

Dictionaries for the future – the future of dictionaries: Challenges for lexicography in digital society

From November 26 to 28, 2018, 18 experts from the fields of Dictionary Research, Practical Lexicography, German as a Foreign Language, Italian Studies, Translation Science and Empirical Linguistics congregated at the Centro Italo-Tedesco per l'Eccellenza Europea / Deutsch-Italienisches Zentrum für Europäische Exzellenz, *Villa Vigoni* on Lake Como, for a workshop on the topic of future challenges for lexicography. Supported by the German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, DFG), the workshop was initiated and organised by Stefan Schierholz, Martina Nied Curcio, Laura Balbiani and Anne-Kathrin Gärtig-Bressan. Held within this framework of German-Italian cooperation in humanities, the discussion dealt with aspects of the digital society of the future. The dramatic transformation from print to online dictionaries during the last two decades has changed the academic and commercial worlds of dictionaries, lexicography and relevant research. Users' preferences for costless online data, waiving proof of the data reliability, has drawn many publishing houses into a deep crisis, which is being slowly overcome these days. In Germany this change is felt in the last couple of years as a few publishers survived and are successful again on the market today. In addition, some academic dictionary projects have been reinforced with the support of public funding. No fundamental progress is observable at the theoretical basis and as with regard to dictionary

research at universities since, (a) the issue is still not focused and (b) the near future perspectives look grim. Research on online information systems, digital dictionaries, user's behaviour, and dictionary critics and criticism are no top priorities at universities in Germany. In this context, the main aims of the workshop were to develop ideas and concepts for the future, to initiate a critical use of the data offered on the internet, and to set new impulses for the state of affairs in dictionary research. At the closure of the workshop the participants adopted *The 15 Villa Vigoni Theses on Lexicography*¹, which are listed below.

Stefan Schierholz

1. **Dictionaries of the future** consist of lexical or linguistic information systems in which existing lexicographic data are conflated, entrenching multilingualism and linguistic variety, and which provide people who are confronted with gaps in their knowledge with answers as well as support in the writing and formulation processes of texts.
2. Lexical information systems must become a significant topic of **public discourse**. **Awareness** of the fact that the respective online data available should provide the **requisite high quality** must be publicly nurtured.
3. Practical lexicography must be constantly aware of its **social responsibility** and must strive for a comprehensive, pluralistic **description of linguistic and factual realities**. In the process, the demarcation between the subject area and the selective lexicographic prioritization must be rendered perceptible.
4. As independent social institutions, universities and public research facilities must actively participate in **critical discussions and evaluations** regarding lexical information systems.
5. Lexicographic **amendments** in online information systems must be **chronicled and preserved** so that they remain permanently available as well-documented evidence of academic processes.
6. Lexicography requires **partners and allies**: the solutions and challenges for the lexicography of the future

The workshop participants included the following persons:

Dr. Andrea Abel (Eurac Research, Bozen), Prof. Dr. Laura Balbiani (Università della Valle d'Aosta), Wiebke Blanck (Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg), Prof. Dr. Gualtiero Boaglio (Institut für Romanistik-Universität Wien), Prof. Dr. Stefan Engelberg (Institut für Deutsche Sprache, Mannheim), Dr. Anne-Kathrin Gärtig-Bressan (Università degli Studi di Trieste), Prof. Dr. Luisa Giacoma (Università della Valle d'Aosta), Dr. Laura Giacomini (Universität Heidelberg), Prof. Dr. Christine Konecny (Universität Innsbruck), Dr. Kathrin Kunkel-Razum (Bibliographisches Institut GmbH, Berlin), Dr. Fabio Mollica (Università degli Studi di Milano), Dr. Carolin Müller-Spitzer (Institut für Deutsche Sprache, Mannheim), Prof. Dr. Martina Nied Curcio (Università degli Studi Roma Tre), Prof. Lorenza Rega (Università degli Studi di Trieste), Prof. Dr. Elmar Schafroth (Universität Düsseldorf), Dr. Rüdiger Scherpe (Klett Verlag – ELI), Prof. Dr. Stefan Schierholz (Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg), Dr. Francesco Urzi (European Parliament – Université de Genève).

