

“*Are You My Mother?: An Exploration of Bibliographic Relationships of Translated Documents*”

Heidegger writes that “*Dasein* is not something present-at-hand which possesses its competence for something by way of an extra; it is primarily **Being-possible**” (1962, 183). Bartoloni interprets Heidegger’s *Dasein* as potential--as the act or state in which one creates meaning in the world through engagement with a community and intersection with its linguistic and cultural vectors (3, 2003). If one applies Bartoloni’s interpretation of *Dasein* to the world of information science, one could say that information is only meaningful when it is placed in a system through which it has the potential to be interpreted. Such a reading will be recognizable to translation theorists as well. Priel writes that the act of “translation is conceived as an event, a response, a dialogical experience that transforms both the text and the reader” (94, 2013). Similar to the ways in which formal structures of information organization make data comprehensible for users, the transformative act of translation constantly creates new meanings for translator, reader, and content. With the idea in mind that people perceive meaning in the world through metamorphic communion with information, I will examine both formal information systems as translations and the ways in which people interact with translations in the context of these intermediate systems. From this, I argue that there is significant overlap between translation studies and information science. Finally, I conclude that people in both fields can benefit from acknowledging these similarities, and that such recognition enables a future for information organization in which interoperability does not have to mean equivalence. In such a world, the relevance of information objects and structures would be exponentially sustainable, because their meanings would exist in an intrinsically-interpretable zone.

Until the 1970s, information scientists had approached the issue of what makes information meaningful through “system-centered” research (Choo and Auster, 1993, as quoted in Case, 6, 2012). Generally, this meant gauging whether or not users were able to make sense of information by surveying their experiences of systems like university library catalogs (Case, 6-7, 2012). It is more popular today to evaluate meaningfulness, or relevance, though, from the perspective of the user and how they interpret, create, and use information (Case, 6, 2012).

For the present purposes, however, this dichotomy between user and system is unhelpful. As mentioned above, I argue that people derive meaning from information by realizing its potentiality. Potentiality necessarily occupies a space between ends of spectrum. Priel is again useful; she writes “When processes of translation/interpretation ignore diversity or deny equivalences, the dialectic movement between the two is forestalled, generating stasis” (94-5, 2013). In other words, subscribing fully to any one viewpoint engenders stagnation. Of course, it is impossible to inhabit this threshold except theoretically, as such a liminal space is defined by its flux. However, one can still approximate this borderline by acknowledging an approach’s shortcomings. Throughout this paper, then, I will take the system as my starting point. This system-centered approach finds its inspiration in Cronin’s sentiments about the Tower of Babel. He writes “human presence in the world can only be understood through and in the context of the made objects that mediate human existence” (470, 2012). At the same time, I will actively engage with user experience, as, ultimately, these users are interacting systematically with a system of which they themselves are a part (C. McCaffrey, personal communication, April 26, 2015). I will do this by looking at the different ways in which information scientists deal with translations in digital library catalogs.

To begin, it is important to be comfortable with the ways in which information scientists organize information, if only to appreciate how this has recently changed. In the information science world, there are three major conceptual models representing what Wilson calls the “bibliographical universe.” Each of these models is differentiated by the number of basic ontological categories comprising the universe. They are: Smiraglia’s two-entity model, which divides the bibliographical universe into *works* and *instantiations* (Smiraglia, 2001); Wilson’s own three-entity model, comprised of *works*, *texts*, and *exemplars* (Wilson, 1968); and the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions’s (or IFLA’s) four-entity model, organized by *works*, *expressions*, *manifestations*, and *items* (IFLA, 2009). IFLA’s model is commonly known as “*ferber*” or the *Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records* and is widely accepted. As it forms the basis of the current cataloging standard, *Resource Description and Access* (or “RDA”) FRBR is the conceptual model on which this paper concentrates.

