

Cat, Class and Metadata

Guest Editorial

This issue of LIM welcomes in the new decade with some changes in content of the journal. These include a new, shorter column devoted to practical library management issues and our first author is Dean Mason, of Salans, who writes about business continuity planning for the law library. We are also planning a new series on subject-specific information resources guides and are pleased that Dunstan Speight, of Berwin Leighton has written the first article on taxation sources.

We have started to commission Guest Editors, who have expertise in a particular subject area, to help with the journal and we are delighted to welcome Stella Dextre Clarke as our first Guest Editor; Stella is an expert in the field of cataloguing, classification and metadata. She is an independent consultant specialising in the design and implementation of thesauri and other knowledge organisation structures. She currently leads ISO NP 25964, the project to update and revise the international standards for thesauri. Previously she was the Convenor of the Working Group which developed BS 8723. In 2006 she won the Tony Kent Strix Award for outstanding achievement in information retrieval, in recognition for her development work on IPSV (Integrated Public Sector Vocabulary), as well as on the vocabulary standards.

She has been instrumental in identifying authors and topics for this issue and has written an article on thesaurus standards, plus our Guest Editorial....

There's life in the old cat yet...

Cataloguing and classification have been around for a very long time. The information retrieval thesaurus dates effectively from the 1960s, while the term "metadata" and the web directory taxonomy came into widespread use only in the 1990s, born of the World Wide Web. As each innovation followed the ones before, the new technology has characteristically not supplanted the old. It has simply added a new capability to the repertoire of the information professional. Hence the value to us of all of the articles in this issue. We continually need to hone our skills in all the areas discussed. At the same time though, we have new technologies to take on board.

Almost every meeting I have attended this year has been buzzing with "Linked Data", the mechanism first dreamt of by Tim Berners-Lee, for enabling the Semantic Web. For example:

- A highlight of the ISKO-UK conference¹ in June was Tom Scott's presentation, explaining how the BBC is developing websites which link up its music programmes with information on the composers and artists they feature, other recordings by the same artist, etc. The links from the sites dip in and out of

Wikipedia and MusicBrainz, since these resources are used almost like controlled vocabularies and the BBC is not scared of losing its audience in the wild, wild Web. The cost of building the underlying ontologies and using RDF has not been an issue, Tom says, since they've always needed to put together the programme information and this method is proving more economical than its predecessors.

- The UDC conference² in October persuaded all comers that a great but financially challenged classification scheme will do better when exposed free of charge on the Web (in a linked way, of course), than by demanding high prices from users. The 2,000 "core" classes at the top of the UDC will soon be published on the Web using SKOS (the W3C standard for publishing Simple Knowledge Organization Systems). This will enable applications such as linkage from each class to the corresponding items in cooperating library catalogues, which can in turn link the items to information about their authors, etc. The Library of Congress is ahead of them, with their Subject Headings (LCSH)³ already online in SKOS. The basic principle behind the linkage mechanism is simple: give every class or heading its own dereferenceable URI, and the rest follows easily.
- The Semantic Web track at the Online Information meeting in December provided another three days of immersion. Under the spotlight was OPSI (Office of Public Sector Information), which together with the COI (Central Office of Information) is leading the way on government activities to demonstrate the power of information in general and Linked Data in particular. As the government's Power of Information Taskforce has reported⁴, "The Ordnance Survey is fundamental to delivering the power of information for the economy and society.... Maps are an easy to understand way of presenting complex information but, until recently, creating tools for presenting information on maps was very difficult and expensive to do." Now that the public imagination is stirred by demonstrations such as Edubase⁵, making it easy to research schools by location, the heat is on the Ordnance Survey to relax its copyright stranglehold and free up access to the nation's prime geographical datasets. All the while Number 10 is listening, funding will flow and we can expect more liberation and linkage of information in imaginative products and services.

Tim Berners-Lee's widely cited 2001 article⁶ in *Scientific American* led to much over-hyping of the Semantic Web and by now expectations have calmed down greatly. But the Linked Data movement has been advancing steadily. It now seems unstoppable and shortly will be energising screens not far from you, in-house as well as externally.

This does not mean that the more traditional ways of organising information are displaced. Linked data works hand in hand with structured datasets, the traditional preserve of the information profession. We just have to apply some extra skills and discipline as we develop and maintain them. The articles in this issue show the continuing need for all the techniques we affectionately term "Cat & Class", such as classification, indexing, metadata and controlled vocabularies. Even the art of composing a good title is still vital, as Derek Sturdy's article explains.

Semantic Web technologies need to be deployed as well as the traditional techniques, not instead of them. The key to the success of our profession lies in striking the right balance, as we mix the old with the new.

Stella Dextre Clarke

Editor's Note

I am indebted to Stella for her help in putting this issue together. I would also like to thank all our authors who have produced some in-depth articles on the topic and represent many different view points – from Derek Sturdy's thesis that taxonomies are dead in the electronic age to Vanda Broughton explaining how the Bliss classification is being turned into a thesaurus for use electronically. Martin Jones from Advice Services Alliance, Katherine Dawson from Citizens Advice and Liz Marley from the House of Commons Library all explain how they use taxonomies and thesauri on their websites and to control their information.

Guy Holborn is our legal cataloguing expert and he provides helpful hints for cataloguing legal materials. Catherine O'Sullivan from Norton Rose explains how a large law firm has implemented the Moys Classification Scheme, which is currently under review by BIALL with a view to publishing a new edition.

Footnotes

¹<http://www.iskouk.org/conf2009/proceedings.htm>

²<http://www.udcc.org/seminar2009/programme.htm>

³<http://id.loc.gov/authorities/>

⁴<http://poit.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/poit/>

⁵<http://www.edubase.gov.uk/home.xhtml>

⁶<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=the-semantic-web>

We have contributions from Australia with Glenda Browne describing methods of indexing for free legal resources on the web and, vicariously from Canada, John Furlong has sent in an interesting report of the CALL/ACBD Conference, focussing on the topic of internet literacy, or "neteracy" for lawyers.

Our Current Topics section includes an article from Jennifer Smith, who was a law librarian until recently. She writes about the importance of information security and gives advice on how to implement security measures within your information service.

Pam Wolffsohn from Nabarro, who co-presented the pre-Conference Seminar in 2009 with Victoria Jannetta, has produced a timely and practical guide to managing an information service in these credit-crunch days and Katie Woolf, previously from the National Archives, has written a critique of the government paper, *Information Matters*, on exploiting information and knowledge within the public services.

The Editorial Board is very pleased to welcome two new members, Julie Keys and Dunstan Speight, who both work for law firms in London. Dunstan has already been pressed into action and has kindly written the first article in our new Subject Resource Guides column, featuring resources for corporate taxation.

Integrating Legal Research Skills into the Curriculum and into Life

Alison Pope

doi:10.1017/S147266960999048X, Published by Cambridge University Press, 9.4 December 2009.

In *Legal Information Management* Vol. 9, No. 4, page no. 246, we featured an article by Alison Pope. Please note the following erratum nine lines down under the second section of that article "User survey". The text should read:

"Working alongside the ELS3 module leader, Kara Johnson, we analysed the 2007/08 feedback and discovered two major recurring themes."