Introduction to the Special Issue:
Critical and Social Knowledge Organization

Suellen Oliveira Milani*, Widad Mustafa El Hadi**, and Natália Tognoli***

* *** Fluminense Federal University, Information Science Department, Campus do Gragoatá.
Bloco J, Rua Professor Marcos Waldemar de Freitas Reis, s/n - São Domingos – Niterói/RJ, Brazil
**iSchool & Geriico, University of Lille (France), University of Lille, BP 60149,
59653 Villeneuve d'Ascq Cedex, France
* suellenmilani@id.uff.br, **widad.mustafa@univ-lille.fr, *** nataliatognoli@id.uff.br

Suellen Oliveira Milani is an Associate Professor in Department of Information Science and Graduate Program of Information Science at Fluminense Federal University, Brazil. She holds a Doctoral Degree in Information Science. Among her current research interests are knowledge organization and representation, ethics in knowledge organization, theoretical foundations of information science, information user studies. Complete résumé available at lattes.cnpq.br/2821128318835622. Orcid: orcid.org/0000-0001-7183-6030

Widad Mustafa El Hadi, is Professor of Information and Communication Sciences at the University of Lille SHS where she is in charge of International Relations and of the Master Diploma program. She holds a PhD in linguistics from the University of Lyon 2, France and a Habilitation from the University of Lille in 2004. Her main areas of interest are: theoretical approaches to knowledge organization; language & culture and their impact on knowledge organization; knowledge organization systems and their evaluation; cross-language and cross-cultural information retrieval, and, more recently, Digital Humanities and ethics in information & knowledge organization. She has been active in ISKO (International Society for Knowledge Organization since 1996, as co-founder of the French ISKO Chapter (with Jacques Maniez) and elected as the first ISKO-France president (1996-2001, 2015-2023). She publishes regularly on knowledge organization, digital cultures, digital humanities and recently the Ethics of KO. She has supervised 18 doctoral theses on terminology; library and information science; information literacy; archiving and knowledge organization systems and Digital humanities. She founded in June 2021 the "International Thematic Network on Ethics in SHS".

Natália Tognoli is a Professor in Department of Information Science at Fluminense Federal University, Brazil. She holds a bachelor's degree in Archival Science, a Master's, and a Ph.D. in Information Science. Her current research interests are the relationships between knowledge organization and archival science, focusing on critical studies and social justice. She coordinates the Information Science Graduation Program at Fluminense Federal University and is Editor-in-Chief of the Knowledge Organization Journal. Orcid: orcid.org/0000-0002-0609-498X

Information institutions and systems have the goal to ensure access to information and records, support research, preserve and disseminate memory, promote accountability and encourage reading and cultural activities. For that, professionals construct, maintain and apply knowledge organization systems in a given context, space and time, taking into account the diversity of knowledge domains, users' needs and reflecting on their own agency.

It is a global concern of KO to create alternatives to promote spaces for the appropriate representation of knowledge domains and user communities' needs, mainly the ones that do not belong to the dominant groups, but solutions are local and/or contextualized, generally. For that, it is important to consider cultural and linguistic barriers, theoretical assumptions, values and critical and social studies. These studies comprise a topic of KO, which is suitable for hosting such discussions.

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Social studies, including cultural perspectives, reflect specific discursive communities and knowledge domains. As Ibekwe (2024) observes, critical studies in KO investigate the power dynamics, biases, and social impacts embedded in the systems and methods used to classify and organize information.

Approaching a critical and social KO requires the recognition of a framework of intertwined injustices that are deeply rooted in historical practices of exclusion and silencing. These injustices support not only a social exclusion but also an epistemic one, especially if we aim to address social justice and epistemic justice in KO systems, for instance.

Social justice in KO refers to a more inclusive knowledge organization system as part of institutions that promote access to information as an essential right to support responsive, participative and representative decision-making. It means the elimination of institutionalized domination and oppression (Young 1990). Creating KO systems under a social justice perspective means doing it in a defensible, participatory and transparent way, involving historically excluded groups to avoid reinforcing institutional biases, challenging the illusion of neutrality, recognizing their ideological nature and actively promoting the preservation and visibility of diverse cultural narratives and epistemologies.

Thus, KO deals with the inherent tension between the non-neutrality of representation of knowledge and the commitment to respond promptly and accurately to the demands and information needs of different knowledge domains and user communities. This dynamic has led the field of KO to engage in a discussion regarding the promotion of access, ethics, and social justice through studies and actions. This special issue explores the assumptions underlying critical and social approaches to KO. Critical studies within KO focus on examining the field's presumptions and proposing solutions to its challenges.

From this perspective, critical and social KO enables diverse approaches. For this Special Issue, the following main topics were outlined:

a. Antiracism, anticolonialism, and feminist stances;
b. Epistemicide and epistemic (in)justice in KO systems;
c. Inclusive terminology/metadata;
d. Indigenous knowledge organization;
e. KO support for social justice;
f. Truth and relevance in KO.

