

International Terminology Associations and Standardization - Infoterm, TermNet, ISO/TC 37

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Introduction

Today mainly the following three institutions organise, co-ordinate and promote terminological activities all over the world: Infoterm, the International Information Centre for Terminology, TermNet, the International Network for Terminology, and ISO/TC 37, a Technical Committee (TC) of ISO, the International Organization for Standardization, which is called at present “Terminology and other language resources”, and whose secretariat is held by Infoterm on behalf of the Austrian Standards Institute.

The new conceptions of terminology have been largely developed within the framework of this group. It is widely accepted today that terminology is all over the place wherever and whenever specialised (i.e. scientific, technical or professional) knowledge that is

- communicated – e.g. in professional communication, scientific conferences, training events, etc. (in written or spoken form)
- recorded and documented – e.g. in the form of databases, specialised texts, ...
- referred to or transmitted – e.g. in the form of bibliographic or factual data as primary, secondary or tertiary information
- transformed or transferred – e.g. in education, translation, etc.

Knowledge as such exists – at least so far – only in the human brain. By means of computers and other information and communication technology (ICT) systems we can record, process, store and re-use only the representations of knowledge (which is already quite something compared to early computing in the form of number crunching). These representations can take linguistic forms (basically terminology

and other language resources, see below) or non-linguistic forms (e.g. numerical data, graphic representations, formulae etc.).

Therefore, what is called “knowledge management” in general can refer to different kinds of

- communication management
- document management
- information management

none of which can do without “content management”, which to a large degree depends on terminologies (i.e. systems of concepts represented by terms or other kinds of concept representations in digital form). Thus, over the years, a new field of research and development has emerged: terminology science, which is concerned with scientific-technical cognition (first of all with concept creation) from the systemic-epistemological point of view, with concept representation in linguistic and non-linguistic form, and with methods and tools to manage terminological data.

The latter also comprises the application of classification schemes and other documentation languages to terminological data (e.g. for the sake of structuring terminological records in a terminology database). On the other hand, terms serve as keywords to be assigned to texts, factual data, bibliographic records etc. in library and documentation systems. So, there is a close relationship between terminology and documentation (T&D) in content management. Terminological data proper are largely primary information on the knowledge items called concepts.

INFOTERM – International Information Centre for Terminology

<http://linux.infoterm.org>

Infoterm, the International Information Centre for Terminology, was founded in 1971 by UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, with the objective to support and co-ordinate international co-operation in the field of terminology. During the first ten years of its existence, Infoterm mainly worked within the Austrian Standards Institute, concentrating its efforts on collecting data and organising the elaboration of international terminology standards. From the very beginning, Infoterm on behalf of the Austrian Standards Institute was put in charge of the secretariat of ISO/TC 37 “Terminology and other language resources” – a Technical Committee of ISO, the International Organization for Standardization.

In 1980, UNESCO urged Infoterm to create an international network for institutions and organisations that were active or interested in the field of terminology – thus, TermNet, the International Network for Terminology, was

started as a 'logic network' with the great support of UNESCO and the Canadian government. In 1988, TermNet was re-organized into an independent international non-profit organisation.

In 1996, Infoterm became an independent international association made up of national, international and local terminology associations and organisations, as well as specialised institutions engaged in the field of terminology. The main objective remains unchanged: support for professional communication and knowledge transfer by promoting international co-operation in the field of terminology, with great importance being attached to high-quality, multi-functional terminologies which prove essential to our modern, global and multilingual information society.

In order to attain this goal, all Infoterm members closely collaborate, aiming at

- collecting and disseminating information on terminological activities and their results;
- publishing these data in printed or computerised form so as to make them generally available;
- supporting the establishment of a world-wide network of terminology information and documentation centres;
- connecting these centres to other institutions or organisations collecting, creating or distributing terminological data; and
- supporting the elaboration and use of harmonised methods and guidelines for terminology information and documentation centres on the one hand and for the generation of high-quality terminological data on the other.

All these efforts are actively supported by other international, local and national Infoterm partner organisations and their members.

