SLOVENŠČINA 2.0: “LEXICOGRAPHY”

A round table at the eLex 2011 conference on electronic lexicography focused on the question whether there will still be dictionaries in 2020. The overall consensus was that yes, there will be dictionaries, but they will be different than dictionaries in the past and may, in some cases at least, no longer be called dictionaries. It was also recognized that the online medium will become more and more dominant in lexicography. Subsequent events have shown that the lexicographic community is very much aware of this, the proof also being the formation of the European Network of e-Lexicography (ENeL). The question for lexicographers has become not whether dictionaries will still exist in the future but how should electronic dictionaries, especially online dictionaries, be conceptualized and designed to meet the needs of modern dictionary users.

This special issue brings an insight into various projects that moved away from the printed medium and started dealing with questions such as: What is the profile of my user? How can the opportunities offered by the online medium be most effectively exploited? Which functionalities should be included? What means can be used to make user more pro-active and engaged? What are new types of information that can be presented? How does the change in medium affect traditional lexicographic principles and practices? The value of these papers lies also in the fact that they cover different types of dictionaries, languages, countries and aspects of lexicographic work.

The first two papers of the special issue give accounts of two English dictionaries that were the first to announce their intentions to abandon the printed medium. Michael Rundell explains the reasons behind the transition of Macmillan English Dictionary from printed book to digital-only resource, and considers both the downsides of abandoning print and the advantages of digital media. It is shown that users of online dictionaries bring new demands and consequently new challenges for dictionary publishers, who in turn need to find solutions which are relevant to the new medium. A similar case is presented for
the Oxford English Dictionary by John Simpson, its former editor-in-chief, who by attempting to adopt the perspective of James Murray, the OED's first editor, looks at the dictionary's publishing history, changes in editorial policy across the two media, and discusses some new options already implemented by the dictionary, such as data visualisation through graphs and links to other resources.

The papers by Žmigrodzki and Arias-Badia et al. present ongoing Polish and Spanish projects respectively that represent the new generation of dictionaries, namely “digital-born” dictionaries or dictionaries designed solely for an online medium. Žmigrodzki gives an account of the new general dictionary of Polish, describes the history of the project and provides an overview of dictionary characteristics and its contents, and outlay the plans for the future. A particularly valuable part of the paper is the presentation of the organization of work, i.e. workflow, as this is rarely encountered in papers of this kind. Arias-Badia et al. report on the DAELE, a learners' dictionary for Spanish, and focus on definitions, examples, and collocations as features that bring recent theoretical advances such as Corpus Pattern Analysis (CPA) and the presentation of collocations by using collocational networks to the Spanish lexicography.

Carole Tiberius and her colleagues address the important topic of a dictionary-writing system (DWS). They present their in-house DWS, which is currently used for the production of a monolingual dictionary (ANW) and a bilingual dictionary, its features and software requirements. A discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of both in-house systems and off-the-shelf systems will be particularly useful for any dictionary projects facing this decision.

The paper by Trap-Jensen et al. is an empirical study that shows what role log files can play in determining which words are selected next for inclusion in the dictionary. They argue that corpus remains the best source for the first 20,000 words, but beyond this frequency threshold log files and other resources are
worth consulting. Their conclusion is that lexicographers should still make the final selection, regardless of the methods used, especially at low frequency words.

The final three papers look at recent developments in Slovenian lexicography. Simon Krek evaluates the recently published second edition of the Dictionary of Literary Slovene (SSKJ) by comparing it with its predecessor and the Dictionary of New Words of the Slovenian language (2012), which was partly integrated in the second edition. His findings reveal that the second edition does not contain a great deal of new material; furthermore, the material that has been added or updated often goes against the concept of the original dictionary, raising doubts about lexicographic competence of the authors of the second edition and the motivations behind its publication. Iztok Kosem evaluates the Fran portal, another recent product of Slovenian lexicography, and finds that despite its wealth of 21 different dictionaries, it comes with many problems that reduce its user-friendliness, with a heavy connection with the printed medium being the most dominant one. Polona Gantar looks into the future of Slovenian lexicography by comparing and contrasting two different concepts for a new dictionary of Slovene that are currently subject of heated discussions in the media and among academics. By considering some of the proposed features of both concepts, she concludes that only a solution based on the needs of Slovene users, which is digital-born and optimally exploits language technologies in the lexicographic process, can result in a dictionary that will be a state-of-the-art lexicographic product as SSKJ once was.

In front of you is a special issue of Slovenščina 2.0 which provides a snapshot of contemporary activity in the European lexicographic community, and which gives some pointers to the directions in which the field is moving. We wish you an informative and thought-provoking reading.

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