48

Knowl. Org. 24(1997)No.1
Book Reviews

times borders on mannerism ("unter-worfen", 'subjected', p.37; "re-volutionieren", 're-volutionize', p.70; "Un-Wahrheit", 'un-truth', p.71).

All these objections to Capurro's book do not diminish the value of this fascinating collection of essays. It should be recommended not only to the expert in knowledge organization and information technology, but also to the anthropologist and philosopher.

The volume is rounded off by a useful bibliography (p.115-121), a detailed subject index (p.122-128), an index of Greek terms (p.129), an index of Latin terms (p.130-131) and a name index (p.132-134).

[1] See Capurro, R. (ed.): Informationsethik. [Ethics of information]. Konstanz: Universitätsverl. 1995. (Schriften zur Informationswissenschaft, 18).

Werner Bies

Dr. Werner Bies, Forststr. 52, D-12163 Berlin, Germany.

WELLISCH, Hans H.: **Indexing from A to Z.** Dublin/New York: H.W. Wilson. 1995. 569 p. US$ 45. ISBN 0-8242-0882-X.

This is the second edition of Wellisch's book, revised and enlarged in 1995. It contains almost 400 citations, in part most recent and in part dating back to the pioneer times of mechanized documentation and even earlier.

In this book, the author releases his comprehensive knowledge of the topic of indexing, collected and having matured in life-long teaching and practice. The contents of the author's numerous publications of the author are displayed here in concentration.

The book is preceded by a list in which the most important technical terms in indexing are compiled, together with the definitions in which the author uses them. This contributes much to the clarity of their use in the text.

Much valuable knowledge for indexing has fallen in oblivion and is presented anew by Wellisch here. One example is the loss of any discrimination between relevance and pertinence. An unattainable goal is set for any retrieval system if a type of "relevance" of the responses (with which pertinence is meant in reality) is demanded for them. Much time and manpower is presently being wasted for this goal.

Wellisch also criticizes various habits and opinions that have become untenable in the present – for example, the sorting mode of "letter by letter", the excessively pre-coordinating Library of Congress Subject Headings, and their claim to constitute an appropriate tool for databases.

In indexing, business and science clashes to an extent hardly found in any other field. From his eminent view, the author relentlessly criticizes those authors who in carelessness or ignorance try to promote their business under the label of science. In particular, those are meant here who make publishers believe that there is a super-simple, cheap and at the same time effective way of indexing in existence. Wellisch emphatically advises against embedded software if it is restricted to merely marking so-called important textwords.

The usefulness of a thesaurus for indexing is stated, but at the same time it is wisely advised against underestimating the task of thesaurus construction. The employment of published and continually maintained thesauri or their adaptation to the task at hand is recommended. For the reviewer, this reservation is certainly appropriate for large and continually growing databases, those covering an entire field of knowledge. However, the construction of a thesaurus for the (fairly limited) subject field of an individual book is a thing that may be expected of a professional indexer. Those headings which will have to be related to each other by "see" and "see also" references can be compiled more completely from a thesaurus than through mere reflection. At the same time the indexer would feel the necessity of taking into consideration those terms as headings that had not been explicitly used by the book author and under which, however, a user might look-up.

The book is subdivided into 96 sections, alphabetically arranged, among them, for example, Automatic Indexing (towards the prospects of its success for the autonomous creation of useful indexes the author is skeptical), Bad Indexing (subtitle: "a baker's dozen of common mistakes"), Costing (including everything a freelance indexer must know), Depth of Indexing (comprising exhaustivity and specificity), Indexing Languages (with a comparison of natural and controlled languages), Legal Texts, Medical Texts, Training in Indexing. But topics of more formal character are treated, too, for example Abbreviations, Double Entries, Locators, Personal Names, Punctuation.

Each section comprises almost everything in an encyclopedia-like fashion which is of interest for the topic under consideration. Occasionally, the reader is referred to other sections in which parts of the topic are also dealt with. Should there not be a section of its own for a topic of interest, for example, subheadings, one finds ample reference in the index to those sections in which the topic is also discussed.

