

UDC Seminar 2009: an overview

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UDC Seminars' background

Following the first UDC Seminar that took place on 4-5 June 2007, the proceedings of which are published as an annex to *Extensions and Corrections to the UDC 29 (2007)*, it is with great pleasure that we now introduce the proceedings of the second in the series of what are now biennial UDC conferences.

These conferences are organized by the UDC Consortium and their titles honour the first two international UDC Seminars that took place in 1968 and 1970, in Copenhagen and Frankfurt respectively. We often refer to the first two as the 'famous UDC seminars' as they were the first to address the issues of classification use online, ahead of their time and pushing at the boundaries of research. The Copenhagen and Frankfurt seminars left their mark on classification research for decades. In many ways they represent a milestone in the evolution of library classification and they brought awareness of the role bibliographic classifications could play in the world of computers and online retrieval. The first event, from 1968, entitled *First Seminar on UDC in a Mechanized Retrieval System* was conducted by Robert Freeman and Pauline Atherton (now Cochrane) who presented not only their implementation of UDC in a mechanized retrieval system but suggested the following steps for the future: improvement of the theory of the use of UDC; preparation and publication of more editions; developments of standard machine-readable cataloguing information and efforts towards having UDC included in both experimental and operational systems; enlisting the support of large number of users in the maintenance of the schedules; continuing exploration of the use of UDC as a switching tool in international information systems; and investigation of the possibility of a concordance between UDC and thesauri. The seminar was exhorted by the participants as "WIN with the UDC", W-I-N being an acronym for World Information Network (see Proceedings of First Seminar on UDC.... 1968).

The Frankfurt conference that followed in 1970 brought presentations from a number of operational systems, using UDC in the SDI and IR service, e.g. automation of the UDC-based Boreal Institute Library in Edmonton, Canada; the planned new Bibliothèque des Halles in Paris; the Research Centre systems within the General Steels Division of the British Steel Corporation in Scotland etc. It contained papers and discussions on the potential role of UDC in combination with thesauri, descriptor lists and indexes of KWIC and KWOC types. But the Frankfurt seminar will probably be remembered for the proposals by Helmut Arntz for the reform and reconstruction of the UDC based on free facets and even more so by the seminal research by Ingetraut Dahlberg. Dahlberg proposed a very detailed and comprehensive framework for the reorganization of the UDC on the principle of facet analysis and the simplification of the scheme with respect to the general categories, the symbols used and the rules for syntagmatic organization taking into account the implications of computer technology with possible changes in the layout and editions of a new UDC.

When organizing the 2009 Seminar, we were both humbled and inspired by the quality and significance of the first two seminars and our desire was to bring UDC again to the fore-front of classification and information retrieval development. With the Web, and especially the web

of linked data, the prospects of classifications' applications are changing again and we regret that neither Pauline Cochrane nor Ingetraut Dahlberg were able to attend our conference to be present at yet another milestone for bibliographic classification. However, we received the warmest wishes for the success of our conference from both of them.

Conference

The International UDC Seminar 2009 "Classification at a Crossroads - multiple directions to usability" took place in the Koninklijke Bibliotheek in The Hague on 29-30 October 2009. It was a truly international event as it attracted 135 delegates from 32 countries comprising librarians, LIS lecturers, researchers, information consultants, Web technologists and indexing specialists. Koninklijke Bibliotheek proved to be an excellent venue not least because of the library's proximity to the Central station, which is frequented by trains from Amsterdam airport every thirty minutes, but also because The Hague is a very pleasant city for walks, informal dining and museum visits. The conference room provided by the co-organizer, The Koninklijke Bibliotheek, was equipped to a high standard and supported by very professional library staff. The entire conference was recorded and we also had a small exhibition space to show and sell UDC editions. Ergon Verlag had a stand selling books from their *Advances in Knowledge organization* series and EmeraldInsight also had an exhibition stand. Although two days was a relatively short time, the conference offered an opportunity for networking and exchanging ideas about future projects.

The UDC Seminar 2009 was opened by the UDC Consortium chairman Alan Hopkinson who thanked the organizing team and welcomed speakers and delegates. Perry Morree of the Koninklijke Bibliotheek greeted the conference on behalf of the hosting institution.

Programme

The conference focused on technological aspects of using, sharing and accessing classification schemes in an online environment. The programme consisted of 22 talks covering various applications of classification and addressed general issues of the role of classification in information discovery. The potential of classification in the context of new web standards, semantic technologies or, as is nowadays more frequently termed, a 'linked data' environment, was explored. Talks were organized into six sessions: Classifying Web resources (chair by Wouter Schallier); Classification and thesauri (chaired by Gerhard Riesthuis); Classification frameworks, concepts, structure and relationships (chaired by Peter Ohly); Classification and the Semantic Web (chaired by Dagobert Soergel); New approaches to classification (chaired by Vanda Broughton) and Classification in library networks (chaired by Ia McIlwaine).

