

Minutes of the First General Assembly of the
Canada/United States Chapter of ISKO

On 18 June, 2009, at ca. 3:35 pm, the first General Assembly of the Canadian/United States Chapter of ISKO (ISKO-C/US) was called into session by Richard Smiraglia, speaking on behalf of the ISKO-C/US steering committee consisting of himself, Kathryn La Barre, and Joseph Tennis. In attendance was a group of ca. 15 members of ISKO, including Smiraglia, La Barre, Rebecca Green, Elin Jacob, Barbara Kwaśnik, D. Grant Campbell, Valerie Nessel, Cristina Pattuelli, Nina Butlin, Gretchen Hoffmann, Jay Bernstein, Nicolas George, David Pimentel, and Thomas Dousa. Smiraglia moved that Green serve as chair for the assembly, a motion that was immediately seconded and accepted by acclamation. At the suggestion of La Barre, Green moved that Dousa serve as secretary for the assembly; this motion was likewise seconded and generally accepted.

In her capacity as chair, Green laid out the agenda for the assembly. Elements of the agenda that had already been slated for presentation and discussion were:

- (1) reports by the steering committee of ISKO-C/US regarding bylaws (to be presented by Smiraglia in his capacity as president), the program of the NASKO conference (to be presented by Smiraglia in lieu of the program chair, Joseph Tennis, who was not in attendance), and chapter finances (to be presented by La Barre in her capacity as treasurer);
- (2) the election of new officers for the next biennium (2009-2011); and
- (3) discussion of the NASKO 2011 conference.

Green asked if there were further matters that should be added to this agenda. Jacob stated that she wanted to discuss the acquisition of a permanent website for ISKO-C/US, preferably on server space integrated with that of other ISKO chapters.¹ La Barre noted that she had sent a letter to H. Peter Ohly, the current Secretary and Treasurer of ISKO, requesting webspace integrated with that of ISKO. Green asked the assembly if the matter should be taken up for further discussion and the response from the assembled members was affirmative. It was also suggested that Smiraglia report on, and respond to any questions that members might have about, the journal *Knowledge Organization*, of which he is the current editor-in-chief. Again, Green asked the assembly if this was acceptable to it; again, the answer was in the affirmative. Green submitted the full agenda, with the two additions, to the consideration of the members of the chapter and it was unanimously accepted.

Once Green had restated the order in which the agenda of the assembly would be considered, she yielded the floor to Smiraglia. After briefly recounting the history of the ISKO-C/US chapter (i.e., the initial discussions for forming a North American chapter of ISKO in Vienna during the Ninth International ISKO conference in 2006 and the first NASKO meeting held at Toronto in 2007), Smiraglia extended thanks to members of the chapter for their support over the previous two years. He then went on to report on the current status of the ISKO-C/US bylaws. According to ISKO statutes, a new chapter can come into existence if (1) a group of three or more individuals living in geographical region previously unrepresented assent submit a proposal to the presidency of ISKO to form a chapter and (2) the presidency (i.e., executive committee) of ISKO accepts the proposal. It is further required that the new chapters submit a set of bylaws for approval by the presidency. As Smiraglia noted, the proposed bylaws for ISKO-C/US had been approved by the ISKO presidency in a committee meeting held at the Tenth

¹ To date, the ISKO-Can/USA website has been maintained by Kathryn La Barre on shared UIUC web space.

International ISKO conference in Montreal in August 2008: it was now up to the general assembly to approve them.

Smiraglia introduced the bylaws by noting some of their most salient features. According to article 8, the text of these bylaws could be amended only by vote of an assembly of ISKO-C/US members: accordingly, they were to be opened to discussion and possible emendation at this and future meetings of the ISKO-C/US general assembly. Furthermore, Smiraglia noted, articles 3 and 7 of the bylaws stipulate that membership in the chapter is only through dues paid to ISKO and that these dues are to be paid to ISKO through ISKO-C/US. Article 4 requires that each chapter have an executive committee consisting of least three members: a president, a treasurer, and a program officer (i.e., the person who is to chair the program committee and oversee the planning of the biennial ISKO-C/U symposium). Finally, articles 3 and 7 stipulate that no money is to be taken in by the organization apart from membership dues for ISKO or fees charged to members for attendance at the biennial NASKO symposium, while article 2 establishes that ISKO-C/U is a not-for-profit organization.