If a comprehensive topic would have exceeded the framework of the book, the reader is referred to the special literature, which is often the most recent one.

The book is preceded by a list of particular comprehensive topics, and it is recorded in which sections

Knowl. Org. 24(1997)No.1
Book Reviews

49

each of them is dealt with. Thus, the unavoidable dispersion of topics in a basically alphabetical arrangement is effectively overcome or at least mitigated, and at the same time the book serves those who can be satisfied only through an alphabetical arrangement.

The index to the book is a model example of excellent book indexing. There is hardly any heading which is not subdivided by carefully phrased subheadings. Reciprocal entries are common for those headings the locators of which should also be found under other headings.

Wellisch is afraid that he might have done overindexing. In many checks the reviewer has not encountered such things. On the other hand, an only marginal occurrence of a concept, or the occurrence of a word different in meaning from that in the index, has rightly been excluded from the index. Here, the careful consideration of an expert indexer has been at work. For example, the word "relevant" in the sentence: "...the relevant national and international standards..." did not lead to an entry under "relevance" because of the difference in meaning in the text and in the index. The same holds true for this word in the sentence: "Discriminate between relevant information and merely passing mention of a topic". Here, "relevant" means something like "significant".

These examples give support to Wellisch's standpoint that any autonomous, automatic indexing will remain an illusion forever. In the reviewer's view, every programmer would be overtaxed when he is expected to compile in advance the wordings of contexts through which the weight and the meaning of a keyword might have been specified in the literature of the past and might be in the future. For the same reason, Wellisch's criticism of the "indexes" KWIC and KWOC, in which no meaning analysis and no disambiguation is performed, is perfectly justified.

The book serves very well the large audience of people who have to deal with indexing and indexes. First of all, the book describes the creation of back-of-the-book indexes, and here, it addresses both the professional indexer (who can refresh his familiarity with the state of the art) and also the book author as an only casual indexer. He, too, is provided with valuable advice for concentrating on the most important sections, and even the sequence in which the sections should profitably be read, in order to avoid the worst pitfalls.

As far as the publisher as a user of the book is concerned, the book provides an impression of how much experience and knowledge in the art of indexing must be at work for a good index.

Should a reader happen to come across the book, he will be surprised at the complexity of good indexing for the same reasons as mentioned in the foregoing. Hopefully, in future this reader will appreciate a book with a good index. This may, in the long term, lead to more books with good indexes and to more employment of professional indexers, much to the advantage of effective book use and the development of knowledge.

Wellisch does away with the common misconception that the author of a book is necessarily also an ideal indexer. Writing a book and writing the index require quite different talents, and only rarely are they found in one and the same person. The widespread opinion that indexing is as simple as breathing for a book author has been disastrous for the recognition and employment of indexers, at least in many countries, and, hence, for the quality of many indexes.

Like many other books, this book often refers to standards in indexing. Here, a word of warning is appropriate in the opinion (and experience) of the reviewer. "Standards" in scientific work should always only looked upon as guidelines or recommendations, and as the negotiated opinion (although negotiation is quite alien to science) of a group of experts at a specific point in time, and for which nobody feels responsible personally. Often, standards are outmoded at the very time of their appearance, which is not surprising in view of the rapid progress prevailing in the field of indexing. But they persist in monumental firmness for an unmerited long period of time. Even the often-cited period of five years (if it were only practiced!) is much too long for keeping up with progress sufficiently fast. There seems to be a significant difference between the individual institutions with respect to the reluctance with which their standard committees are willing to revise their own statements. Pedantic adherance or insisting on standards would seriously impede progress. Every author who tries to introduce a novelty can be (and is often) blamed for "violating" existing standards.

Among the definitions of topics presented in the book, "topic" is defined as "A concept, theme, idea treated explicitly or implicitly in a document". The indexing of only implicitly treated topics ("ellipses" in the terminology of the Indian school) makes particularly high demands on the expertise and carefulness of the indexer. The treatment of implicit topics should be mentioned in the flowchart of the standard ISO 5963 on p. 230 and be explained in the book.

