Report on the 9th Conference of the Semantic Web In Libraries 4-6 December 2017, Hamburg, Germany[1]

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Introduction

Having been introduced to the SWIB through the searching for the section of literature review of my thesis earlier the year, I decided to attend in the conference when I would arrive in Germany to start my visiting research period in Cologne. Although I had forgotten the exact date of the conference I received an email from one of the mailing lists in November. I just jumped at the chance of a sponsored place at the conference. Because the SWIB conference gave me the opportunity to gather some useful information for my thesis topic on modeling grey archaeological literature. I was delighted that my grant application had been accepted successfully.

I arrived in Hamburg in early morning of the day before the conference, so I explored the city of harbor and little Europe in wonderland. Although I had some difficulties in connecting to the network by my mobile phone to find my way on google map I was hospitably welcomed and helped by residents of Hamburg to find my way.

Day 1

I went to the conference venue early in the morning. The *Katholische Akademie Hamburg* provided an excellent base for the conference, set in an attractive building with orange and grey frontageand a great view to The Gothic Revival Church of St. Nicholas's church. Before the conference was officially opened by the chair of the Rhine-Westphalian Library Service Center (hbz), *Dr. Silke Schomburg* on 5th of December 2017, we had the opportunity to register and get the scheduled program of the conference. Before opening the conference's

three meetings, the participants had the chance to socialize and talk to each other around the breakfast table. I talked to Dr. Ziyoung Park, Hansung University, South Korea. Both of us studied library and information science and were interested in the conceptual reference models. It was really interesting for us to visit each other from the Asia with the same subjects of interest. The fact that the lecture theatre, restaurant, and accommodation were all on the same site created a good opportunity for discussion outside of the formal program, providing the opportunity for many useful contacts to be made.

During the first day of the conference three meetings on "the DINI AG KIM", "BIBFRAME Use: Vocabulary, Conversion, Reconciliation" and "VIVO community" were held. Furthermore, on the first day of the conference registered participants were able to attend five various workshops and tutorials about semantic web technologies and managing linked data. Although I had decided to participate in the "BIBFRAME Use: Vocabulary, Conversion, Reconciliation" the session was fully booked. Then I attended the "VIVO community" meeting but the instructor announced the meeting would be in German. As sadly I do not understand German, I just went for the last option, which was attending the BIBFRAME meeting and luckily I was successful to attend it. As a result of this, I got to the meeting with a little bit of delay and I could only listen to Nate Trail and Ray Denenbergboth from the Library of Congress.Theirpresentations were on BIBFRAME Pilot. I had already read about BIBFRAME but I was curious to know what they did in practice with the huge amount of data in MARC. They gave detailed information about the second Pilot simulating the cataloging environment with Linked Data, a triple store, and the BIBFRAME data model in the Library of Congress. It was quite interesting for me as a cataloguer to know 60 pilot cataloguers are working to create new descriptions of items. I found the meeting very useful. After the meeting - on our way to the elevator - I talked to the presenters about the idea of making another ontology for modelling bibliographic universe and by we decided to discuss it further in future. I hope to interview them in near future.

The afternoon was allocated to the workshops of the conference. Five workshops were held in parallel from 13-18 o'clock. Each workshop had about 20-25 participants. Workshops were focused on a few topics. Although I was interested in participating in "**introduction to Linked Data**", there was no vacancy to attend it. Therefore, I did not have any option but to take part in "**Dokieli**"workshop. The main idea of Sarven Capadisli from the University of Bonnfor developing Dokieli was discussed. He discussed about openness, access and

decentralization in scientific publication in the first part of his workshop. In the break session I talked to Abigail Sparling a librarian from Canada who participated in "**introduction to Linked Data**". She told me if you just ask the instructors of the workshop perhaps they accept you because there were still a few vacant seats in the room. I listened to her advice and asked *Christina Harlow* for permission to attend the workshop and she kindly agreed. The workshop was practical and all the participants made their own xml files step by step. The workshop had three helpful instructors. They were careful enough to be sure each participant was able to do the practices correctly. Fortunately, at the end of the workshop I was quitepleased with the content. Because having the knowledge of programing did not seem as a big barrier for learning in that workshop and instructors taught from the basic steps.

From the first seconds of the conference the participants twitted on twitter under the hashtag of #SWIB17 and they highlighted each aspect of this event from their own perspective.