In its capacity as international information referral and consultancy centre for terminology, Infoterm performs among others the following additional roles and functions:

- International Collaborating Centre for Terminology of the World Health Organization (WHO);
- International Thesaurus Information Centre;
- Secretariat of the Technical Committee (TC) ISO/TC 37, Terminology and other language resources, of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) on behalf of the Austrian Standards Institute (ON);
- Registration Authority of ISO 639-1 for alpha-2 language codes comprising the International Standard, Codes for the representation of names of languages-- Part 1: alpha-2 code ;
- and is associated with the Department for Public Information of the United Nations (UN/DPI).

In 2002, Infoterm concluded a co-operation agreement with the University of Applied Sciences Cologne (FHK), by which a branch office was to be established

at the University. In the course of a major re-organization on the memorable 11 September 2002, Infoterm moved its premises to a new location in Vienna. On this occasion, its archival holdings were donated to the Eugen Wüster Archive founded at the University of Vienna, whereas the Infoterm Library and large parts of the documents collection were moved to Cologne, where they were entrusted in the form of a permanent loan to DEUTERM, the German Terminology Information and Documentation Centre at the FHK. In 2003, finally, the Infoterm Branch Office Germany was installed and is gradually staffed for future activities. The documentation and clearinghouse activities of Infoterm have thus being shifted to Cologne.

Outlook

Given the success of the promotion of terminology and multilinguality aspects at international (UNESCO) and European level – not to mention the field of standardization –, new horizons have opened up for strategic Infoterm activities. This refers among others to the development of innovative services in the public domain in many countries of the world.

TERMNET – International Network for Terminology

<http://www.termnet.at> (forthcoming: <http://linux.termnet.org>)

TermNet – There is no Knowledge without Terminology

TermNet, the International Network for Terminology, was founded in 1979/80 on the initiative of UNESCO, with the aim to establish a network for co-operation in the field of terminology. Nine years thereafter, TermNet was registered as a non-profit organisation being allowed commercial activities (such as the TermNet Publisher) for the benefit of its members.

Today, TermNet serves as a business forum for international co-operation between companies and organisations / institutions dealing with the practical and commercial aspects of terminology. Terminology is here understood in its broadest meaning as terminological data, methods and tools, which also constitute the terminology market comprising terminological products and services.

The main objective of TermNet is to stimulate the development of terminology and knowledge markets, supported by information and communication technologies in developing the multilingual information and knowledge society.

Products and services for the terminology market are developed in co-operation with its members. To construct and expand a world-wide market for terminological products and services, therefore, is the top-priority TermNet strategy. To this extent, the network not only acts as a initiator of and partner in joint projects, it also

organises a host of other activities, ranging from the provision of valuable information and business opportunities via the development of a TermNet Expert Pool to the organisation of pertinent conferences and seminars on a commercial basis.

TermNet benefits from the activities of Infoterm and ISO/TC 37 “Terminology and other language resources” and implements the strategies and standards established by these organisations in practical activities and system developments in both private industry and public administration alike.

TermNet Members co-operate in:

- developing marketable terminological products, tools and services as well as carrying out respective marketing and promotion strategies
- planning and implementing large-scale market development, R&D and awareness raising projects and initiatives
- organising practice-oriented training opportunities, workshops, conferences and other joint activities
- developing high-end consultancy and training services regarding the application of terminological data, methods and tools

TermNet provides a network for promoting the activities, products and services of its Members.

The main tasks of the TermNet Secretariat are:

- to quickly and efficiently disseminate information on new terminological data, publications, activities, methods and tools to TermNet Members;
- to provide business opportunities for its Members;
- to bundle its Members' resources and competence in joint activities in order to generate benefits in terms of synergy and know-how; and
- to promote its Members' products and services on a global scale

TermNet Members benefit from a series of advantages, e.g.:

- business opportunities and valuable information via TermNet newsflashes and joint projects
- participation in specific terminology events and conferences with internationally renowned experts at substantially reduced fees
- substantial discounts for services like the design, creation and administration of databases or expert assistance and advice for specific problems;
- subscription to TermNet News – the Network's quarterly information bulletin, presenting news on the terminology and related markets

ISO/TC 37 Terminology and other language resources

<http://linux.infoterm.org/iso-e/i-iso.htm>

History:

In 1936, the Technical Committee ISA/TC 37 "Terminology" of the International Federation of the National Standardizing Associations (ISA) was founded. It worked until 1939. In 1951, ISO/TC 37 "Terminology (principles and coordination)" of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) was founded. It started to operate in 1952. In February 2001, TC 37 was renamed "Terminology and other language resources" and widened its scope towards language resource management.