Contemporary database indexing widely suffers either from excessive pre-coordination (often being borrowed from book indexing routines) or from lack of indexing language syntax. The demand for the latter is due to the loss of concept connectivities during concept analysis and to relying too much on mere post-coordination. Since both of these deficiencies result in large and incessantly decreasing recall and precision ratios, and since the survival power of informa-

50

Knowl. Org. 24(1997)No.1
Book Reviews

tion systems (and, eventually, their justification) may crucially depend on appropriate counteraction, this problem should be made mention of, too, in a specific section of the book in a future edition.

The book is a must for everyone who creates, judges, and finances indexes. It is written in a vivid style, is endowed with many convincing and appropriate examples, and displays a sense of humor. The reader will be absorbed by its contents and again and again will encounter the unexpected – for example, the peculiarities of names in various foreign languages or the history of the alphabet. After this experience the reader will be motivated to read the book in its entirety, literally from A-Z!

Robert Fugmann

Dr. Robert Fugmann, Alte Poststrasse 13, D-65510 Idstein, Germany

Short Notices

GALINSKI, Christian; GOEBEL, J. W.: **Guide to Terminology Agreements**. Vienna, Austria: TermNet 1996, 48p, ISBN 3-901010-18-1.

This publication is issued in the ELRA Resource series with its purpose clearly stated in its title. It is a well-taken attempt to bring some method and light into the maze of copyright, particularly intricate for the world of terminology.

It starts with a call for comments and suggested changes, followed by an explanation of how to use the guide. Then Part 1 gives detailed information on what to include in terminology agreements, showing the possible contents of different clauses, 18 points in all. Part 2 shows the contents of the *Code of Good Practice for Copyright in Terminology*. Part 3 covers a glossary of terms like "copyright holder", "data usage", "originator" etc. Part 4 contains a short 11-item bibliography and Part 5 an index of key-terms. An appendix reproduces the integral text of *Directive 96-9-EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on the Legal Protection of Databases*. The last page gives information on ELRA.

This guide is an excellent initiative by INFOTERM to serve whoever needs advice on copyright issues in relation to terminology dissemination.

Herbert Eisele

Dr. Herbert Eisele, 27, rue Galliani, F-92100 Boulogne, France.

HUBER, Jeffrey T.; GILLASPY, Mary L.: **HIV/AIDS and HIV/AIDS-Related Terminology: A Means of Organizing the Body of Knowledge**. New York, London: Haworth Press 1996. IX, 107p., ISBN 1-56024-970-6.

This book is "intended for use by individuals in any arena concerned with the creation, collection, organization, management, or dissemination of HIV/AIDS-related information and materials" (p.3). The main section is a structured vocabulary, arranged hierarchically (*not* a thesaurus), called "Domains and Headings" (p.13-72). The ten domains, trying to represent the "complex, cross-disciplinary nature of the disease" (p.1), are called "Generalities", "Epidemiology and Transmission", "Education and Prevention", "Clinical Manifestations of HIV: Complications, Malignancies, and Infections Associated with AIDS", "Treatments and Therapies: Medical Management of HIV Disease", "Psychosocial and Religious Issues, Case Management", "Legal, Ethical, Economic, Political Aspects", "Organizations, Funding Opportunities, and Health Policy", "Fine Arts", "Belles Lettres and Nonfiction". There are also "Universal Subdivisions" (p.73-82), "designed to be applied as needed to headings to facilitate access to the information" (p.3): "Age Ranges", "Sexual Orientation", "Gender", "Stages of Infection", "Ethnic Groups", "Geographic Names", "At-Risk Populations", "Religious Faiths", "Signs and Symptoms", "Special Populations". An alphabetical index (p.83-107) refers to "the appropriate term and its respective placement in the hierarchy" (p.5). Terms from universal subdivisions are excluded from the index.

Werner Bies

Dr. Werner Bies, Forststr. 52, D-12163 Berlin, Germany.