Tagungsbericht

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ISI 2015 Conference Review

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Abstract: The International Symposium of Information Science 2015 celebrated the 25th anniversary of the conference series with fruitful discussions in a lively atmosphere in Zadar, Croatia. The conference review summarizes the keynotes by Tefko Saracevic and Julianne Nyhan as well as Lyn Robinson's talk about Information Science and Digital Humanities and a selection of talks given at the pre-conference workshop "Digital humanities and the technologies of the semantic web: decolonizing description for the sake of digital humanities".

Descriptors: Meeting, Information science, Humanities, Digital, ISI 2015

Tagungsbericht ISI 2015

Zusammenfassung: Mit konstruktiven Diskussionen in lebhafter Atmosphäre feierte das Internationale Symposium der Informationswissenschaft 2015 den 25. Geburtstag der Konferenzreihe in Zadar, Kroatien. Der englischsprachige Tagungsbericht fasst die Keynotes von Tefko Saracevic und Julianne Nyhan sowie den Vortrag von Lyn Robinson und ausgewählte Beiträge des Workshops "Digital humanities and the technologies of the semantic web: decolonizing description for the sake of digital humanities" zusammen.

Deskriptoren: Tagung, Informationswissenschaft, Geisteswissenschaften, Digital, ISI 2015

Introduction

"Curtains are closed" – this unusual announcement was one of the first of the International Symposium of Informa-

tion Science (ISI) 2015 in Zadar, Croatia. Despite the tempting beauty of the shining Mediterranean Sea right in front of the windows, the audience was eagerly waiting for the conference to begin. Researchers from Europe and further afield had accepted the kind invitation from Franjo Pehar, Christian Schlögl and Christian Wolff and the Department of Information Sciences at the University of Zadar to the biannual meeting for information scientists and neighboring disciplines. Three days full of talks on a broad range of topics and engaging discussions about "Re:inventing Information Science in the Networked Society" awaited them. ISI 2015 definitively grabbed participants' attention easily: The lively conversations with colleagues from various countries, the traditionally rewarding student presentations of the aspirants for the Gerhard Lustig Award, fruitful exchanges between less and highly experienced researchers and, of course, the scientific contributions to the field of Information Science formed a great experience. Only a small selection of the research presented was chosen to be presented in this volume to highlight the contributions of ISI 2015 for the field of Digital Humanities (DH). These and all other papers of ISI 2015 can be found in the conference proceedings by Pehar et al (2015).

"Re:inventing Information Science in the Networked Society" – The Keynotes and a Plea for LIS as DH

Announcing the reinvention of information science raised high expectations. Unsurprisingly, processes of reinvention mostly go hand in hand with a certain struggle for identity. A remedy in times of struggle was suggested in Tefko Saracevic's and Julianne Nyhan's keynotes. Both advocated awareness about the disciplines' historical events and developments as a means to promote the discipline as science in its own right. The topic of reinvention was finally rounded off by Lyn Robinson's clear encouragement to conceptualize a common future for DH and LIS.

Tefko Saracevic's talk made a strong claim for the relevance of relevance. He took the audience on a journey through time, starting in the middle of the 20th century, marking historical landmarks of the notion of relevance.

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According to Saracevic, the reason for the enduring importance of relevance lies in its connection to searching. To him the concept of aboutness is more important for librarianship, whereas relevance is vital for searching and therefore for all information scientists. Saracevic stressed that even in our networked society and despite all upcoming technological changes, the notion of relevance will remain essential for information science and therefore also for Digital Humanities. Unfortunately, time constraints did not allow long discussions after keynotes. However, the audience got a short glimpse of the important schools of thinking when Nick Belkin joined the discussion after Tefko Saracevic's talk. He brought the influence the anomalous state of knowledge has on knowledge into account and argued that ASK is situation and user dependent, questioning the traditional way of relevance assessment in IR research.

