

Introduction

The conference entitled "Tools for Knowledge Organization and the Human Interface", Darmstadt, 14-17 Aug.1990, was organized in four parts:

- A "Introduction",
- B "Knowledge Organization: Bases and Systems",
- C "Retrieval and Applied Classification", and
- D "Conference Synthesis".

The first of the two proceedings volumes contains those of the papers from parts B and C that were available in time and could be printed in the form as submitted by July 14, 1990. It includes, however, also the abstracts which were provided by those authors who could not, for some reason, send their papers early enough. These abstracts should give some idea of what an author intends to speak about during the conference. Their papers will be included in Vol.2 together with the documentation of parts A and D, the introductory and closing sessions of the conference.

With Vol.1 available before the conference the audience will - on the one hand - have a valuable help for easier understanding, especially taking into account that the mother tongue of most of the participants is not the English one and the authors - on the other hand - will be able to refer to their texts and may select for oral presentation only what they deem most necessary in their short speaking time during the 12 parallel running workshops, three at a time. However, the rather great hurry in which this first volume had to be compiled, in order that it may serve this purpose, has left its traces in some of the contributions and their editing.

The conference theme is reflected in various ways in the papers. Some of the authors for instance stressed the necessity of an improved conceptual `t r a n s p a r e n c y` of information work. Transparency is important in the presentation of knowledge for its easier understanding as well as in its further processing and its retrieval for an information searcher. He might like to know on which intertwined and loss involving paths the information has reached him, as one cannot recognize afterwards, how much of its amount has been lost on its way to the user or how much has not been brought onto the way at all. If one would know this, it would be easier to assess with what kind of losses one has to reckon and what is in fact the distortion resulting from this. From such an insight the value of the rest of information received can be better assessed. Under these circumstances there must be a greater readiness to support with more conviction all approaches for an im-

provement of this situation. The problem of transparency is also encountered in the new direction of hypermedia to which some of the papers are devoted.

The discussion of the capabilities and limitations of algorithmic procedures in information processing, as compared with the procedures of intellectual subject analysis constitutes another core topic of the conference. It serves the progress in our field, if the pros and contras of such procedures will be looked at with more sobriety, in order that future efforts can concentrate on success promising procedures. It is the Society's basic philosophy to consider any word recognition only as an auxiliary step and that the genuine task in information supply lies in the recognition of meaning. So far, algorithmic procedures have not shown to provide realistic solutions. Nevertheless, algorithms can excellently support the expert in his other information activities. This is presented in a number of papers on computer supported classification and retrieval, especially in library science and will also become the topic of the introductory panel discussion.

The practical significance of just these topics has been recognized also by combining the conference with two preceding seminars on "Thesaurus Software" and "Intelligent Interfaces for Subject Access in Libraries" as well as one preconference of the Society for Conceptual and Contents Analysis by Computer (SCCAC). The contributions of these events are to be published in INTERNATIONAL CLASSIFICATION to the extent possible.

The first ISKO Conference offers altogether 60 papers (10 plenary lectures and 50 workshop contributions) from very different sections of knowledge organization thus giving an impression of the broad range of the field's theoretical bases and practical applications. In this volume, the 10 plenary papers precede the workshop papers which are arranged following the conference program.

The conference was co-sponsored by the German Documentation Society's Committee on Classification and Thesaurus Research, the German ISKO Chapter and the Committee on Classification Research of the Fédération Internationale d'Information et de Documentation, FID/CR. Substantial grants received from the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, the Hessische Ministerium für Wissenschaft und Kunst, the Gesellschaft für Mathematik und Datenverarbeitung (GMD/PTF), and the Deutsche Stiftung für Internationale Entwicklung are gratefully acknowledged.

The editor expresses his cordial thanks on behalf of the Society to all authors who not only contributed but also shaped and enriched the conference by their excellent work!

Robert Fugmann