

## ANNOUNCEMENT

*Computer service for bibliographical research in philosophy: a short report on an information system established at the Institute for Philosophy of Düsseldorf University.*

In Philosophy, there is neither a perfect "thesaurus" nor "normal" categorial framework available. With the exception of the historic periods in which the cognitive role of Philosophy was subordinated completely to its idealogical role, there existed simultaneously a plurality of philosophical systems. Some words used in them may have had an origin in a particular scientific discipline, but most belong to Philosophy itself. Sometimes they can be used in a very imprecise way, and mostly their position in a Philosophical system, say A, gives them an interpretation different than that one for the same word in a system B.

Under these circumstances, it is quite difficult to apply in Philosophy procedures used regularly for information retrieval in Science. Here, instead of indexing based on classification, or a fixed vocabulary, some reliable interpretive methods for content characteristics must be devised.

The first computerized bibliography service in philosophy was instituted in 1967 at Harvard University as a part of the MARC<sup>1</sup> Pilot Project. From that time on, the Library of Congress has been regularly bringing to its subscribers the latest bibliographic information on the topics previously stipulated in their profiles. The SDI<sup>2</sup> System serves also many philosophers though it is not specifically designed for them only.

A system providing bibliographical information on philosophy in particular is presently being developed in the Documentation Section of the Institute for Philosophy in Düsseldorf. Here, data on German philosophical literature is collected and processed. Additional material is obtained through exchange with the *Philosophers Index* and in cooperation with *Revue Philosophique de Louvain*.

<sup>1</sup> Machine-Readable Catalog Copy.

<sup>2</sup> Selective Dissemination of Information.

The principle aim of the Institute is not to publish regular bibliographies, but to create a data bank to be used to respond continually to special problems on individual philosophers; or, as they like to call it in Düsseldorf, to make possible a dialogue between the user and the information system.

To describe a document, the Düsseldorf system works with a special type of summary, using key-words from context ("inhaltliche Erfassung"). Essentially, it means that the search editor must select just those words which constitute the categorical framework of the original text. Further, after these representative textual words are indicated, their relations must be registered.<sup>3</sup>

Two different retrieval systems are available for returning such pre-prepared information to the user. The first type is called the DIALOG System.<sup>4</sup> It allows the user to initiate the question: for example, he may ask to be provided with all the information available on articles dealing with Kant's theory of space and time. Let us say that seventy-eight is given as the number of documents in which the problem is dealt. Having obtained this figure, we may proceed further and request for each of them full bibliographical information including the key-word abstracts. But we may also decide that the original assignment was too broad. Therefore, we narrow the questioning logic: for example, to the conjunction of our three original terms "H: Kant, Immanuel", "space" and "time" we can add the new conjunct "V: Cassirer, Ernst".<sup>5</sup> The response might be four article titles: we could now proceed by asking for complete bibliographical data for each of them.<sup>6</sup> Further, selected articles might be projected on a cathode-ray tube screen, and copies of particular pages made.

To ensure more precise delineation of the given problem, and subsequent retrieval from the data bank, DIALOG offers some additional devices, specifying the "contextual field" (a list of synonyms, of different terms obtainable from the same root, of associated words, etc.).

The second retrieval system is based on the registering program ALBUM.<sup>7</sup> Typical products of this system are general indexes for philosophical journals.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>3</sup> If two or more words are followed by the same index number (besides listing other numbers), their relation in the text is an essential one.

<sup>4</sup> A special version of Siemens system, GOLEM. For further information see Henrichs, Norbert, *GOLEM—Siemens-Retrieval System im Dienste der Philosophie*. Siemens, Munich 1967.

<sup>5</sup> "H: . . ." we search for an article in which the given name in conjunction with other words could be found; "V: . . ." leads to the selection of articles written by a given person.

<sup>6</sup> This is projected on a screen, and may be printed simultaneously.

<sup>7</sup> See Henrichs, N. and H. Rabanus. *ALBUM—ein Verfahren für Literatur-Dokumentation*. Munich, Siemens Schriftenreihe data praxis 026, 1969.

<sup>8</sup> *Philosophische Dokumentation, 1 Zeitschriftenbibliographien*, 1.1 Gesamtregister zur Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung 1-21 (1946-1967), Hrsg. A. Diemer, Redaktion N. Henrichs, Datentechnik Siemens AG, Meisenheim 1968.

To assess properly the value of services provided by the Düsseldorf System, we may compare it with the *Philosophers Index* and MARC. *Philosophers Index* is limited to an equivalent of ALBUM only. The user must search for requested information throughout the pages of index on his own. He cannot impress his request and its modifications upon the system, there is no dialogue; the coverage of material is only one-dimensional. Retrospectivity is left out. MARC covers almost completely the whole area of current book publishing in English. The advantages are clear: had truly representative descriptions been used, at least some of the philosophically important documents published in other areas (e.g. education, sociology, etc.) might be detected.

Scholarly research depends heavily both on periodicals and on monographs. In this latter sense, the highest profit may be gained, if both systems are used as supplements to the other. Perspectively, MARC is planned to cover also French and German monographs; the Düsseldorf System, besides broadening coverage of national (at this time roughly 40 German journals are processed) and foreign periodicals, intends also to step into the area of monographs. How far these two systems will supplement each other, without unnecessary and expensive duplication will depend on compatibility of respective methods of description of materials and on fully planned cooperation. The fact that MARC is so general and the Düsseldorf data bank and *Philosophers Index* so specialized should not be an obstacle to arranging useful interaction between the systems.

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1.2 Gesamtregister der Kant-Studien Teil I 1-30 (1897-1925), Meisenheim 1969.

1.3 Gesamtregister der Kant-Studien Teil II 31-60 (1926-1969), Meisenheim 1970.

1.4 Gesamtregister zu Annalen der Philosophie (und phil. Kritik, Erkenntnis etc.), Meisenheim 1971.

1.5 Gesamtregister zur Revue Philosophique de Louvain 44-67 (1946-1969), Meisenheim 1972.