Once Smiraglia had outlined the bylaws, Green opened the floor for discussion of issues pertaining to them. Bernstein opened the discussion by expressing concern that Paypal, the mechanism through which ISKO dues are typically paid, was overcharging; La Barre noted that she would address this in the treasurer's report and it was decided to defer discussion of the issue until then. Kwaśnik then raised a question about whether the purpose of ISKO-C/US was to promote a specifically North American scholarly approach in knowledge organization (KO). Smiraglia maintained that the scope of ISKO-C/US is purely geographical: its goal is to promote KO taking place in United States and Canada. (Smiraglia noted that Mexico had been invited to join the chapter as well, but concerns, *inter alia*, about the current (lack of) status of Spanish as an official language of the chapter had led Mexican KO researchers to decline the invitation.) Kwaśnik followed up with an additional question about how ISKO-C/US was to provide cohesive guidance to KO within the region: in reply, Smiraglia referred to the final line of the preamble of the bylaws that "the Chapter exists to promote research and development [sci. of KO—TMD] in the region" and suggested that this would provide sufficient criteria for ISKO-C/US's role in promoting KO within Canada and the United States.

Another set of questions regarded those articles pertaining to the officers of the chapter. One member asked whether three offices would suffice for smooth functioning of the organization; another asked whether it the bylaws shouldn't make more explicit provisions for succession in office, in case one of the officers should be incapacitated or otherwise unable to discharge his or her duties. In response to these questions, Smiraglia suggested that the chapter take a pragmatic approach and see how operations would proceed over the next two years: if any problems regarding offices should emerge, they could be taken up by the general assembly at future iterations of NASKO.

Other questions dealt with the textual interpretation of certain passages of the bylaws. Jacob expressed puzzlement at the wording of the final sentence in Article 2, which states that ISKO-C/US "[a]ctivities are solely for the promotion of scholarship culture and education in the field of knowledge organization": shouldn't the text be "scholarship, culture, and education ..."? Smiraglia pointed out that the text of the ISKO-C/US closely mirrors that of the general ISKO bylaws, which are tributary, in many of their formulations, to Ingetraut Dahlberg, the founder of the organization: in much the same way that Dahlberg prefers "knowledge organization" to "the organization of knowledge", it is likely that "scholarship culture" is her formulation for "the culture of scholarship". It was decided that emendation of the text here was unnecessary. At this point, at the suggestion of Smiraglia, Green asked the assembly if it saw fit to endorse the text of the bylaws, a motion seconded by Kwaśnik and Pimentel. After this motion had been carried, Jacob proposed an emendation of the penultimate sentence of Article 6 from "The General Assembly constitutes a quorum regardless of the number of members present" to "The General Assembly at a biennial NASKO symposium constitutes a quorum ... " on the grounds that this

would specify more precisely the conditions under which the General Assembly would meet—and so preclude the possibility that unduly small quorums (e.g., a quorum of one) could be constituted. Pursuant to discussion of the interpretation of the sentence, it was decided that the complete text of Article 6 appeared to stipulate meetings of NASKO as the appropriate venue for calling meetings of the General Assembly and thus Jacob’s motion to emend was not seconded. Pimental went on to suggest the phrase “biennial NASKO symposium” in Articles 6 & 7 be amended to “biennial NASKO” on the grounds that “symposium” is redundant after “NASKO” (i.e., the “North American *Symposium* on Knowledge Organization” [emphasis mine—TMD]): Dousa seconded the motion to carry through this emendation. Green asked the General Assembly if it saw fit that the bylaws be approved with the stipulation that, in all occurrences of the phrase “NASKO symposium”, the word “symposium” be struck: this motion was carried and so the bylaws were officially approved by the General Assembly.

Next on the agenda was the report of the program chair, which was delivered by Smiraglia in lieu of Tennis. Smiraglia reported that Tennis sent his regards to the conference as a whole and, in particular, wanted to thank the co-chairs of the planning committee, Jacob and Kwaśnik, for all their work in organizing the conference: this formal thanks to the planning committee was met with applause from all members present.

