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The following report was prepared by Mr. Sten Hedberg, project leader for the Web version of ISO Draft Technical Report 11015.

DTR 11015 : Abbreviations of typical bibliographic terms:**Outcome of the 1998 user survey 1998 and action plan**

This is an edited version of an oral report made to the TC46 SC9 plenum at its meeting in Athens, May 1998.

Early 1998, ISO TC46 SC9 N244 was distributed with a request to the member bodies to state their opinions in various technical matters connected with the database of abbreviations held within the project DTR 11015. (The enquiry scheme is attached.)

The outcome of the enquiry is not very conclusive, mainly due to the fact that very few answers were sent in. Only two answered by the distributed form, one gave an answer to an early version of the form, one sent in an essay on the overall usage of abbreviations, and two reported that they had nothing to contribute with in the matter.

The Swedish opinion has been somewhat less formally explored, by some individual comments that have been reported to the Swedish focal point for TC 46/9 where a general statement on those lines was approved.

Only the U.K. still sees the scenario where the cataloguer does much original work with heavy use of abbreviations, but it is stressed that these occur mainly in those parts of the record that do not quote the item. From that, it also follows that the cataloguer has most use for abbreviations in the language of the catalogue, i.e. monolingual.

France and Sweden indicate that it is no longer allowed or advisable to abbreviate in input, since that disturbs full text searching. France admits the need for abbreviations, but they are to be created mechanically from full words in such output where space is essential, after which the user of the presentation will have to interpret the abbreviated form according to the reversed list.

As to the general management of the file, there is certain support for a mechanism where the central file is distributed and available nationally but updated under central control.

Some detailed answers:

- The answers seem to indicate that there will not be very many users of this service. Locally produced lists on paper might be handy in the U.K. scenario, where also a glossary function is proposed, but remote access through the web or Z39.50 seem most interesting.
- Language is an essential element in the record and in the search, to get a narrower set, and it will not do just to have codes for languages without indications of the version of the language (en-US [i.e. American English], fr-CA [i.e. Canadian French], etc.). It must be clear from the record in what languages the abbreviation is valid.
- Plurals, inflections and derivations should come in separate records when abbreviations vary. But there seems to be no need for case-sensitive input or search.
- A notes tag might be useful in occasional instances.
- Diacritics have to follow the usage of the language

It could be added that the U.K. reminds us of the fact that English language abbreviations in this field can be regarded as proprietary for the Joint Steering Committee of the AACR, since the usage documented there forms part of the rules.

For the future, it is clear that the impact of this project is not enough to make ISO change its stand vis-à-vis free access to online facilities developed within the ISO framework. On the other hand,

- the mere bulk of the paper makes it impossible to market this document in any other way than on-line;
- the considerable effort already put into the project must not be wasted.

The answers received give us some guidelines. The proposed web-server, within the Swedish national library network, will not be able to take in the files until late 1999 or early 2000, so there will be time to elaborate and explore the issues further, on both the copyright and the technology side of the matter. For the 1999 meeting, the technical and layout-related parts of the activity will be penetrated by the project leaders, Sweden and Russia, while we hope that the secretariat might come up with some solution in the copyright issue.

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