FROM GENERAL THESAURUS TO GENERAL ONTOLOGY

Experiences from the National Library of Finland

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The National Library of Finland is responsible for the development and updating of four Finnish thesauri:

- **YSA** (Yleinen suomalainen asiasanasto)
  - Finnish General Thesaurus
- **Allärs** (Allmän tesaurus på svenska)
  - Swedish translation of YSA
- **MUSA** (Musiikin asiasanasto)
  - Finnish Music Thesaurus
- **CILLA** (Specialtesaurus för musik)
  - Swedish translation of MUSA
PRODUCTION OF GENERAL THESAURI

• The development of general thesauri is a mandate of the National Library
• Swedish versions produced in co-operation with the Åbo Akademi Library
  • YSA in use since 1987
  • Allärs in use since 1996
USE OF GENERAL THESAURI

• Current use:
  over 12.5 million terms searched per year
  – YSA nearly 9 million
  – Allärs over 3 million

• Not only libraries but widely used also by other organisations
  – e.g. The national government document metadata standard (JHS 143) recommends the use of YSA in the <DC:Subject> field
MAINTENANCE AND ACCESS

• The general thesauri are maintained within the ILS
  – Authority records within the National Bibliography and Discography databases
  – MARC authority format

• Access to authority records separate
  – First: Thesaurus CD-ROM
  – Currently: separate search database (non-standard)
  – Future: fully integrated ontology library server?
CO-OPERATION PROJECT

• The National Semantic Web Ontology Project in Finland (FinnONTO), 2003-2007
• NLF a partner since 2004
• NLF has provided
  – the basic data (YSA terms)
  – also expertise in the development and testing of the General Upper Ontology and the ontology server
• Will continue within the National Semantic Web 2.0 project (2008-2010)
YSA to YSO: WHY?

• "So, it’s a blueprint of the world, is it?"

• Need for a general upper ontology to serve as "semantic glue" for special ontologies
  – Rough estimate: one third of the terms in special ontologies overlap with general terms

• The general thesaurus provided the basic terms for building a general ontology
THESAURI to ONTOLOGIES

• General Thesaurus (YSA)
• Thesaurus of Museums (MASA)
• Thesaurus of Photography (Valokuvausalan asiasanasto)
• AgriForest
• etc.

YSO

MAO

VALO

AFO

Plants

Plant ornaments

Plant photography

Botanical terminology

etc
NEXT STEPS

NLF main interests for the project period 2008-2010:

• General Upper Ontology
  – analysis of feedback > revisions
  – calibration of YSA and YSO > implementation of new YSA terms
  – reconstruction of Swedish version

• Development of integrated ontology server
  – further development of user interface and APIs

• Securing assets for ongoing maintenance and development after the project phase
Asiasana (en): thanks
Asiasana (fi): kiitokset
Asiasana (sv): tacksägelser