1 Cf. <https://www.emlex.phil.fau.de/2019/01/>

- demand, with a view to European perspectives, an **interdisciplinary exchange** between research institutes, academies, publishing houses and other representatives of the private sector.
7. One significant **task for the lexicography** of the digital future is the orderly conflation of data which has been generated automatically by text corpora and specifically processed, as well as a user-orientated presentation. The social relevance of such information systems will be consolidated once the underlying corpora mirror the entire linguistic diasystem and are freely available to researchers.
 8. Dictionary research must be considered a **cultural science** which, through interdisciplinary projects, conflates practical lexicography, linguistics, computer science, book science and documentation science.
 9. In a modern information society, we require academic studies to advance a **standardization process** for metalexigraphic **core terminology**, as a solid theory induces multifaceted improvements in practical lexicography.
 10. **Academic lexicography** should be increasingly visually creative, and with regard to digital formats it should venture into **experiments**, thereby availing itself of the interest of people in linguistic questions. **State funding** must concentrate on lexicographic innovations.
 11. Lexicographic projects should be oriented towards the **specific needs of the users** (towards the first language and the foreign language, towards translating, etc.) as well as towards the users' linguistic acts or communicative intentions, as language is the subject matter of lexicography, and learning and understanding languages is a central competence in a globalised world.
 12. Academic findings regarding the use of lexicographic information systems as well as **teaching practice and translation practice** should be increasingly incorporated into the **lexicographic process**.
 13. Lexicography is called upon to develop concepts for productive **user participation** in lexicographic information systems.
 14. The digital supply of data in the information systems of the future must be regarded as a significant means for 'lifelong learning' so that the **critical use of resources** can be established as a **strategic key competence**. This must also be firmly entrenched in the **training and continued education of teachers**.

15. Lexicography requires **pedagogical concepts** in order to be able to accomplish the **didactic implementation** of lexicographic information systems. In the process, this should integrate the media competence of the users.



Jacek Fisiak (1936-2019)

Professor Jacek Fisiak of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland, passed away on June 3, 2019. He was a renowned linguist, an indefatigable organizer of academic life, and a capable dictionary editor.

Jacek Fisiak first came to Poznań in the late 1960s, with the ambitious plan of reviving English Studies there. He not only succeeded spectacularly, but soon came to be regarded as the chief figure among Polish Anglicists; it was not long before he received similar recognition from historical linguists elsewhere in the world. He was the go-to person for anyone in need of assistance with elusive sources pertaining to the history of Germanic languages, his private library being a frequent port of call for scholars from all over Poland.

He did all the usual things that academics do, but tended to do them exceptionally fast, efficiently, and with deep passion. He organized dozens of international conferences on historical and contrastive linguistics, gave over 60 papers at international congresses and over 150 guest lectures, supervised 61 doctoral dissertations and countless MA theses. He served as Head of the Department of English (1969-2005), Rector of Adam Mickiewicz University (1985-1988), and Minister of National Education (1988-1989). In recognition of his achievements, he received honours and awards too numerous to mention, including two honorary doctorates (from the Universities of Jyväskylä in Finland and Opole in Poland), as well as, unusually for a non-British citizen, an Order of the British Empire.

While his primary interest had always been historical linguistics, especially medieval English dialectology, in the post-1989 period he also tried his hand at dictionary making. He was instrumental in breathing new life into bilingual English-Polish lexicography, acting as editor-in-chief in a number of projects with HarperCollins, Longman, Kernerman Publishing, and others. Among those, *The New Kościuszko Foundation Dictionary* (2003; 2nd, digital edition 2015) was, and still is, the largest English-Polish, Polish-English dictionary in terms of coverage, as well as the only one featuring the American variety of English, while *Longman Słownik Współczesny* (2004, 2nd edition 2011) was the first – and so far the only – truly active bilingual dictionary designed specifically for Polish learners of English.

As a person, Professor Fisiak was generous, outgoing, and likeable. He will be remembered not only for his wide-ranging knowledge and professional achievements, but also for his irresistible charisma and his lust for life.

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