

International UDC Seminar 2011 “Classification and Ontology”: a report

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With three successful conferences behind us, UDC Seminars have now become a regular and internationally recognized event. Although entitled “UDC Seminars”, the conference themes are selected for UDC and non-UDC audiences alike, tackling issues and topics that bridge the knowledge organization domain, bibliographic control and web development. A particular strength of the 2009 and 2011 Seminar programmes was that they accommodated various classification systems in different application environments while focusing on particular issues and concerns that are shared between communities of practitioners and researchers.

The last UDC International Seminar “Classification & Ontology: Formal Approaches and Access to Knowledge” took place on 19-20 September 2011 in the National Library of the Netherlands. The Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) provided a grant that helped with the programme execution. The National Library sponsored the conference by providing the excellent venue. The conference theme was formulated as to promote collaboration and exchange of expertise between the bibliographic, semantic web and AI domains.

The event was well attended and well received. There were in total 141 delegates from 30 countries across Europe, Asia, North America, South America and Australia in attendance. The keynote address by Prof. Patrick Hayes, from the Institute for Human & Machine Cognition (Florida, USA) and one of the developers of web ontology standards, opened a two-day programme consisting of 21 talks and two poster presentations. Talks were organized into 7 sessions reflecting the various contexts in which classification and ontology intersect. The programme covering topics that spanned technology, bibliographic control, knowledge organization and philosophy were very much academic and research orientated.

On the first day, the keynote address provided an insight into both the strength and fragility of formal ontologies when representing meaning in real life situations. Even basic assertions that something is the same or different can be ambiguous. Nevertheless, logic and formal ontologies are powerful tools in representing complex information and the question remains when and if intricate solutions are needed or indeed feasible to deploy on the web. The talks that followed in the first session illustrated pragmatic and forward looking views and approaches to formalisation of meaning, more in tune with the Web environment which is less ambitious when it comes to refinements but more powerful in scale and more capable of achieving the necessary level of compromise we need for the Web to work. One message that can be taken from the first day of talks is that the Web is open and waiting to embrace all that can be expressed and processed as meaning. A number of speakers stressed the urgency for knowledge classification schemes to be published as linked data if the information value embedded in these systems is to be exploited in a web context. The emphasis here was on possibilities, opportunities and experiments in research environments. The second day speakers exposed more of the intricacies of conceptual structures of classifications, particularities of logic by which concepts can be analysed, organized, subsumed or related in order to present information. This approach is not always compatible with web ontology standards such as, for example, SKOS, that support simpler terminology structures. Presentations about particular schemes illustrated that classifications may indeed require more thought with regards to data modelling should they be used in conjunction with semantic technologies. However, we then also heard about the limitations of existing web ontology standards in expressing semantics, which seem to be unsuited to the semantic complexity typical of

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knowledge classifications. The entire scenario of linking legacy collections of documents and the Web with the help of bibliographic classification was, overall, vaguely touched upon. The panel discussion at the end of the conference confirmed that all the issues addressed at the conference are very much ongoing developments with solutions emerging gradually. The panel commended the conference for providing the opportunity for different parties to meet and talk about their specific focus and concerns.

Although the majority of speakers were academics and researchers renowned for their work in the field, many had substantial practical experience working with classification applications, web technology and terminology design and a keen interest in classification and its full recognition in the Web environment. This enabled a lively discussion and useful exchange between speakers and audience. The programme contained many well known names and attracted delegates from a wide range of specialities: software developers, web developers, web ontology standards implementors, librarians and researchers, which created excellent networking opportunities.

Following the conference we collected feedback via a small online survey and received answers from over 40 delegates with very complimentary remarks regarding the organization, programme and the execution of the event. As organizers we are particularly pleased that the proceedings were published by Ergon Verlag, on time for the conference and that the audio recordings and slides of all talks were published immediately after the conference and are easily accessible for all those who were not able to attend.

Reports and reviews of the conference programme were published in *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly* vol. 50, no. 2/3, *IFLA Classification and Indexing Newsletter*, 44(2011), *Knowledge Organization* vol. 39 and various weblogs and newsletters.

Proceedings of the International UDC Seminar 2011 published by Ergon Verlag can be ordered and purchased online from <http://seminar.udcc.org/2011/php/proceedings.php>

Outputs (slides and audio recordings) are available at <http://seminar.udcc.org/2011/programme.htm>

The next UDC Seminar 2013

The International UDC Seminar 2013 will take place in The Hague, on 24-25 October 2013 and will have a theme related to knowledge visualisation, navigation of conceptual structures, classification schemes interfaces and display. The conference programme committee will be formed in July and the the precise focus and the title will be decided by August 2012. The first call for papers will follow shortly thereafter.

References:

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Slavic, A.; Civallero, E. (eds.) *Classification & Ontology: Formal Approaches and Access to Knowledge: Proceedings of the International UDC Seminar, 19-20 September 2011, The Hague, The Netherlands.* Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2011.