Day 2

The talks given by various figures that were connected to the semantic web technology were insightful, to say at least. It was great to be able to listen to so many experienced and knowledgeable people from library and information science sectors. Listening to the speakers made it clear to me the key issues and challenges facing the semantic web technology today and made me understand how committed each speaker was to their particular field. In the sessions of the conference, I was listening to the most up-to-date developments in the semantic web field and other related fields being discussed. I felt that I was taking part in something special related to my own research project.

Dr. Silke Schomburg, Chair of the Rhine-Westphalian Library Service Center (hbz), Germany, formally opened the conference and invited the everyone to actively participate in the event. Her speech was followed with **Dr. Klaus Tochtermann** from the Leibniz Information Centre for Economics (ZBW), Germany. She talked about the role of linked data and gave some information about the background of the conference.

Then the program continued with a highly stimulating and broad keynote speech by **George Oates** from the Good, Form & Spectacle, UK. The title of her speech was "Every Collection

is a Snowflake" which was really creative and I was curious to know about her perspective of the semantic web technologies in real world and data collections. She was critical of the new technologies dealing with organizing collections. She also had a great perspective and focus on the users' problems when they facing new technologies or new systems of organization. The talk was interesting for me as I have done my master's thesis about user tasks when using online library catalogues.

Oates's speech raised many questions in my mind for which I did not have any ready answer. Those questions are fundamental and related to the basic concerns of library and information centers. For example, the methods that librarians use for organizing information, cataloguing rules, etc. were criticized by her. Fortunately, she proposed a breakout session in which we were able to participate in more discussion about the questions I mentioned. I just wish there was more time for discussion.

All of the conference presentations were organized in four main topics: "Special collections", "Vocabularies", "Infrastructure" and "Entity recognition and lookup". The organization was effective. My only issue was that for some of the sessions there was not enough time for asking questions.

The first session of the conference entitled "Special collections", opened by **Rodolphe Bailly** from the Cité de la musique - Philharmonie de Paris, France. His project, DOREMUS, was about music collection, and involved an ontology, controlled vocabularies, tools for data conversion and interlinking and examples of reuse of those results in a music recommendation system.

Then **Regine Heberlein** from the Princeton University Library, U.S., as a member of project group in LD4P at Princeton defined linked data ontologies specifically for the description of special collections materials. Her presentation answered some of my questions considering methods for converting from MARC-Based production workflows to production workflows based on linked open data. I have repeatedly heard from some of my colleagues in Iran that "MARC is dead" but during her discussion I found that dealing with immigration issues from MARC based catalogues to the new generation of catalogues involves an extremely hard process.

The last presentation of the special collections was given by **Myung-Ja K. Han**,U.S.She shared their experiences in classifying the entities of the metadata of their collection. I learned more aboutschema.org semantics from her presentation. Basically, all of the three presentations were focused on sharing experiences of some practical projects and in this sense they were very informative, but again there was little time allocated to discussion.

After the break, the conference continued by four presentations in the "Vocabularies" session.**Valentine Charles** (from the Europeana Foundation) taught me more schema.org and I learned that Europeana could be the right place for my further research because it is trying to use principles of Linked Data for aggregating and representing metadata in the domain of cultural heritage. So it is quite similar to my research project in which I intend to model the grey literature of cultural heritage.

The researchers of the other three presentations (**Nate Trail and Ray Denenberg** from LoC; **Jason Kovari and Steven Folsom** from the Cornell University; and **Ian Bigelow** from the University of Alberta) focused on the issues related to conversion to BIBFRAME. I knew from the start of the conference that BIBFRAME would be a challenge for me in this field. I found the presentations helpful ad they discussed real challenges of moving libraries to linked data era. The presenters seemed to agree that although we might say MARC is dead,we use it in the library systems. Although there were some different opinions for using an ontology in the era of Linked Data for Bibliographic Universe, this session didn't make any conclusion or suggestion for library communities as to how to manage their data to enjoy the benefits of Linked data era. I suggested that the BIBFRAME could be one of the main topics of the next conference.

Day 3

On the last day of the conference, after I found my gift from Santa in front of the door of my room in the hotel and visiting the harbor in the early morning I reached to the conference building at 8:45. The session started with the second keynote speech. **Dario Taraborelli** from the Wikimedia Foundation gave an speech about "Unlocking Citations from tens of millions of scholarly Papers". This presentation made me think as a librarianabout how we

can improve the access to citations. I should say that the choice of keynote speakers with their fascinating topics was one of the conference's strengths.