Julianne Nyhan brought the pivotal work of Father Roberto Busa to attention. Her current book project aims to sum up the historic developments of Digital Humanities from 1949 to the present. Busa digitalized the ample works of Thomas of Aquin using punch cards. Even today the Index Thomisticus is crucial for scientists all over the world. From a gender perspective it is particularly interesting that mainly women have been employed for this particular type of work. Busa and his employees can serve as one example out of many scholars and workers that helped in digitalization and that should be kept in our minds when facing the future.

"Re:inventing" – this issue was also picked up by Lyn Robinson. In her view, one commonality between DH and LIS is their need to reinvent themselves in today's changing world of information use. She encouraged the two disciplines of library and information science and of digital humanities to close ranks. The benefits of a common future lie in a stronger alliance that helps in times of crisis and offers numerous new research opportunities. She modelled the two disciplines as distinct, but linked by several commonalities and similar in their overall goal to research components of the communication chain. In order to realize her vision, DH and LIS researchers and professionals are asked to embrace their changing identity. "Digital Humanists, you are all in fact librarians!" is her call towards doubting DH professionals.

"Digital humanities and the technologies of the semantic web" – Pre-conference Workshop

Re:Invention as a topic fits the pre-conference workshop equally well. The one-day workshop was dedicated to "Digital humanities and the technologies of the semantic web: decolonizing description for the sake of digital humanities" and was organized by Marijana Tomić and Manuel Burghardt. The three sessions featured a broad range of thought-provoking, stimulating talks of which we will select four in order to give an insight into the diversity of topics of these talks. Sessions 1 and 2 were focused on primary data and the use of semantic web technologies in standards and methods, whereas the 3rd session was centered on different tools.

The morning sessions were dominated by topics related to archives. Clearly, standardization plays an important role in archives. Drawing on the process of development of archival standards, Giovanni Michetti drew the attention to the lack of neutrality present in those standards. He stressed the need to acknowledge that bias cannot be avoided completely due to the way standards are built. The bias becomes all the more influential with respect to technology that is used by archives: The impact of technology on how we remember the past must be taken into account. Following the line of bias, Gregory Rolan made a strong claim for the need of descriptions which can suit different needs, particularly because archives start owning the access to documents once these are recorded. Currently, metadata standards do not enable person-related rights. This is, despite the authors own the rights of their records, they are neither granted modification nor destruction nor access control to those records. A first step to empowerment of record owners is sharing metadata between archives in order to ensure that potential users are able to learn more about records of interest.

The afternoon session featured a variety of projects and corresponding tools, including finished master and doctoral theses as well as internationally funded projects just about to start. The difficulties as well as the advantages resulting from digitization were in the focus of all talks given. Based on a tool used to visualize Shakespeare's dramas, Manuel Burghardt revealed many problems in non-standard use of markup for texts. The tool was built around the Folger Digital Text Corpus consisting of 14 Shakespeare dramas marked up according to TEI. Based on the markup, rich visualizations were implemented, e. g. which characters are simultaneously on the stage. These algorithms were applied to TextGrid Repository

texts, which use TEI as markup, too. However, annotation errors, missing structure elements, and spelling variants in character names cause difficulties in terms of using the algorithms derived. Marijana Tomić focused on the research questions that arise from digitized Croatian manuscripts, particularly on those manuscripts dating from the time when printing had been invented but manuscripts were still produced. Digital technology may enhance research on manuscripts in many ways as the number of ligatures, the size of letters etc. may be computed easily. However, the most important problem of research based on digitized manuscripts results from calibration issues. Digital images must ensure to provide equal measurements in order to be a useful tool.

Conclusion

Travelling to Zadar for ISI 2015 was definitely worth the journey. It has the potential to become a landmark in the history of the conference series. This is, it clearly shows the development of the German speaking IS community. Founded as a meeting of scientists from Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, ISI is becoming increasingly European. Combined with a stronger relationship between the ISI community and the European Chapter of ASIS&T as discussed by the panelists during ISI 2015 this will lead to a broader recognition of Information Science Research. See you next time at ISI 2017!

References

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