Carlyle writes that FRBR “is a complex, entity-relationship model” (266, 2006). Its aim is to provide a framework to evaluate metadata, or information about information, and bibliographic relationships through the display of collocated, or related, entities (Madison, 14, 2006). The FRBR conceptual model classifies entities into three groups. Most important to the present discussion is Group 1, which includes the entities mentioned above: *works*, *expressions*, *manifestations*, and *items*. El-Sherbini and Curran provide a good example of FRBR Group 1 entities (10, 2011):

. . . *the work would be the story of Dracula as conceived in the mind of Bram Stoker. When Stoker put pen to paper and wrote Dracula, first as a play and then as a novel, he created two different expressions of that work. Other expressions might include*

*translations of the work into different languages, the countless Dracula films, or adaptations based on the idea of Dracula, like Nosferatu. When an expression is encoded into some sort of media, the result is a manifestation, like the latest U.S. printing of Dracula, or the Criterion Collection DVD of Nosferatu. The copy of a manifestation received by a cataloger's library is . . . an item. It is quite literally the discrete "item in hand" when one is cataloging.*

[Handout] >> Christmas Carol

It is important to understand FRBR because it is the conceptual model upon which the RDA cataloging standard is based. Many of the world's most renowned libraries are now cataloging in RDA, including the Library of Congress, the British Library, and the National Library of Medicine ("Who's cataloging in Rda," 2010). A FRBR-based database that many will recognize is OCLC's Worldcat (Zhang and Salaba, 2012).

As a brief history, RDA is the latest iteration of the *Anglo-American Cataloging Rules*, or AACR. From 1967 to at least 2010, most North American and British libraries were cataloging according to the AACR standard. A revision, AACR2, came out in 1978, and in 2005, AACR3 was released, which is what is now called RDA. Between 2005 and early 2010, a group troubleshooted the standard until it was officially released in June of 2010 (El Sherbini & Curran, 8, 2011).

While the differences between the various iterations of AACR2 and RDA are relatively granular when compared head-to-head, they have a potential to change how people interact with information that deserves attention. To get a feel for the general differences between AACR2 and RDA, one can draw an analogy between the World Wide Web of the 90s and the fashionable

Semantic Web of the early 2000s. Briefly, the Semantic Web is a version of the World Wide Web in which all data is hyperlinked, so that relationships between discrete information objects might become machine-readable in a way similar to how humans connect ideas. While there have been challenges to the Semantic Web that have slowed its implementation (Ray, 2010), its *ethos*, that data is informative only insofar it is able to be related to other data in a meaningful way, is similar to that of RDA's; like many information scientists, the creators of RDA wanted to make information more accessible and comprehensible (A. Carlyle, personal communication, April 23, 2015).

To this end, the most critical aspect of RDA is that it makes bibliographic relationships explicit. These specific relationships are those in the FRBR model, which are meant to help users fulfill four main tasks: *to find*, *to identify*, *to select*, and *to obtain* bibliographic entities (Taylor, 104-5, 2009). In 2000, Svenonius created a fifth user task: *to navigate*. To illustrate the importance of her *navigating* function, she describes the following scenario (19):

*Some users come to a search for information knowing exactly what they want. But other users do not quite know or are unable to articulate the object of their search, and yet they are able to recognize it immediately when they find it. Such users expect guidance.*

For Svenonius, finding and obtaining items is not the end goal of bibliographic exploration. Her *navigating* function compensates for the user who does not know what he or she is looking for and who, consequently, uses the structure of the catalog to information-seek. RDA excels at meeting the *navigation* function. By relating entities of different type and origin based on conceptual and functional connections, RDA allows users to semantically relate information

(Bianchini & Guerrini, 2015, 23). The significant ease with which users are able to distinguish relationships between entities in RDA is especially important in the context of translations.

The clarity of these relationships makes the act of cataloging translations in RDA significant on multiple levels. One of these planes, as Svenonius suggests above, concerns the relationship between the user with a non-specific information need and the display of the catalog with which he or she interacts during research. In the context of semiotics, a catalog's display of translations and the metadata that describe the content within those records can serve as a meta-translation. On her book *The Intellectual Foundation of Information Organization*, Smiraglia writes that (564, 2003)

*Svenonius . . . brings us full circle by describing all bibliographic activity as language. She suggests that the point of bibliographic activity is communication, and that each device used to order the record of knowledge can be understood in terms of grammar and syntax.*

If one substitutes Svenonius's device with a library catalog and her grammar and syntax with a record's metadata, it would not be a stretch to agree with Raber and Budd, when they write that the "changing relation between text and content, and between signifier and signified constitutes a **change in meaning** of the informative object, as new meanings are assigned to existing objects" (Raber & Budd, 2003, 512). In other words, just as language is made of signs, and signs are inherently interpretable, (Raber & Budd, 2003, 508), so too might one view the display for a translation and the content its metadata describe as a translation itself. Cronin writes (480, 2012):

*This movement from one symbolic level to another, or encoding, is mirrored by the preoccupation among early pioneers of information science . . . replacing signs with others signs . . . is precisely what translators do.*

While it would be wise not to subscribe fully to Cronin's coding analogy, as he later posits that information science and translation studies are tautological (482, 2012), the above quotation describes both what has taken place in this analysis and what takes place during the act of cataloging itself. When a cataloger parses an item's content, or its aboutness, by creating signifiers for it, or metadata, that item is transformed into digestible form for both computer and user.