Today ISO/TC 37 prepares International Standards concerning

- principles and methods
- vocabulary of terminology and other language resources
- terminology work
- preparation and management of language resources
- preparation and layout of terminology standards
- computerized terminography and lexicography
- documentation of terminology and other language resources
- coding and codes in the field of language resources
- applications of terminology and other language resources in language engineering

Scope and objective

Scope: Standardization of principles, methods and applications relating to terminology and other language resources.

The objective of ISO/TC 37 is to prepare standards specifying principles and methods for the preparation and management of language resources within the framework of standardization and related activities. Its technical work results in International Standards (and Technical Reports) covering terminological principles and methods as well as various aspects of conventional and computer-assisted preparation and processing of terminonoly and other language resources for various applications. Within its capacity limits, ISO/TC 37 tries to assist other TCs in applying ISO/TC 37 standards and solving problems of terminology standardization, but it is not responsible for the co-ordination of the terminology standardizing activities of other ISO/TCs.

Outlook

Given the fact that mobile communication, mobile computing and mobile commerce are driving the development of the multilingual information and knowledge society, the aspects of most efficient management of multilingual

content is of growing importance. In this connection, a shift from ‘hardware’ standardization via ‘software’ standardization towards methodology standardization can be observed. Electronic content – comprising terminology and other language resources – is the blood circulating in the veins of the information and knowledge society: the information infrastructures. E-Content is the indispensable prerequisite for e-business, e-learning, e-government, e-health and all the other e-...s of the future multilingual information and knowledge society based on a combination of wireless and wired technologies. Terminology in the meaning of representation of knowledge at the level of concepts does not only comprise terms and other linguistic representations, but also an ever-increasing number of non-linguistic representations. To extend the scope of ISO/TC 37 also towards knowledge resources on the one hand and terminology strategies at micro- and macro-economic level within the framework of information and innovation policies on the other hand could, therefore, well become a logical consequence of this development.

Standards published:

- ISO 639-1:2002 Code for the representation of names of languages - Part 1: Alpha-2 code
- ISO 639-2:1998 Code for the representation of names of languages - Part 2: Alpha-3 code
- ISO 704:2000 Terminology work - Principles and methods
- ISO 860:1996 Terminology work - Harmonization of concepts and terms
- ISO 1087-1:2000 Terminology work - Vocabulary - Part 1: Theory and application
- ISO 1087-2:2000 Terminology work - Vocabulary - Part 2: Computer applications
- ISO 1951:1997 Lexicographical symbols particularly for use in classified defining vocabularies
- ISO 6156:1987 Magnetic tape exchange format for terminological/lexicographical records (MATER)
- ISO 10241:1992 Preparation and layout of international terminology standards
- ISO 12199:2000 Alphabetical ordering of multilingual terminological and lexicographical data represented in the Latin alphabet
- ISO 12200:1999 Computer applications in terminology - Machine-readable terminology interchange format (MARTIF) - Negotiated interchange
- ISO 12616:2002 Translation-oriented terminography
- ISO/TR 12618:1994 Computer aids in terminology - Creation and use of terminological databases and text corpora
- ISO 12620:1999 Computer applications in terminology - Data categories
- ISO 15188:2001 Project management guidelines for terminology standardization

Standards in preparation:

- ISO 860 Rev. Terminology work - Harmonization of concepts and terms
- ISO 1951 Rev. Lexicographical symbols and typographical conventions for use in terminography
- ISO/DIS 12615 Bibliographic references for terminology work

ISO/AWI 12618 Computer applications in terminology - Design, implementation
and use of terminology management systems (Rev. of ISO/TR 12618)
ISO 12620 Rev. Computer Applications in Terminology - Data Categories
ISO/DIS 16642 Computer applications in terminology - Meta model for
representing terminological data collections
PWI 22128 Quality assurance guidelines for terminology products
ISO/NP 22134 Terminology in sociolinguistic applications
Proposals for a new work items:
Terminology Work - Updated principles and methods
Harmonization of terminology in existing technical documents of TC 37.
