Complaints about the BL

Inigo Thomas is too kind to the British Library (*LRB*, 25 April). The architectural problems aren't limited to the exterior. They're even worse in the reading rooms themselves, where the open-plan layout allows all the noise in the service areas – bleeping from electronic scanners, ringing telephones, fax machines, conversations between staff and readers etc – to go straight out into the reading areas, causing constant distraction and irritation. ... Still more upsetting is the grossly defective digital catalogue. It not only fails to incorporate the printed subject indexes from the pre-digital period – a major omission – but inexcusably fails to inform readers of that omission. This has deprived unwitting readers of thousands of relevant references and caused serious damage to their research.

James Obelkevich, letter, *London Review of Books*, 23 May 2013

Count Harry's diaries

The density of [Count Harry Kessler's] social connections – in three countries – accounts in part for the vast scale of the diaries. The Deutsches Literaturarchiv in Marbach has so far published eight volumes of them, beautifully edited and accompanied by excellent indexes and notes, roughly eight thousand pages of text and back matter. (Volume I, the volume Kessler wrote in English, has yet to appear.) Laird Easton, who published a biography of Kessler in 2006, has worked with the Deutsches Archiv and made a single-volume selection of entries from 1880 to 1918 [*Journey to the abyss: the diaries of Count Harry Kessler, 1880-1918*, Knopf, 2011].

Jonathan Steinberg, `The man who knew everybody', *London Review of Books*, 23 May 2013

An orderly system

Henry tutted and shook his head. 'One can never *find* anything, that's the problem.'

'Really?' said Mark. Thoughtful. Very thoughtful. 'No, I can see you wouldn't be able to. Interesting.'

Over the next half an hour or so Mark assessed the potential. He displayed a constructive interest in Henry's papers: 'Of course with proper cataloguing ... if you had a comprehensive index, then retrieval of any specific item would be simple ... an orderly system could help your own approach to the memoirs.'

'Quite,' said Henry helplessly. 'Quite so.'

'If I could assist in any way ... ' murmured Mark.

Penelope Lively, *How it all began* (Penguin, 2011)

Oops ...

The late Tory MP and lothario Alan Clark would have greeted Charles Moore's authorised life of Margaret Thatcher [Allen Lane, 2013] with a wry smile. He often complained in his later diaries that he was the only Conservative Minister of his generation not rewarded with a title on retirement.

'I have simply been bypassed,' Clark wrote at the time of the 1995 New Year's honours, blaming his exotic private life.

But where Lady Thatcher and John Major failed him, Charles Moore has triumphed. Like most politicians of the period, Clark would have looked himself up in the index. And that's when the smile would have crossed his face. And there he is – listed as Sir Alan Clark.

'Londoner's Diary', *Evening Standard*, 29 April 2013

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Contributions of review extracts welcomed by the editor of this section, Christine Shuttleworth (please see inside front cover for further details).

Reviews

Edited by Christopher Phipps and Michael E. Jackson

ISO 25964-2 Information and documentation – Thesauri and interoperability with other vocabularies – Part 2: Interoperability with other vocabularies. Geneva: International Organization for Standardization, 2013. 99 pp. CHF 196.00

In the June 2012 issue of *The Indexer* (**30**(2): 109 –10) I reviewed the standard ISO 25964-1:2011 *Information and documentation –Thesauri and interoperability with other vocabularies – Part 1: Thesauri for information retrieval*. Now, a year and a half after the first part was released, the second part, ISO 25964-2:2013 Part 2: *Interoperability with other vocabularies*, has been published.

For some background, Part 1: *Thesauri for information retrieval* provides comprehensive guidelines on how to design thesauri of terms used for indexing and retrieving multiple documents, articles, pages, files, and so on. While not used for single-volume back-of-the-book indexing, thesauri are important tools for indexing multiple-volume reference works, periodical literature, and other forms of content in database indexing, in order to ensure consistency. ISO 25964-1 (Part 1) is also published as a British Standard, BS ISO 25964-1:2011, and it has considerable overlapping content with the US standard ANSI/NISO Z 39.19-2005 (2010 revision) *Guidelines for the Construction, Format, and Management of Monolingual Controlled Vocabularies*. ISO 25964-1 (Part 1) differs from ANSI/NISO Z 39.19-2005 in two regards. First, it covers multilingual thesauri, whereas ANSI/NISO Z 39.19 covers only those in English, and second, it covers only thesauri, whereas ANSI/NISO Z 39.19 covers other

types of controlled vocabularies. Thus, ISO 25964-2 (Part 2), which is also published as the British Standard BS ISO 25964-2:2013, completes the treatment of controlled vocabularies, where Part 1 left off, by covering types of vocabularies other than thesauri. Yet it also goes beyond ANSI/NISO Z 39.19 by additionally addressing interoperability between different kinds of vocabularies.

A controlled vocabulary is any kind of managed list of terms intended for indexing, with each term representing a single concept. Only terms in the controlled vocabulary may be used for indexing, and there are certain policies or procedures for adding any new terms to the controlled vocabulary. That is what makes it 'controlled.' While short controlled vocabularies do not need any cross-references from a 'nonpreferred' variant term to a 'preferred' term, longer controlled vocabularies do utilize nonpreferred terms to point the user to the preferred term. A thesaurus is a more structured kind of controlled vocabulary. In addition to the feature of nonpreferred terms pointing to preferred terms, thesauri also have relationships between the preferred terms, either hierarchical, as broader/narrower terms, or associative, as 'related' terms. Thesauri are what are most often used by professional indexers to provide a consistent use of indexing terms when indexing multiple documents over a longer period of time and/or when multiple indexers are involved.