Such a mental exercise has the potential to affect the future of information organization in a digital world in which interoperability is the gold standard. On the one hand, information scientists desire inter-system communication. Key benefits of interoperability include expedient information-sharing and reduced operational costs. On the other hand, they also need population-specific collection development, so that libraries can acquire materials that are meaningful for the users they serve. Meeting both aspirations is a balancing act with which recognizing the similarities between translation studies and information science can help. As mentioned above, ignoring diversity or denying equivalences results in stasis. There is somewhere in between sameness and otherness, however, that information scientists can find by coming into contact with translation theory.

Another, less-abstract level of importance concerns how catalogers approach translations in practice. RDA catalogs bibliographic entities based on their content, rather than their format, in contrast to its predecessor AACR2. This, in turn, allows RDA to more readily accommodate

the interpretation of relationships between resources in dynamic environments (Miksa, 2009, 48). The benefits of a system like this are easy to acknowledge: if users are able to search for items based on their content first and their format second, especially in a catalog in which metadata are hyperlinked, it would follow that they would be able to locate more relevant items more quickly. Moreover, a content- and relationship-based model is particularly vital as libraries start acquiring more born-digital and other ambiguously-formatted resources.

One can examine this theory in practice by looking at how translations are catalogued. There are two types of bibliographic information that readily demonstrate the theories expounded in this paper. They are: individual records for multi- or bilingual translations and record sets, or groupings of similar entities, of single-language translations.

For a bilingual translation in AACR2, one would see the collapsing of different *expressions* into one, descriptive statement. For example, the title for the Loeb Classical Library's *expression* of Homer's *Iliad* containing both the original Greek and an English translation in AACR2 would read "*Homer, Iliad, Greek & English*" (example adapted from Yale University Library, 61, 2012). [Fig. 2] In RDA, however, these *expressions*, while in the same record, are separated within the display. The same entry would read *Homer, Iliad* with no indication of language for the Greek on one line, and, on another line, *Homer, Iliad, English* (example adapted from Yale University Library, 62, 2012). This minute alteration has repercussions for translation studies that are significant.

In his seminal essay, "The Translator's Task," Walter Benjamin writes (79, 2012)

. . . *translation transplants the original into an -- ironically -- more definitive linguistic domain, since it can no longer be removed from it by any transmission, **but only re-elevated into it as well as to other entities** . . .*

He goes onto say (81)

. . . *so translation, instead of making itself resemble the sense of the original, must fashion in its own language, carefully and in detail, a counterpart to the original's mode of meaning, **in order to make both of them recognizable as fragments of a vessel, as fragments of a greater language** . . .*

What does the RDA cataloger of a translation do, if not come as close as possible to presenting that *expression* as a fragment of a greater entity-relationship vessel? Moreover, Benjamin almost perfectly summarizes the foundations of semantic hyper-linking when he writes that the relationship between a translation and its original not only creates meaning anew for the original, but also elevates it to a position from which people can form relationships between it and other informative objects. The consequences of looking at records for bi- and multilingual translations via a paradigm like Benjamin's allows for interdisciplinary advances in scholarship that might not have been possible otherwise. If translation scholars start incorporating concepts of importance to information science, such as interoperability and semantically-relational data, the opportunities in the areas of machine translation and artificial intelligence are many. Similarly, if information scientists absorb seminal models of translation theory, such as the hermeneutic approach whose supporters believe that language and translations are culturally-determinable (Venuti, 483, 2012), they will be able to remain anchored to the affective side of data.

