Knowledge Organization: Research Tools concerning the Bilateral Relations of Romania

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Knowledge organization and all initiatives in this area, as well as the tools developed over time for this purpose, have always been accompanied by numerous challenges. The bibliography, although among the oldest tools of knowledge organization, still proves its value, especially in the context of the quantitative developments in contemporary society and of the technological progress. This paper presents a recent initiative in the field of knowledge organization, namely a project started in 2011 at the level of the Department of Information and Documentation Sciences within the Faculty of Letters at the University of Bucharest. The project consists in a series of bibliographical tools which cover Romania's bilateral relations with different states. The three bibliographies completed to date within this series are mentioned, the paper focusing on the last appearance (the first part of the bibliography concerning the Romanian-Czech relations), on the challenges and difficulties encountered in its achievement, but also on the latest endeavour within this vast project, the initiation of the actions for developing an online tool, a platform to provide the academic and research community, as well as the general public, with a flexible, user-friendly information tool for retrieving scientific literature on Romanian-British relations, and which will contribute to the research process by facilitating access to information and orientation of research.

Keywords: knowledge organization, research tool, bibliography, bilateral relations, Romania

1. Introduction

Info-documentary structures act as intermediaries between the universe of information resources and the user community. Through the specific activities they carry out, their specialists have a decisive influence on knowledge and bring together those who seek knowledge and those who have it or they give them access to documents containing relevant knowledge. Librarians and information specialists play a key role in organizing knowledge and, according to Davenport and Prusak, in creating efficient knowledge markets[1]. In the future, their role seems to be related more to the field of knowledge engineering by constructing value-added tools for extracting and retrieving knowledge.

2. Knowledge organization and knowledge organization systems

A very old activity that preoccupied Aristotle, Bacon and other thinkers of past centuries, knowledge organization began to be addressed in a systematic manner at the end of the 19th century by librarians who had to manage large collections of documents. Facilitating the use of recorded knowledge in various formats underlies its organization, the objective of knowledge organization systems being its subsequent retrieval. According to Anderson, knowledge organization is "the description of documents, their contents, features and purposes, and the organization of these descriptions so as to make these documents and their parts accessible to persons seeking them or the messages that they contain. Knowledge

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organization encompasses every type and method of indexing, abstracting, cataloguing, classification, records management, bibliography and the creation of textual or bibliographic databases for information retrieval."[2]

Knowledge organization systems have been designed since ancient times, but their development is related to the last hundred years, with new technologies having a significant contribution to their evolution and diversification in recent decades. Today when we speak about knowledge organization systems we refer to a series of schemes, from authority files to classification schemes, thesauri and ontologies that all organize, manage, and retrieve information. Hodge notes that a knowledge organization system can be considered as "a bridge between the user's information need and the material in the collection," such a system guiding the user through a discovery process[3]. Although for users it would be useful to have a single system, the probability of creating such a system is quite small.

Some systems do not organize knowledge, but documents or references about documents. Rowley identifies three areas using many of the tools of knowledge organization: catalogs and bibliographies; indexing and abstracting services; records management[4].

Knowledge organization tools can be found at all levels of intermediation of communication processes[5] and every phase in knowledge organization has its value so that all processes such as selection, organization and preservation of document collections do more than just providing access to knowledge, they add value to the knowledge stored in collections.

Considered as traditional information retrieval tools, bibliographies are added value knowledge tools. Smiraglia considers bibliography as a synergic catalyst. He notes that "Bibliographic control is an application of knowledge organization in which professionals 'control' the arrangement of certain artifacts and their intellectual content for retrieval. Resource description, subject headings and classification are the tools of bibliography exercised especially by information institutions under the rubric of bibliographic control."[6]

Despite claims that bibliography is obsolete, it is an information product with a fundamental role in knowledge organization and continues to have a key role as a research tool. Hjørland notes that currently, in the library and information science field, dominate perspectives focusing on users, technology and management and he brings arguments for what he calls "the bibliographical paradigm," that is "a perspective in library and information science focusing on documents and information resources, their description, organization, mediation and use."[7] But selecting, organizing and retrieving documents, as well as the bibliographic description must consider the needs of users.

3. A Recent Initiative: the Series of the Bibliographies concerning the Bilateral Relations of Romania

The value of knowledge organization tools, particularly of those that enable access to information and direct research activity increases, especially in the context of the information explosion and of recent developments in technology. Their value is given not just by the needs of the contemporary information world and by the quantity of information involved, but rather by the approach unity, the force of criteria and the consistency of the suitability elements[8]. These features turn them into effective and indispensable tools in any research approach. In a field such as international relations, where there are countless opportunities for cooperation, such tools are of a fundamental importance by the added value they bring at a cultural and scientific level.

Nowadays, when globalization has reached a high level, the need for maintaining cultural identity, for identity relationship and the need to emphasize the documentary reflections related to Romanians' relations with other peoples of the world are obvious.