Following this was the treasurer’s report, presented by La Barre. Currently, ISKO –C/US is awaiting incorporation as a legal entity: it will be so incorporated in the state of Illinois in the United States of America. As of 18 June, 2009, the balance of ISKO-C/US’s monetary holdings was \$1,142.29: this total will change in the coming weeks as monies from the registration fees for NASKO 2009 (\$ 70.00 per member; \$30.00 per students and retired members) are added and payments of fees to Syracuse University are disbursed. La Barre further noted that there are presently 47 ISKO members paying their membership fees through ISKO-C/US. The rates are 83 € (equivalent to ca, \$118.00 [USD] for regular members using Paypal; \$ 125.00 if the payment is by check, with the additional \$7.00 serving to cover bank fees), and 28 € (i.e., ca. \$40.00 [USD]) for students and retirees. Dues are to be paid to ISKO-C/US in January: La Barre noted that members can transfer money individually to ISKO but noted that ISKO prefers lump-sum payments from the chapter. Funds are transferred from the chapter to ISKO twice a year: over the last two years, payment has been made from Paypal account to Paypal account. Although there is a fee associated with such Paypal money transfers, costs are less than wire transfers conducted through banks are. For this reason, La Barre recommended that members of ISKO-C/US use Paypal to pay their dues fees; she offered to provide advice to any member who was having trouble using Paypal to make his or her payments. In response to a complaint by Bernstein that, despite paying his dues for 2009, he had not yet received the issues of *Knowledge Organization* that every member is to receive, La Barre stated that, in the past year, there had been a significant delay in the diffusion of the journal to ISKO members in North America: she said that she had received a few extra copies of the current issue for distribution to members and that she would send inquiries to ISKO to see if any outstanding issues might be sent to members as expeditiously as possible. Kwaśnik asked if there was any temporally fixed limit on student rates for dues or whether, after a certain period of time, a member who had joined as a student must pay regular rates for dues regardless of his or her status. La Barre replied that there is no limit on student rates: however long a member of the chapter is he student, he or she pays student rates. No further questions were asked and Green thanked La Barre for her report.

The following item on the agenda was the election of officers for the biennium 2009–2011. Green opened the floor for nominations for the office of president. Smiraglia nominated La Barre. After La Barre accepted the nomination, the motion was seconded by Bernstein. Bernstein then asked Smiraglia if he would consider standing for a second term as president and Smiraglia demurred. There were no further nominations for the presidency. Green then opened the floor for nomination of the treasurer. La Barre nominated Dousa, who accepted the nomination, and the

motion was seconded by Hoffmann. No other nomination for treasurer was put forth. Finally, Green opened the floor for nominations of the program chair. A proposal was put forth to nominate Jacob as the program chair, which was seconded by Kwaśnik: Jacob accepted the nomination. La Barre nominated George for the position of program chair and this nomination was seconded by Jacob. Green asked Jacob if, given her support of George's candidacy for the position, she would be willing to withdraw her candidacy. Jacob replied in the affirmative and so removed herself from consideration. George accepted the nomination and no further names were put forth. Smiraglia moved that the nominations be closed and that the persons nominated be elected by acclamation: La Barre seconded the motion and it was passed by acclamation of the assembly. Accordingly, for the years 2009-2011, La Barre will serve as president of ISKO-C/US; Dousa, as treasurer; and George, as program chair.

Having overseen the election of new officers for the chapter, Green brought up for discussion the upcoming NASKO to be held in 2011. First to be discussed were potential venues for the symposium. La Barre noted that the dean of the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, had issued a standing invitation to the symposium and added that, if UIUC were the venue, it might be possible to hold the conference at the Allerton Conference Center. George suggested that a venue further to the west, such as the University of Washington, might help to offset the strong "east-coast" flavor of past NASKO meetings. Another suggestion was to hold the next NASKO at Toronto, the site of the original conference in 2007. Two reasons were offered in support of this proposal: (1) it would be best to alternate between United States and Canadian venues for the symposium to keep in the spirit of the joint identity of the chapter and (2) Toronto is a central located site with direct transportation to a number of places, thus making it readily accessible by airplane to the widest range of members. Campbell noted that he had sent an e-mail to the head of the Faculty of Information and Media Studies at the University of Western Ontario in London, Ontario, but cautioned that, from the point of view of transportation, London is considerably more difficult to reach than Toronto is. Bernstein suggested that Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, might be an interesting Canadian venue. Since no chapter members from Dalhousie were present at the General Assembly, it was not possible to gain any sense for the university's willingness to host the symposium; it was also noted that transportation to Halifax might prove expensive for many members. It was observed that, whatever the venue chosen, it would be desirable that the host school be willing to outlay some money to sponsor the symposium. Furthermore, Smiraglia noted, it seemed best to keep the formal apparatus of the symposium simple (e.g., no large banquets): this would keep costs manageable and so make it more affordable to a wider range of members. No final decision was made as to venue: this will be left to the George and the program committee for NASKO 2011 that he will constitute and establish in the next year.