Highlights of the conference were the two keynote addresses by Professor Dagobert Soergel (University of Maryland), a well known expert in indexing and information retrieval and by Dan Brickley (Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam), a World Wide Web standards developer, technologist and researcher. Professor Soergel opened the first day of the conference with a well thought-out and informative overview of information seeking scenarios which raise the need for classificatory knowledge structures. Using an abundance of examples he illustrated how classification can help disambiguate and instruct users, and demonstrated its potential within software-based solutions to improve semantic search expansion in information retrieval. Opening the second day, Dan Brickley's talk took the viewpoint of a proverbial 'crossroads' and provided in his own words a "webby perspective on subject classification and its place in the World Wide Web". He

gave a broader picture of the Web information space, its dynamics and the driving philosophy behind it, explaining what we can learn from the short history of the Web and how this applies to classification. According to Dan, the value and future of classification schemes will depend on their openness in terms of sharing classification expertise outside the bibliographic domain as well as providing access to classification data using web technology standards.

Open access to classification data was a recurring topic during the conference. Jakob Voss approached the subject by comparing the idea behind Paul Otlet's Mundaneum, which gave rise to the development of UDC, to that of Wikipedia. Gordon Dunsire reinforced this idea of globalization and network sharing of resources with practical aspects and solutions for sharing, linking and using knowledge organization systems in the networked environment. Ceri Binding, Devika Madalli and Antoine Isaac went into more detail with respect to vocabulary sharing standards, SKOS specifically, giving examples of developments in these matters and highlighting the technical issues involved.

The scope and technicalities of automatic classification applications was addressed by Anders Ardo while Linda Kerr, from Intute, gave an overview of her long experience and evolution in the policy and practice of using vocabularies in indexing web resources. Practical experiences in linking thesaurus and classification systems were discussed in three talks (Francu & Sabo, Van Doorn & Polman and Hajdu-Barat). Stella Dextre Clarke presented an update on the new ISO 25964 standard for structured vocabularies and the extent to which it deals with classifications.

While the conference was in general more concerned with technology, talks by Broughton, Gnoli and also by Boteram & Hubrich took more theoretical views on some underlying structural issues and potentials related to classification schemes. Towards the end of the conference reports were presented on research into classification interfaces (V. Osinska), classification's relation to social tagging (A. Sauperl) and shifts in the practice of using classification in the organization of physical collections (P. Cousson). Finally, the role of classification in national library and information networks was addressed by D. Rozman and M. Balikova, on national subject authority control, and R. San Segundo, on the links between classification and national subject heading systems.

The Panel discussion at the end provided an opportunity for librarians and classification developers to discuss the future and sustainability of classification schemes based on traditional publishing models. The metaphor of a crossroads seems to illustrate the situation of the library community and bibliographic model of information services. Web technology, however, is clearly going down the path of linked data with little interest in isolated systems and silos of data within any single domain. The conference showed clear evidence of the interest of the Web community in classification and how to make use of it - but little or nothing can be done until classification data is openly disclosed to software that can process them and relate them to resources on the open Web.

A dominant feature of the conference was the interactions between 'technologists' and traditional indexers and librarians who found an opportunity to discuss and exchange views in many different aspects of subject access. Very positive and enthusiastic feedback was received from both attendees and speakers, all confirming their lasting interest in subject indexing matters.

It was a great honour to serve as the programme chairs for this conference. We feel that we have fulfilled the objective - to organize an interesting, timely and outward looking meeting to foster the exchange of ideas relevant not only for the UDC but for bibliographic classifications in general. Enthused with the success of this conference we are looking forward to organizing our

next UDC Seminar in October 2011, setting UDC firmly on the path it has followed from its very creation: as a ground-breaking and leading knowledge organization system.

UDC Seminar 2009 Proceedings

The main intention of the programme committee was to revive interest in and widen the discussion of classification matters. The conference did not focus on UDC alone but rather on issues and problems facing every bibliographic classification. This was also the reason why we invited key speakers for certain topics irrespective of their desire to submit any written output. We hoped that the slides and MP3 recordings published at <http://www.udcc.org/seminar2009/programme.htm> will help all those interested in the subject. For reasons of wider dissemination we have arranged for a selection of nine conference papers to be published in the *Knowledge Organization* journal, volume 37 (2010). Regrettably, the journal's policy does not permit any pre-publication of papers and hence we were not able to reproduce any of those here. However, the full paper reference is provided next to the paper abstract where appropriate and extended abstracts were provided for three papers from that selection. We hope that these proceedings, as they are, will provide a good overview of the conference.

Past UDC Conferences

First Seminar on UDC in a Mechanized Retrieval System (1969) conducted by R. R. Freeman and P. Atherton, Copenhagen, 2th[nd]-6th September, 1968 : proceedings. Edited by R. Molgaard-Hansen, M. Rigby. Copenhagen : Danish Centre for Documentation, 1969. (FID/CR Report no 9).

Second Seminar on UDC in Mechanized Information Systems (1971) conducted by R. R. Freeman, Frankfurt, 1st-5th June, 1970 : proceedings. Edited by R. Molgaard-Hansen, M. Westring-Nielsen. Copenhagen : Danish Centre for Documentation, 1971. (FID/CR Report no 11).

International Symposium. UDC in Relation to other Indexing Languages, Herceg Novi, Yugoslavia, 28 June-1 July, 1971. Proceedings, Belgrade: Yugoslav Center for Technical and Scientific Documentation; The Hague: FID, 1972.

Proceedings of the International Seminar "Information Access for the Global Community", 4-5 June 2007, The Hague. In: *Extensions and Corrections to the UDC*, 29 (2007), pp. 159-316.