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Editorial

All articles in this edition of MDN are centered around the theme text analysis. The editors of MDN have chosen this theme for the first special edition as they find this topic of great importance for the social sciences. There is an increasing significance attached to the technique of text analysis chosen for the analyses of written material and responses to open ended questions, and even for the formulation of interview questions.

Inspite of its importance, text analysis is still in a developmental phase. Important developments in recent years are: high speed retrieval programs, the existence of different dictionaries, disambiguation procedures and progress in the field of operational grammar. But still a lot of work has to be done.

Last year the Dutch community enjoyed the benefits of the more than 20 years of experience of J.Z. Namenwirth, who was visiting the Netherlands with the assistance of Z.W.O. This occasion brought the social scientists working in this field together in a seminar where recent works or methodological problems were discussed. Our aim was to inform other people about the developments in this field in the Netherlands. The choice of articles was made by a special staff consisting of Zvi Namenwirth, Irmtraud Gallhofer and Kees Niemöller. We would like to express here our sincere thanks for the editorial work they have done for MDN.

The next edition of MDN appears in May. Contributions may be sent to the editors.

Redaction

Preface

As mentioned above, the contributions in this edition are forthcoming from participants of the text analysis seminar held last spring at the Free University in Amsterdam. The first three articles deal with mass communication. They use text analysis as an observation technique in order to make inferences concerning the progressiveness of a specific newspaper (J.J. van Cuilenburg), the well foundedness of argumentation in this newspaper (G.W. Noomen) and concerning the dominating influences of Dutch mass media (J.Oorburg et al.). The following three articles are related to International Relations. The first article studies the reliability in extracting decision making concepts from ministerial debates (I.N. Gallhofer). Then the next tackles the problem of finding semantic characteristics of the decision making concepts in order to construct a dictionary (J.Z. Namenwirth et al.).The third article describes the semantic space of the texts representing the decision making concepts (J.Z. Namenwirth, J. Kleinnijenhuis).Following a short summary of the programs available in the Netherlands for computer-aided text analysis (I.N. Gallhofer), Boot's contribution deals with the development of a computerized Dutch grammar which can highly facilitate automatic text analysis. Finally M.Kops' book concerning sampling for content analytic purposes is reviewed by J. Oorburg.

The articles published here are drawn from research projects concluded at the time the seminar took place. Other participants reported on activities which were still going on. During the seminar a workgroup for text analysis was established. People interested in these activities may contact I.N. Gallhofer (Free University, Afdeling Methoden en Technieken, De Boellelaan 1115, Amsterdam, tel.020-548 44 23).

Finally, we wish to thank the editorial board of MDN for providing us with the possibility of publishing these papers.

Zvi Namenwirth
Irmtraud Gallhofer
Kees Niemöller