

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of The International Network on Ethics in SHS

### Title

Biases in Knowledge Organization and Impacts on User Communities: An Ethical Perspective

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### Abstract

Bias can be understood as slanting, prejudice, tendency or leaning and integrates an important topic discussed in the field of Knowledge Organization (KO). This issue deserves to be analyzed in depth since biases can occur in multiple instances: a. librarian's performance, b. knowledge organization systems, c. metadata, and d. the document itself, as pointed out by Milani, Guimarães and Olson (2014).

In this sense, biases in KO can promote damage to user communities; sometimes, these biases aim to guarantee specificity to representation of information, however they can reveal tendency evoking beliefs and values of those who assign metadata or maintain knowledge organization systems. These biases can also reinforce prejudices or promote deviations in the representation of information, causing harmful effects to user communities of the information system, mostly people who do not belong to dominant ones. When a bias is part of the document to be represented, the librarian will decide about the way in which this bias will be negotiated (Milani 2017).

Discussions about biases in knowledge organization systems, especially subject heading lists, are relatively common in the literature on library catalogs. According to Olson and Schlegl (2001, 62), “[a] number of these critiques have addressed negative biases in terms of gender, sexuality, race, age, ability, ethnicity, language, and religion as limits to the representation of diversity and to effective library service for diverse populations.”

Actions to attenuate and prevent biases in representation of information in catalogs must be undertaken in search of solutions to respect user communities; these solutions implicate language studies and vocabulary control (Pinho 2021). The goal is also to give them a voice, after all, the organization and representation of knowledge can guide the way in which a user can understand herself/himself, the world, and its divisions. For this reason, it is important to investigate in a continuous and productive way how catalogs can be more reliable.

Thus, this presentation will address the categories of biases in KO presented by Olson and Schlegl (2001) and indicate some impacts that biases can cause to user communities of libraries and information systems. Ultimately, it will be argued that ethical dilemmas arising from this context can be negotiated through an ethical decision-making.

## References

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