The selection process for this special issue was highly competitive, with 47 relevant proposals submitted. After careful evaluation, we are honored to present 12 papers, divided across two issues (vol. 51, issues 7 and 8).

Part I focuses on racism, intersectionality, decoloniality, epistemic injustices, and marginalized communities in KO systems.

Chris Holstrom, in "Critical control: how different forms of vocabulary control aid and hinder novice indexers aiming to support racial justice", investigates how novice indexers assign terms to documents addressing race and racism. The study analyzes the faithfulness, exhaustivity, and specificity of the indexing terms while also examining how confident and in-control the indexers feel throughout the process.

Maria Aparecida Moura, in "Information and code biases: social differentiation, intersectionality, and decoloniality in KO systems", introduces an experimental framework that integrates intersectionality and decoloniality as essential dimensions in designing and structuring knowledge organization systems.

In the paper "Toward an etiology of harm for knowledge organization: onto-epistemic injustice in classificatory systems of record", Beth Patin, Tyler Youngman and Elliott Hauser discuss two instances of actual epistemic harms from knowledge organization systems tracing the effects they have upon what can be known through them, the identities they create or deny, and the resulting structure of reality they uphold.

In "Psychiatric classifications: an epistemic justice issue", Laurence Favier and Stéphanie Derdar examine the portrayal of schizophrenia within medical and bibliographic classifications, as well as French-language media. The paper highlights efforts to destigmatize schizophrenia through the evolution of classification practices.

Nick Ubels, Lisabelle Tan, and Angel Long, in "Developing person-centered metadata: a case study of the Behaviours in Dementia Toolkit" describe the process and outcomes of navigating the complexity of developing, refining, and implementing person-centered metadata in the context of the Behaviours in Dementia Toolkit.

Heather Moulaison-Sandy, Karen Snow, and Brian Dobreski, in "Social dimensions of culture, code-switching, and controlled vocabularies", delve into the concept of code-switching as a cultural phenomenon. They explore how marginalized users navigate linguistic and cultural differences in KO systems, shedding light on the challenges of creating inclusive vocabularies.

Part II addresses topics such as autism, indigenous knowledge and language, feminicide, folksonomies, and KO processes.

In the paper "Sort of people: considerations about the ontogeny of autism in the Dewey Decimal System, 1942-2023", Dóra Pákozdi traces the ontogeny of autism within the Dewey Decimal System, from the 14th to the 23rd editions highlighting the shifts in the psychiatric understand-

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ing and societal attitudes toward autism, the dynamics of neurodiversity recognition, the conceptualization of autism as a spectrum, and the influential role of autistic self-advocacy.

To address a discussion regarding the subject representation of the different aspects of indigenous peoples' cultures in Latin America, Mario Barité and Mirtha Rauch present the paper "Native peoples and knowledge organization: perspective from the indigenous warrant". The study compares approaches from Canada, the United States, Australia, and Latin America to highlight best practices and challenges.

In the paper "Organization and representation of indigenous scientific production: a case study on the institutional repository in Brazil", the authors Caroline Periotto, Felipe Arakaki, Jair de Jesus Massa, Luciana de Souza Gracioso and Luzia Sigoli Fernandes Costa present a diagnosis, propositions and pre-tests in an institutional repository for the inclusion of metadata for indigenous authorship, summary and keywords in indigenous language.

Julia Bullard presents "Provocations of process in critical knowledge organization work", which discusses the following assumptions: a. systems should be seamless and not reveal the work behind them; b. systems should achieve a single authorial voice through consistency, precedent, and patterns; and c. knowledge organization systems are best applied with minimal interpretation on the part of the worker. The author argues that the most provocative work in critical knowledge organization is happening at the level of process.

In the paper "Knowledge organization systems typifying crimes of violence against women, homicide of women and femicide: a proposal", Rochelle Martins Alvorcem, Gercina Ângela de Lima and Maria Cristina Vieira de Freitas offer a guideline to typify crimes of violence against women in filling out the National Risk Assessment Form and police report through knowledge organization systems.

Finally, Sarah Barriage, Beth Strickland Bloch, and Vanessa Kitzie, in "Drag storytimes and bibliographic invisibility: a comparative analysis of picture book subject metadata", analyze the metadata associated with picture books featured in drag storytimes. The study compares metadata from library catalogs with that from online social cataloging platforms to highlight gaps and opportunities for inclusivity.

Critical and social studies on KO, including knowledge organization systems, in archives, libraries, and information institutions and environments must be constantly conducted. In this special issue, the readers will find theories, methodologies, toolkits and case studies carefully presented by specialists who have been studying KO processes, instruments, and products from a critical stance focusing on the social dimension.

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