Osma Suominen in the 100th anniversary of the National Library of Finland introduced "Finnish National Bibliography Fennica as Linked Data". His presentation also discussed the challenges of dealing with converting 1 million MARC bibliographic records to BIBFRAME 2.0. Many people raised their hands for questions after the presentation, which was an indication of the importance of the topic and audience's interest.

After the coffee break in the infrastructure session, three presentations were given by researchers from Netherlands, Belgium and Finland. The focus of this session was a debate on implementing linked open data technology and quality of this kind of data. The presentation of **Anastasia Dimou** was different from the others'. She argued that the quality of Linked Data generated from existing tools is not reliable because they incorporate heterogeneous data from multiple sources and different formats into the Linked Open Data cloud. She introduced a new sustainable semantic-driven approach which they tried to use it in their own project.

The last session of the conference was about "entity recognition and lookup". Six researchers from Germany and the U.S. shared the results of their projects.

I was especially interested in the presentation of **Alicia Esquivel** from the Chicago Botanic Garden and **Katie Mika** from the Museum of Comparative Zoology (U.S.). Their presentation was about "Improving Named Entity Recognition in the Biodiversity Heritage Library with Machine Learning". Their project focused on scientific names and they used entity recognition algorithms to extract scientific names in order to index and attach to page records. The presentation gave me the ideato extract data of my own project by using their algorithm.

Due to time limitation to reach the train I had to leave the conference so I lost the last two presentations but I watched theirrecordings after the conference. The conference finished at 15:15 on 6th of December. From what my conversation with the other participants, everyone

was quite satisfied with the quality and diversity of the presentations and we all are looking forward to share new ideas in the next year conference in Bonn, Germany.

EXTRAS

Besides all of the wonderful keynote speeches, presentations and workshops, the conference had two features that added great value to the event. One was the lightning talks session. The idea was that each presenter made a 3-minute presentation and condensely conveyed his or her message. Probably a longer version of PechaKucha style of presentation which are effective and joyful for the audience. There were eight of such talks. I found this opportunity to be useful for those presenters who couldnot make it to the main presentation sessions for any reason.

The other feature was breakout sessions. One week before the start of the conference the organizing committee asked the participants for proposing topics of breakout sessions. The aim of the sessions was to create a possibility for participants to get together over a specific idea, project, problem, to do hands-on work, discuss or write. Five breakout sessions were proposed by some of the participants on things like Wikidata, Folio, and Linked Open Research Cloud. Participants of each break out session registered their names on the related page of the Conftool. These sessions were held on 5th of December from 16 – 18.
I participated in "Small pieces, loosely joined" session which suggested by George Oates. She was the keynote speaker of the conference. We discussed her presentation. I realized that she putsa great deal of importance on the users' need. At the end of the session we all agreed to start a virtual discussion group to talk more about the topic of the breakout session.

VISITS AND EXCURSIONS

By the time the day's events had ended, we were all in need of some relaxation. The social events of the conference came highly recommended by my colleagues and friends at the University of Cologne, so it was something I was particularly looking forward to. After the breakout sessions we went to the nearest Christmas Market to *the Katholische Akademie Hamburg* to visit and explore the traditional markets. During the explorations we continued our discussion about the topics of the session. Later on we went *to the Rheinische Republik Hamburg* restaurant for the conference dinner. During the dinner I talked to some librarians

from Hamburg and I learned about difference of education system for librarians in Germany in comparison to ours in Iran. I also learned a few things about food and dinning culture in Germany.

REFLECTION

Participating in the SWIB conference for the first time created a great opportunity for me to communicate and network with some other like-minded people and those with similar research interest. The fact that the conference, was not limited to librarians, and many people from different fields participated in the conference, was one of those features that made this event very productive and effective. The conference was like a small version of IFLA congress for me which I hope I could participate one day in future.

Next year will be the 10th year of the conference. Although the conference was really well-organized, there are some suggestions which might be useful for the next year conference:

1. It would be better if participants suggest some topics for the workshops in advance or perhaps choose some topics they are interested in from a list using an online poll;

2. Seeing the profile of each participant on the online Conftool was very helpful but if there were some forums for sharing ideas it would have been more useful and informative for participants who are interested in sharing ideas on the same subject.

Overall, holding a conference annually and bringing the professional from all over the world is a lot of hard work for a good cause and the efforts of the organizers are much appreciated. Conferences such as this that are focused on very specialized topics (in comparison to many conferences that accepts papers on all subject areas within an academic discipline) are very effective in building communities of scholarship and communities of practice. I hope to be able to be part of these communities and participate in the future conferences.

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