

**The Philosophy and Information Professions:
SIG/AH Program
for the 50th Annual Meeting of the American Society for Information
Science**

Organized by Ralph Dumain, SIG/AH Chair

SIG/AH—THE PHILOSOPHY PROFESSIONS AND INFORMATION

*Moderator: Ralph Dumain
Librarian, Washington, DC*

What information sources do philosophers use? Is the literature that they read and cite bound by their network of personal contacts, professional associations, nationality, or native language? How does the social structure of the profession influence the demarcation of research programs? To what extent do different research programs interpenetrate? Is there institutionally determined arbitrariness in the clustering of the literature as reflected in journals and conference proceedings, even within a particular specialty, when compared with more or less objective divisions of philosophical literature based on branches of philosophy, specialties, subject matter, research interests, and issues? Does peer review keep philosophers locked into certain schools of thought or locked out of publication and career advancement?

Are bibliometric techniques of potential value for understanding the structure of the philosophy profession? Can information specialists influence information use by philosophers?

How will the use of computers (eg. computerized texts, online publishing, optical disks, online bulletin boards) affect communication among philosophers, philosophical research, and publication trends in philosophy?

Panelists:

T. R. Girill, Member, APA Committee on Computer Use in Philosophy, National Magnetic Fusion Energy Computer Center, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, Livermore, CA

Donald Sievert, Dept. of Philosophy, University of Missouri, Columbia, MO

Ralph Dumain, Librarian, Washington, DC

**SIG/AH—SUBJECT ACCESS, CONTENT ANALYSIS &
PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS**

*Moderator: Ralph Durnain
Librarian, Washington, DC*

Abstracts. Areas to be explored: (1) Evaluation of information systems and retrieval in philosophy: does the current state of subject access to the literature meet information needs? (2) The application of content and discourse analysis and artificial intelligence techniques to computerized texts in order to aid philosophical analysis and argumentation.

INFORMATION RETRIEVAL IN PHILOSOPHY

Mary Ellen Sievert, School of Library and Information Science, University of Missouri, Columbia, MO

While, generally speaking, there are fewer databases in the humanities than in the sciences or the social sciences, several databases contain information on philosophy. *Philosopher's Index* on DIALOG is probably the best-known. The retrieval effectiveness of this file was tested with a series of sample questions covering differing aspects of philosophy (e.g. history of philosophy, ethics, cognitive science). Sample searches explored both the vocabulary (structure, adequacy, breadth of terms, etc.) and effective strategies for retrieval.

Since philosophical literature can also be found in multi-disciplinary files, the sample questions were also tested in *Arts & Humanities Citation Index* on BRS and *Humanities Index* on Wilsonline and *FRANCIS-H* on Questel.

Sample searches tested the vocabulary, size of file, system capabilities and possibilities for limiting (date, language, document type, etc.). The results of the sample searches were compared with the discipline-specific database. Other databases which would be of interest to philosophers in certain specialties such as the MATHFILE for logic, were also discussed and appropriate questions used to test the coverage.

MAPPING THE SHAPE OF AN ARGUMENT

Alastair McKinnon, Dept. of Philosophy, McGill University, Montreal, Canada

This account falls into four distinct parts: an explanation of our choice of texts from Kierkegaard, a brief description of our method, the presentation of our results, and a brief general discussion of the method's merits and possible shortcomings. Our basic strategy is to extract from the text information about its shape and to represent this in a simple and readily intelligible graphic form. Briefly, we identify its key words, produce a matrix showing their frequencies in its various chapters and, using this matrix as input to our correspondence analysis program, show this shape in a plot or map the points of which represent the chapters of the book and the lines joining these points the shape of that book as seen in two dimensions. (Full text in Proceedings.)

SIG/AH—PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVES ON INFORMATION SCIENCE

*Moderator: Diana Woodward
Drexel University*

Abstracts. Fundamental philosophical issues involving the nature of information science and the design of information systems will be examined.

METAPHYSICAL ISSUES IN CLASSIFICATION THEORY

David V. Ward, Humanities Dept., Widener University, Chester, PA

This paper examines certain philosophical issues related to classification theory. These issues are of two sorts: (1) metaphysical questions about the nature of the objects classified, and; (2) epistemological questions about the definitions of the concepts which denote the classified objects.

Primary among the metaphysical questions is that of the status of universals. Are such objects 'real,' in some robust sense of the term, or are they convenient fictions, as the nominalists and pragmatists would have it? I argue that the pragmatism of Quine is the most desirable alternative, both on grounds of economy and explanatory power, but I also note that the practical implications of a Quinean construal differ little from

those of classical Aristotelian theory.

Foremost among the epistemological questions associated with classification theory is the issue of what definitions are. Are we to understand definitions as assertions which give descriptions of objects? Or should we take definitions as imperatives which prescribe rather than describe linguistic practice? I examine a number of philosophical views on the question of definition, and I also look at classificatory practice in biological taxonomy, with the issue of definition in mind.

Finally, I apply certain principles of biological classification to information classification, and I discuss implications for information classification presented by Aristotelian realism and Quinean pragmatism.

PHILOSOPHICAL ASPECTS OF FULL-TEXT ONLINE DATABASES

T. R. Girill, National Magnetic Fusion Energy Computer Center, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, Livermore, CA

(Extended abstract in Proceedings.)

SOCIAL EPISTEMOLOGY AND THE FOUNDATIONS OF INFORMATION SCIENCE

Thomas J. Froehlich, School of Information Studies, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY

The notion of relevance has been a key concept in information science, and while many studies have attempted to measure it with varying degrees of success, they have approached the phenomenon as one of determining the average subjective states of users when evaluating citations either for their personal needs or for the purpose of an experimental situation. Such an approach is rooted in Cartesian philosophy and its many manifestations—various forms of dualism or a monism that radicalizes one aspect of the dualism (eg. materialism or idealism). Philosophically, this approach is bankrupt since it radically misconstrues the social embeddedness of relevance judgments and the appropriation of culture by the "phenomenal body," a phenomenological construct that avoids dualism and which supplies the foundation for a social epistemology that discloses the transpersonal and intersubjective dimensions of relevance and cognitive authority judgments. In order to grasp effectively the information transfer process in society, we must analyze such concepts as epistemic and axiological communities, two foci of a social epistemology and a hermeneutic approach to information transfer structures.

SOURCE: Serial title: *Proceedings of the ASIS Annual Meeting*, volume 24, 1987. *ASIS '87: Proceedings of the 50th Annual Meeting of the American Society for Information Science, Boston, Massachusetts, October 4-8, 1987*. Edited by Ching-Chich Chen. Medford, NJ: Learned Information, Inc., 1987. Abstracts of this program, pp. 253-255.

SIG/AH = Arts & Humanities Special Interest Group. See also extended abstract of T. R. Girill (83-84) and paper of Alastair McKinnon (170-180). See also abstract of joint SIG/AH and SIG/BSS session, "[Midwifing the "World Brain"](#)" (256) and full paper of H. J. Abraham Goodman (91-98).

[Philosophical Style: Selected Bibliography](#)

[Humor & Philosophy: Selected Bibliography](#)

Offsite:

["A Word-Experiment on the Category of the Comic"](#) by Andrew J. Burgess

[“Kierkegaard, Paraphrase, and the Unity of Form and Content”](#) by Antony Aumann

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