The scope of ISO 25964-2 includes guidance on inter-vocabulary interoperability and in particular the 'mapping' between two vocabularies so that one may be used with or for another. It also provides descriptions of various vocabularies other than thesauri, namely: classification schemes, taxonomies, subject headings, ontologies, terminologies, name authority lists, and synonym rings. Thus, this volume instructs how to map vocabularies to others that may be of a similar type or of different types. The volume is roughly equally divided between chapters (or 'clauses') on mapping in general and mapping thesauri (34 pages), and chapters on each of the various vocabulary types (39 pages), which describe their characteristics and also include sections on mapping and other interoperability between those vocabularies and thesauri.

Interoperability is defined as the 'ability of two or more systems or components to exchange information and to use the information that has been exchanged.' Furthermore, 'Vocabularies can support interoperability by including mappings to other vocabularies, by presenting data in standard formats and by using systems that support common computer protocols.' (p. 7) While Part 1 describes the requirement of interoperability for a thesaurus, it does not go into details on how to achieve this, as Part 2 does.

Mapping is the 'process of establishing relationships between the concepts of one vocabulary and those of another' (p. 7). The concepts could be called terms, categories, classes, labels, or names, depending on the type of vocabulary. I have done mapping of vocabularies before, but have never read guidelines on how to do it, so I found this very interesting. I had only done mapping between two vocabularies, not more than two at once, but methods and models for mapping multiple vocabularies to each other are also explained. The different types of mapping are presented with examples for each, such as simple equivalence, compound equivalence (both intersecting and cumulative), hierarchical, associative, exact, inexact, and partial mappings. In addition to examples of term pair mappings, the text also provides examples of mapping implementation situations. Finally, the sections on mapping discuss practicalities, such as automated methods for identifying candidate mappings and methods for storing and maintaining mappings data. The first half of the volume really deals just with mapping between thesauri (with one chapter-clause on mapping between a thesaurus and a classification scheme), and not other areas of interoperability.

The second half of the volume (there is no formal division) has chapter-clauses, with an average of five pages for each, on each of the following vocabulary types: classification schemes, records management classification schemes, taxonomies, subject headings, ontologies, terminologies, name authorities, and synonym rings. The inclusions are indeed quite comprehensive, and even go beyond the scope of controlled vocabularies. For example, it is explained that terminologies are not typically designed for indexing, so the need for vocabulary control is lacking (p. 79). Ontologies also do not always aim to provide vocabulary control (p. 73). That is why the title of this Part 2 is 'Interoperability with other vocabularies' and not with other '*controlled* vocabularies.' I appreciate that records management classification schemes are also included, because corporate records are being digitized and increasingly merged with other content in enterprise content management systems.

Each vocabulary type is systematically treated with the following sections: key characteristics and background, semantic components and relationships (often described in comparison with those of thesauri), and mapping or interoperability between it and a thesaurus. Mapping or interoperability between these different types of vocabularies, where none of which is a thesaurus, is not discussed, though. This would indeed add a level of complexity that is not needed. Each of these four sections is further broken down into consistent subsections, such as types, scope and role in information retrieval, origin and development, vocabulary control, and relationships.

Even though this is considered a 'standard', it is not all about rules, but rather includes guidelines and even recommendations. Indeed there are sections titled 'Recommendations for interoperability with a thesaurus.' Different situations and scenarios are described. As such, ISO 25964-2 is really a very useful and practical document.

In my previous review of ISO 25964-1:2011, I compared it with the US standard ANSI/NISO Z39.19 *Guidelines for the Construction, Format, and Management of Monolingual Controlled Vocabularies*. The author teams had collaborated with each other. There is in fact significant overlap between those two documents. ISO 25964-2, on the other hand, has far less overlap with ANSI/NISO Z39.19. While they both describe vocabularies other than thesauri, ANSI/NISO Z39.19 deals only with *controlled* vocabularies, which in addition to thesauri includes lists, synonym rings, and taxonomies. Furthermore, their descriptions and comparisons in ANSI/NISO Z39.19 are much briefer than the five pages for each in ISO 25964-2. ANSI/NISO Z39.19 does not include classification schemes, subject heading, ontologies, or terminologies. More significantly, the entire first half of ISO 25964-2, dealing with thesaurus mapping, is new information not contained in ANSI/NISO Z39.19 or probably anywhere else. The latter has only one subsection, less than a page, about mapping, which is part of a section of several pages on interoperability.

ISO 25964-2, like Part 1, includes a glossary of terms, notable for being at the front of the volume and not the back. In Part 2, it is 14 pages long, and while it has many of the same terms as in Part 1, it does include more, 89 terms instead of 64, despite it being the smaller of the two volumes. Other features include a bibliography and index (with locators pointing to subsection numbers, not page numbers).

Like Part 1, even though ISO 25964-2 may not be within the budget of the freelancer (at 196 Swiss Francs/£135/US$210), it should be an indispensable source within the library of any organization that manages large controlled vocabularies or for any consultant involved in a vocabulary mapping project. As more vocabularies are developed over time, the needs for mapping them to each other will increase.

Heather Hedden, taxonomy consultant and instructor