UDC Editorial Workshop, The Hague, 21 September 2011: a report

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Abstract: UDC Editorial Workshop is a meeting of the UDC Editors and UDC Advisory Board and invited guests. The 2011 workshop took place on 21 September 2011, in the Koninklijke Bibliotheek in The Hague and was attended by twenty participants. The focus of the workshop was on the structural issues of the UDC scheme, in particular with respect to the ongoing faceting of the scheme and the way in which this influences the UDC content revision process. The History of the Archive Classifications

The UDC Editorial Workshop 2011 took place on 21 September in The Hague in conjunction with the UDC International Seminar "Classification & Ontology: Formal Approaches and Access to Knowledge", 19-20 September 2011. This one-day workshop in the Koninklijke Bibliotheek, is the second such meeting organized for the members of the UDC Editorial Team and the UDC Advisory Board. The previous in October 2009, was called "The Round Table "UDC Editorial Perspectives", the report on which has been published in the E&C 31 (2009).

The meeting was attended by 20 editors, members of the UDC Advisory Board and guests: Marie Balíková (Czech Republic), Miguel Benito (Spain), Vanda Broughton (UK), Andrew Buxton (UK), Edgardo Civalero (Spain), Ingetraut Dahlberg (Germany), Sylvie Davies (UK), Victoria Frâncu (Romania), Claudio Gnoli (Italy), Agnes Hajdu Barat (Hungary), Alan Hopkinson (UK), Ia C. Mcllwaine (UK), Joan Mitchell (USA), Sirje Nilbe (Estonia), Jiri Pika (Switzerland), Gerhard Riesthuis (Netherlands), Darija Rozman (Slovenia), Andrea Scharnhorst (Netherlands), Aida Slavic (UK) and Nancy Williamson (Canada).

The work on UDC is conducted through distance cooperation using available online communication tools and telephone calls as well as email correspondence. Face-to-face meetings of the entire team are rare and the biennial UDC Seminar which is normally attended by the majority of editors and advisory board members provides an ideal opportunity to meet. Because of the fact that it followed two days of a very dense and demanding conference programme the intention was to make this meeting less formal in structure and presentation to allow for free discussion.

There are many issues in the revision and the development of the scheme that are passed from generation to generation of editors and on which there is no clear consensus and no written policy. For instance, we do not have anything recorded on the pace and sequence of revision plans, whether it is to deal with the vacant class 4 or with rules and procedures in removing enumeration and duplication from the scheme. We are lacking a clear instruction policy on class structure in terms of presentation of facets, special auxiliaries, and of pre-combined classes. These are decisions without which the revision of, for instance, medicine and philosophy cannot proceed. Specifically, we need clear principles for the use of special auxiliary symbols so that we can adjust the database to impose control and enable management of different level of auxiliaries. Since 2010 the editorial team has been collecting and recording rules for schedule presentations but we now find that there are many general issues that need to be more openly discussed, such as the use of parallel divisions and the number of examples of combinations included in the schedule.

Having all this in mind, the objective of the workshop was primarily to enable free and informal exchange of ideas. Several presentations were invited to help initiate and focus the discussion. A. Slavic, the editor-in-chief opened the workshop with the overview of UDC editorial projects and UDC content development in 2010/2011.

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Edgardo Civallero, associate editor, presented the plan and the most important issues of the Biology revision project with examples from recent work in the taxonomy of animals, class Vertebrates. He then presented briefly his proposal for the revision of indigenous African languages. Edgardo's presentation was followed by a discussion on the wider problem of ever-changing animal taxonomies and the problem of coordinating different structures.

The guest at the meeting was Joan Mitchell, the editor-in-chief of Dewey Decimal Classification. She presented the recently revised DDC Religion class which drew some of the solutions applied in the revision of UDC Religion class in 2000. In order to avoid disturbances in the previously used classes, DDC has made provision for an alternative arrangement of classes which can be browsed in real library setting on personal mobile devices i.e. using Quick Response code and smart phone technology.

Claudio Gnoli, associate editor, spoke about the second phase of the UDC Philosophy revision project which he is leading. Claudio's concerns are indeed linked to the lack of clear guidance on how to present faceted schedules. In his work on philosophy he is trying to follow the pattern of facet presentation introduced in the class 2 Religion by Vanda Broughton. Nevertheless, there are different ways in which one can introduce facets and enable facet combination. The main issue is that some concepts which need to be combined and re-used within the field of philosophy actually reside in facets outside the field of philosophy (e.g. place and time auxiliaries or other main numbers in special philosophies). These need to be introduced in such a way that the sequence of philosophy facets within a classmark is not disturbed. The problem of faceted presentation of schedules introduced by Claudio was then further emphasised in the presentation on progress in the revision of Medicine, presented by UDC editors Nancy Williamson and la C. McIlwaine. The topic on the faceting of UDC was then discussed in more details following the presentation by Vanda Broughton on Facet analysis in BC2 and possibilities of application to UDC. As the day closed to an end Marie Balíková, the editor and member of the UDC Executive Committee, presented the UDC translation database which the National Library of the Czech Republic is using to prepare the next Czech edition.

Although we planned to hear more about the standard pocket edition and UDC Summary, it came a point when we had exhausted our allocated time on discussing details of structure, faceting and organization and presentation of concepts in general, which was the primary goal anyway. Even though we all regularly communicate via email the intensity and openness of the discussion at the face-to-face meeting provided much needed interactions and much quicker and efficient exchange of ideas. This was particularly beneficial for new members such as myself. No doubt this meeting has provided to the editorial team many thoughts to build upon.

References:

Slavic, A. The round table "UDC editorial perspectives": a report. *Extensions and Corrections to the UDC*, 31 (2009), pp. 19-23. Also available at: <http://hdl.handle.net/10150/118425>