A bibliography focused on a theme such as the bilateral relations provides a set of references on the directions, dimensions and rhythms of the mutual relations between two countries and their peoples and supports researchers who study the flows of these relations[9]. A recent example of such knowledge organization tools which meet the researchers' needs is the series of bibliographical works concerning the bilateral relations of Romania, *Relații bilateral internaționale. Bibliografii generale (RBIBG)* [International Bilateral Relations. General Bibliographies *(RBIBG)*]. This was initiated at the level of the Department of Information and Documentation Sciences from the Faculty of Letters, University of Bucharest and debuted with the Romanian-Swiss bibliography published in 2011 and continued in 2012 with the Romanian-Canadian bibliography. In 2013 I took over the coordination of this series of bibliographies and I decided to continue it with the project on the Romanian-Czech relations.

4. The Bibliography of the Romanian-Czech Relations

At the end of 2014 there was published Part I of the volume *Relații româno-cehe: bibliografie generală* [Romanian-Czech Relations: General Bibliography][10], the third book in the bibliography series dedicated to bilateral relations. Its publishing took place at a special moment for the history of the relations between the two countries: 95years since the establishment of Romanian-Czechoslovak diplomatic relations, 20 years since the signing of the Treaty on Friendly Relations and Cooperation between the Czech Republic and Romania and 80 years of teaching the Czech language at the University of Bucharest. I considered these events had to be marked by an anniversary volume which made me include, besides the bibliography, the main component

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of this book, two other sections (a section dedicated to the diplomatic level, which includes contributions of the ambassadors of the two countries, and a cultural-historical section which includes several scientific studies written by renowned Romanian and Czech philologists and historians) to illustrate the real dimension of the Romanian-Czech relations. The book was edited in a bilingual format, in Romanian and Czech, and it has a truly special nature due to the very approach of the relations between Romania and the Czech Republic, relations characterized by a significant history and constant development throughout the years. The close connections between the two countries and their peoples spread over several centuries and cover the most varied fields, from the cultural to the military and commercial one.

In the case of this bibliography, our goal was to cover all types of sources, from manuscripts to printed and online documents that can be found both in collections / databases of large libraries and info-documentary structures of Romania and the Czech Republic, such as the Romanian Academy Library, the National Library of Romania, the National Library of the Czech Republic, the Central University Library Carol I in Bucharest, the Romanian National Archives, the Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, etc., and all fields, ranging from science, culture, education, political-diplomatic relations, to economics and sports.

Part I of the book is dedicated to monographs and contributions to monographic volumes, and Part II, which is due to be published, will cover articles from periodicals and electronic documents, will include an Index of Names, as well as the documents from the archives in the Czech Republic that could not be included in the volume published in 2014.

The section dedicated to the bibliography is divided in two parts. Considering that a community is identified by territory, common destiny and language, the first part of the bibliography is dedicated to geography, history and mutual linguistic knowledge. A separate chapter of this part is dedicated to the minorities, namely the Czech from Banat and the Vlachs in the Czech Republic. The second part of the bibliography is dedicated to the Romanian-Czech relations in culture, art, science and technology, economics and politics.

The main purpose of this bibliography is to highlight the theme and to be easy to use, flexible, adapted to users. Thus, in terms of bibliographic description, as a general rule, the description of the source library was respected; in some cases the bibliographic description was adapted to the bibliographic standards in force; where appropriate, the errors were corrected tacitly. If there were important differences between the bibliographic descriptions we visited as much as possible the source document. In case of minor differences we preferred the option of the library with most accurate descriptions. In determining the heading we preferred the Czech option for Czech authors and the Romanian option for Romanian authors. The difficulties encountered refer to differences and sometimes contradictions between the bibliographic descriptions of the Collective Catalogue of the Czech Republic (SKC) / Electronic Catalogue of the National Library of the Czech Republic (NKC) and those of the Romanian libraries and contradictions between the Romanian libraries.

As regards the rules for this bibliography, we mention that the heading of the origin library was kept – for the purpose of easier retrieval; for conferences, congresses etc. the description was made to the conference title – whether or not the volume editors are specified. In case of collective volumes, for the volumes edited in Romania, the description was made at the first author (and the others till the fourth) – it is the most common practice in Romanian libraries, except where libraries did not make the description at the title; for the volumes edited in the Czech Republic, the description was made as indicated by the SKC: at the title, the first author, if the bibliographic description in the SKC indicates it as heading, followed by (et al.), irrespective of their number, which is not usually indicated in the bibliographic description / SKC. For translations, the original title was put in note if it was not part of the title information and was not repeated at the subsequent editions.

The bibliography includes Czech authors published in Romania, regardless of the language of the text; Romanian authors published in the Czech Republic (Czechoslovakia). Considering the special linguistic situation, in this case, only as an exception were Romanian authors translated into Slovak included; Czech authors who published works concerning Romania (as well), regardless of the place of publication and the language; Romanian authors who published works concerning the Czech Republic (as well), regardless of the place of publication and the language. The bibliography also includes, to the extent that they could be identified: authors of Czech origin, belonging to Romania; authors of Romanian origin, belonging to the Czech Republic. The bibliography includes: monographs, monographs in relation to the Czech Republic / Czechoslovakia published in Romania, regardless of the author and / or the language of the document; monographs, monographs in relation to Romania published in the Czech Republic (Czechoslovakia) mainly in Czech. Exceptions to these rules were introduced in separate chapters, entitled "Annex."