The next topic brought up for discussion was what the theme for NASKO 2011 might be and how it might be formulated for a call for papers. Smiraglia stated that he wished the call for papers to be as inclusive as possible (i.e., it should specify that conference organizers are willing to consider, in addition to paper proposals on the stated theme, papers on "anything else" pertaining to KO) and that doctoral student participation should be especially encouraged. Bernstein also noted that the theme for NASKO 2011 should be as broad as possible. No theme emerged from the discussion and it was decided to defer further consideration until the workshop on the "State of North American KO" to be held on 19 June, 2009, under the direction of Jacob and Kwaśnik.

After the original items on the agenda for the General Assembly had been dealt with, Green opened discussion on the two additional items that had been proposed for deliberation earlier in the meeting. First of these was the question of procuring a permanent website for ISKO-C/US. George noted that, currently, the ISKO-C/US website is hosted on a personal webspace on the UIUC server, while its publications are hosted on D-List. He suggested that it would be advantageous for ISKO-C/US to have its own web space, on which it could host its own

publications: this would not only allow ISKO-C/US to expand the scope of its website but would also conduce to greater stability for its web publications. It was proposed that ISKO-C/US might lease webspace from the parent ISKO organization. Smiraglia and La Barre noted that the presidency of ISKO is currently trying to negotiate a new website for the organization: it was suggested that H. Peter Ohly, secretary and treasurer of ISKO, would be the person to contact to inquire about the possibility of moving ISKO-C/US into ISKO-sponsored webspace. As regards the potential cost of starting up a new website, it was noted that, because of the generosity of Claire Beghtol and the Toronto-based sponsors of the 2007 NASKO, who helped pay for that conference from their own funds, there is some money available to help start up an upgraded website. Jacob suggested that, as a complement to its website, ISKO-C/US have its own listserv. George offered to take on the task of planning for, and implementing, the new website.

Green then yielded the floor to Smiraglia, who gave a general report on the current state of the journal *Knowledge Organization* and its plans for the immediate future. The current issue (Vol. 36 [2009] 2/3), guest-edited by members of the ISKO-Italia chapter, has just been published and is available to members online: in addition, paper copies should shortly be available to ISKO members residing in the United States. In general, *Knowledge Organization* has greatly increased its online presence. To date, backfiles going back as far as the year 2000 have been digitized and are now available online to members of ISKO: in addition, Ergon Verlag, the publisher of the journal, has recently signed a contract with EBSCO and so back issues to the year 2000 should be available in library aggregators by the end of 2009. Smiraglia also noted that Ergon Verlag has set up an open access agreement for preprints: an author will be allowed to post unedited preprints of an article on his or her own website but the version edited by Smiraglia and his colleagues at *Knowledge Organization* are the property of Ergon Verlag and cannot be so posted. One recent change in editorial policy has been to move its bibliography of knowledge organization out of the journal and into a separate online publication available in PDF form: it is hoped to transform this presently into a live database in the near future. An important consequence of this change is that there is no space for an additional 20+ pages of articles and/or book reviews in the journal itself: Smiraglia anticipates that this will result in “meatier” issues in the future. He also noted that Tennis, who is the new book reviews editor, seeks to expand the section by publishing more substantial bibliographic essays that, ideally, would treat two or three works on a single theme or area of KO: members interested in writing such reviews are encouraged to contact him and offer suggestions of books to be reviewed. In response to queries about the review process of the journal, Smiraglia emphasized that *Knowledge Organization*, unlike many other major journals in Library and Information Science, is committed to maintaining its standards of double-blind peer review.

Once Smiraglia had finished his presentation of matters pertaining to *Knowledge Organization*, Green asked if there was anything else that should be discussed. When nothing was indicated, she asked if the General Assembly thought it fit that the proceedings be brought to a close: this motion was seconded by Jacob and Bernstein. The General Assembly duly came to a close ca. 4:35 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas M. Dousa

Secretary for the First General Assembly of ISKO-C/US

23 June, 2009. [Emended 10 July, 2009; 16 July, 2009; 27 October, 2009]