsored by IFLA's Classification and Indexing Section. It was held on August 20th and 21th, 2009 in a building of the Tuscan regional government, in the very centre of Florence. Despite its quite unspecific title, "Looking for the past and preparing for the future", it resulted in a substantial and lively discussion of some big challenges for contemporary subject indexing, also thanks to stimulations from the section chair, Patrice Landry, and secretary, Leda Bultrini. The program and full papers are published online [[www.ifla2009satellite.florence.it](http://www.ifla2009satellite.florence.it)] and hopefully will be available there for long time.

Some papers addressed uses and current problems of subject indexing systems in online catalogues: Marie Baliková spoke about their situation in Czechia; Sirje Nilbe about the merging of two general thesauri for Estonian OPACs; Wanda Klenczon about the subject heading system of the National Library of Poland; and Aida Slavic (co-author with Emanuela Casson and Andrea Fabbrizzi) about the Italian survey "OPAC semantici". Many clues suggested that the high-quality indexing work of librarians often gets lost in the transfer of information to users, due to both structural and interface problems. One possible reason of this situation is that, in the last years, most work has been focused on making online tools simple, rather than care-

fully reflecting the inescapable complexity of relationships between concepts. The American approach, as represented by the well-known speakers Lois Mai Chan and Diane Vizine-Goetz, tend to make relatively unstructured information, including free tags, available for large amounts of data in such resources as WorldCat. On the other hand, the analytico-synthetic model recommending to express relationships between concepts by ordered strings of connected terms is put forward again by GRIS's "Italian model". The latter is now expressed in the syntax of Nuovo Soggettario, as presented in the papers by Pino Buizza and by Marta Motta (co-author with Anna Lucarelli, Luciana Franci, and Massimo Rolle); hidden in the back of the room, though watching over the younger speakers, was the father of this Italian GRIS school, Alberto Cheti.

The emerging question then is: what is the right stage at which complexity should be reduced, without destroying the semantic richness of subjects? Aren't we supposing that our users are dumber than they actually are?... Folksonomies are often cited as a user-friendly solution to the problem of indexing large amounts of documents. Harriet Aagard reported on an experiment at the Stockholm public library allowing users to add their own tags to catalogue records; however, few users turned out to be interested in taking time for this, and most of them were ... librarians. Chan also recalled the known flaws of folksonomies concerning retrieval precision. The most promising trend is then tool integration, joining the big numbers of collaborative indexing with the sound structures provided by classical library science, in forms like automatic suggestions for indexers and searchers, or different views of subject data according to function and context.

The last feature is relevant especially in multilingual environments, where the same systems are searched by users speaking different languages, or systems in different languages need to be translated, merged, or used together. Ongoing work for adopting the Dewey Decimal Classification in German, Swedish, and Norwegian libraries was reported by Yvonne Jahns, Joan Mitchell, Ingeborg Rype, and Magdalena Svanberg. A set of special classes to express local viewpoints in the Integrative Level Classification was presented by Claudio Gnoli, and some technical solutions to enhance subject tools using machine-to-machine terminology services were illustrated by Gordon Dunshire.

As observed by both Dunshire and a Dutch commenter, all this suggests the future way for subject access to information: librarianship, information technology, and other communities where people are

discussing really similar matters all should cooperate, so to build integrated systems capable of organizing the quickly expanding mass of available knowledge—a task in which semantic tools have a greater role to play than ever.

Claudio Gnoli for ISKO Italy

### ISKO-Canada/United States Holds Second Symposium

The Second North American Symposium on Knowledge Organization (NASKO) was held under the aegis of ISKO's Canada/United States chapter, June 18-19 at Syracuse University in New York. Hosted by conference co-chairs Barbara Kwasnik (Syracuse University) and Elin Jacob (Indiana University), and ably assisted by David Pimentel (Syracuse University) and Nicholas George (Indiana University), the symposium heard ten formal peer-reviewed papers. The theme of the symposium was "pioneering North American contributions to knowledge organization." Attendees also participated in a lively workshop led by Drs. Kwasnik and Jacob concerning the state of North American KO research. The General Assembly elected officers for the 2009-2011 term, who are: Kathryn La Barre (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign), President; Thomas Dousa (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign), Treasurer; and Nicolas George (Indiana University), Program Officer.

Thanks to the efforts of Tom Dousa (University of Illinois) and Joe Tennis (University of Washington), the full papers from the Second North American Symposium on Knowledge Organization, held June 18 and 19 at Syracuse University, have been deposited at DLIST:

Pioneering North American Contributions to Knowledge Organization. (2009). Elin K. Jacob, Elin K. and Barbara Kwasnik (Eds.) *North American Symposium on Knowledge Organization*, Vol 2. <http://dlist.sir.arizona.edu/2636/>

The four papers receiving the highest ranking by conference attendees will appear in revised versions in a future issue of *Knowledge Organization*.

NASKO programs and abstracts, as well as chapter news and membership information can be found at: [https://netfiles.uiuc.edu/klabarre/shared/iskona/ISKO North America - home.htm](https://netfiles.uiuc.edu/klabarre/shared/iskona/ISKO%20North%20America%20-%20home.htm).

Richard Smiraglia