When it comes to single-language translations, the differences between records in AACR2 and RDA are not as conspicuous. However, when these translations are viewed as a record set, a cohesive picture of bibliographic relationships becomes apparent. For instance, if one visits the online catalog of the Library of Congress and searches for “Homer Odyssey,” he/she will be directed to a results list of relevant titles. Examples of three results from the aforementioned search are as follows: [Fig. 3]

1. Homer, *Odyssey of Homer*, newly translated into English prose by T. E. Lawrence, with an introduction by Bernard Knox, 1991.
2. Homer, *Odyssey of Homer*, Translated by Ennis Rees, 1977.
3. Homer, *Odyssey of Homer*, Translated with an introd. by Richmond Lattimore, 1967.

In this collocated list of similar *expressions*, the user sees the *work*, *Odyssey of Homer*, and then an indication of the *expression* by way of its translator. Moreover, the information within these records, and those of the multilingual translations mentioned above, is dynamic at the *expression*-level [Handout]. This allows users to click on the *expression*'s title and be redirected to a record set of similar *expressions*. The power of seeing consistent terms throughout a list of results that indicate the *work*, followed by *expression*-specific terms, should not be underestimated.

Raber and Budd write (516, 2003)

*Information science, like linguistics, works in the borderland of two elements; text and content. This borderland is the terrain of aboutness, representation, relevance, and their relations in the construction or organization of and access to information. In this*

*borderland a text, its content, and its meaning meet as a necessary step in the determination of its relevance to an information user's need.*

The digital library catalog can serve as the borderland about which Raber and Budd are writing. The simplification of the process of determining the aboutness of a bibliographic object is the catalog's job. Svenonius's *navigating* objective goes far in this regard. One cannot parse aboutness, and, therefore, relevance, without recognizing relationships. Without the determination of relevance, a user's query cannot be answered. One way in which users can recognize relationships is by navigating a structured system of like-items, such as a record set. Raber and Budd's borderland is similar to Heidegger's *Dasein*. Meaning is determined by becoming-s, by thresholds and by in between-ness.

However, this dynamic navigability between *expressions* should not be misconstrued for a system of equivalence or hierarchy. These semantically-connected bibliographic entries are meant to allow navigation and serendipity through sameness, but they are, by the means expressed above by Raber and Budd, fundamentally interpretable. Further, in the context of translations cataloged in RDA, the FRBR conceptual model makes significant attempts to dissuade users from understanding the bibliographic information as a system in which the original text is more accurate than its iterative translations. Miksa (2, 2007) writes that the FRBR model is

*at times **necessarily unclear** . . . due to the inevitable variations in information resources and their intended or actual use. FRBR does not, and cannot, provide an absolute true model of these complexities. For example . . . "FRBR does not explicitly distinguish expression from work, noting that the **conceptual boundary between these entities is culturally determined.**"*

This small detail of the FRBR model is important, because it leaves the option available for translations to continue inhabiting the transitional space between conception/completion, signified/signifier, and foreignness/relatability, among other dualities. While *expressions* may have a sibling relationship to one another (Tillett, 22, 2003), that represents commonality, like real people, they are consistently in a state of *Dasein*-like potentiality.

There are also situations for which FRBR is explicit, but that end up in a similarly vague in-between zone. These types of bibliographic entities make RDA's operationalization difficult and contribute to tension within the cataloging community (Weinheimer, 2011). Carlyle provides two examples. The first case involves Braille entities. A Braille version of a text can be made from multiple *expressions*, including translations. In this case, many catalogers would classify the Braille edition as a *manifestation*. However, other catalogers might feel that categorizing a Braille edition of a text would best serve the user as an *expression* (Carlyle, 2006, 271). When questions like these are raised, larger-scale concerns become apparent. For instance, who is the authority on these types of issues? At what cost to interoperability does the desire to curate library catalogs to the user population they serve come?

The second case is how to parse part-whole relationships. For example, "My Country Tis of Thee" is a song that has a musical composer and a lyrical composer. If either the musical score or the lyrics are removed from this *work* and made into a new one, what would the title of that new *work* be? Would catalogers link this new *work* to "My Country Tis of Thee" as an *expression*? What happens when the lyrics that were taken from the original composite *work* that were made into a yet newer *work* are then translated into another language? The domino effect

such problematic bibliographical questions raise is clear (A. Carlyle, personal communication, April 23, 2015).

Despite obstacles to operationalization, it is clear that information scientists and translation theorists have similar conceptions of what makes information meaningful. A cross-discipline openness to inhabiting spaces of potential rather than structure can be advantageous to all involved. If these benefits are recognized, the prospects for collaboration and invention are great.