According to the *linguistic criterion*, there were included Romanian authors translated into Czech / Czech authors translated into Romanian or who published directly in Romanian / Czech etc., regardless of the subject, and foreign authors in relation to the subject, translated into Czech and Romanian respectively. Regarding the Czech writers of German language, a controversial issue in the Czech Republic, we chose

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to integrate them for two reasons: for the Romanian reader these authors are available almost exclusively in translation, the linguistic difference being thus blurred; secondly, in the Romanian culture, some of these authors are perceived as being "very Czechs."

According to the *publishing place criterion,* there were included authors / subject published in Romania / the Czech Republic. One of the great challenges of this work is given by the special situation of the Czech Republic. For Romania, the two criteria mentioned above are relatively clear, with only a few documents to add. But for the Czech Republic, the Czechoslovakia period (1919-1991) is very ambiguous. We tried to adapt the bibliography to the facts: where the criterion of the language barrier seemed decisive, for example, in the translation of (fiction) literature, there were not included in the main body of the bibliography the translations in Slovak; where the linguistic criterion is unimportant, for example, cartographic material, audio material, video material, they were included.

According to the *subject criterion*, there were included Czech, Romanian authors on the subject, regardless of the language or place of publication.

For this bibliography, which would have risked becoming huge, only documents that establish an explicit relationship / comparison between the two countries were selected and because it is a bibliography created particularly based on library catalogues, only those documents in libraries from Romania and / or the Czech Republic were chosen. Documents of a general character were left out.

The main authors of this bibliography worked with the excellent online catalogue of the National Library of the Czech Republic, and with the collective online catalogue of the Czech Republic and for the resources in the Romanian library, because of the lack of a Romanian general catalogue which could offer equal opportunities for information and the same user-friendly interface, they turned to research by ROLiNeST, but also to more traditional methods of data collection by collaborating with librarians from large libraries in Bucharest.

5. Future Projects within this Series

The publication by the end of 2015 of Part II of the Romanian-Czech relations bibliography will be followed in future years by the bibliographies of the Romanian-British relations, Romanian-French relations and Romanian-American relations.

Publishing the three bibliographies published so far in this series was based on the voluntary activity of the authors and contributors, but for the future we are trying to secure funding. Thus, as project director, I have already submitted a funding application to publish the next bibliography. This time it is an online tool, a platform for retrieval of the scientific literature on the Romanian-British relations (eDocRomBrit).

An online platform to support the research community in the retrieval of the scientific literature on the Romanian-British relations is justified especially given that in 2011 it was agreed to launch once again the Strategic Partnership between Romania and the UK[11], which requires a much closer cooperation in several areas. Also, in recent years Romanians have shown growing interest in the British space, and the British have become interested in Romania. At a diplomatic level, the Romanian-British relations date back to 1880. After 1989, Britain has become a close partner of Romania, with the bilateral cooperation covering a very broad and complex area of fields. In education and research, the bilateral cooperation in recent years has been based on *the Program of the Romanian Government and of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland Government for cooperation in education, science and culture, 2010-2014*[12].

One of the major challenges of the project is the very selection of the documents forming the relevant literature on the subject, namely the selection of only those documents that establish an explicit relationship / comparison between the two countries, their peoples and cultures. Great Britain is a special case, because it is composed of four countries: England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and has several subordinated dependent territories.

Enabling access to information, generally at the level of society and especially at the level of the academic community and of the scientific research field, is a priority in Romania. In this context, the project will allow the increase of the quality of research through access to a wide range of data on relevant literature on the topic of the Romanian-British relations, useful in the documentation stage and the increase of the efficiency in the documentation process through retrieval by free, fast and distance access of the information on the relevant literature.

The platform will provide free and flexible access to the documentary production which illustrates the evolution of the Romanian-British relations over time. It is important to note that there will be the possibility for further development of the platform. The technological solution resulting from this initiative will be expanded as the literature increases, but also through the connections that will be able to be made.

6. Conclusions

The project of bibliographies concerning the bilateral relations of Romania represents a unique approach. In the national documentary field there are various approaches to the bilateral relations of Romania, but they are fragmented, dealing with strictly specific matters and do not have such an extent and coverage and, most

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importantly, they do not have a bibliographical character. Most such studies cover the fields of history, economic relations, or are regroupings of documents focused on a certain time and a certain issue.

The opening provided by the bibliographic tools in this series is a large one and we hope that those involved in the study and research of the areas covered by these works, practically in all fields of knowledge and human action, will find in these bibliographies valuable support as these tools not only enable access to the literature in the area of bilateral relations of Romania, but also pave the way for a multitude of new research directions that could be explored in the future.

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