

To the CIDOC Board

08.09.2015

Report of the CIDOC Co-reference Working Group

This report reflects the period from the CIDOC Conference in Dresden, September 2014 to the conference in New Delhi, September 2015. During the reporting period the CIDOC Co-reference Working Group has been focusing on the following areas:

1. Further Development of Concepts and Practices Related to Co-reference

Co-reference investigates the relationship between signs and their identifiable referents. These referents can be other signs or specific occurrences the signs refer to. When signs are linked to other signs, they form chains and networks of co-references. Signs are linked to their referents by mediation of their significance. Linking a sign with its referent is always an act of interpretation performed by an actor. This interpretation occurs in a framework of understanding.

In communication, referents are coupled with predicates. Reference and predication are the two most fundamental functions of language but they can also be discovered in all forms of art and culture. In networks of co-references predications are accumulated. If these accumulated predications are stored on paper or in information systems, our knowledge of the referent is enriched. In this way the concept of co-reference leads to a theory of Cultural Semiotics that can be used as a foundation for an information strategy. In the digital domain such an information strategy also leads to the concept of virtual collections. This is a new idea that will be explored in the following year, in the timespan until the next CIDOC annual conference.

Anyone who finds the previous paragraphs interesting should contact the Working Group.

2. Activities

The CIDOC Co-reference Working Group have experienced a few burst of activity and periods of silence. The bursts of activity have resulted in a few gatherings inside and outside CIDOC conferences as well as several presentations in events organized by other actors that CIDOC.

In the 2014 annual conference in Dresden a pre-conference session was arranged, and in addition, two meetings. A notable achievement is the integration of co-Reference into the CIDOC Conceptual Reference Model (CIDOC CRM).

One reason for the quiet periods is the search for a projects with financing, where the ideas of co-reference can be explored. Attempts to academic partnerships have been made in the field of textual linguistics. Couplings exist to networks of textual scholarship.

The second field, that has been selected for experimentation, is rock art and archives for rock art. In this area more progress has been made. A dataset of Finnish rock art is available. The aim is to broaden this dataset with data from the broader Fenno-Scandian area and later the whole Northern circumpolar region. This goal will be furthered in a scientific rock art seminar in Estonia in October with participants from Finland, Estonia and Russia. Contacts to other regions have been pursued as well, including Africa and the Caucasus region, but all indications of interest to co-operate in this area are welcomed.

New Delhi, 8th September, 2015



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