

SEMINAL MNEMONICS IN KNOWLEDGE ORGANIZATION: MODERN PRACTICES AND ANCIENT TRADITIONS

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The use of seminal mnemonics implies the identification, at the near-seminal level, of similar subsets or groups of concepts (ideas) in subject domains and deriving a similar pattern of organization of the subsets in different domains. More specifically it consists in having the same digit or digit group to denote seminally equivalent ideas in whatever subject they may occur, even though different terms may be used to denote the ideas in the different subject fields. Seminal mnemonics are helpful in the organization of concepts – in the presentation of ideas in technical writing and in discourses, in designing schemes for subject classification, taxonomy etc. This paper examines the sequence of steps in the thinking process in different contexts, such as, systems analysis, systems design, knowledge management, problem solving, decision making, and the process of classifying subjects. Two main categories of concepts are identified, namely, concepts denoting attributes of the elements of the system studied and concepts denoting actions taken at each step in designing the system. The steps and their sequence are similar and parallel in the contexts examined. To facilitate remembering these systematic steps numerals and their ordinal values are used to organize or 'fix' the sequence. We also indicate the similarity in the association of concepts with numbers in some ancient traditions.

Keywords: Knowledge organization; mnemonics; seminal mnemonics; practices; traditions

Introduction

'Seminal' means germinal, originative, containing seeds of later development. For instance: "seminal ideas of one discipline can influence the growth of another".

'Mnemonics' means a method – a way of doing something, especially a systematic way, implying an orderly logical arrangement, usually in steps – to aid the memory, that is, remembering.

Use of seminal mnemonics in knowledge organization devices implies the identification of similar subsets or groups of ideas (concepts) in subject domains and deriving

a similar pattern of organization of the subsets in different domains at the *near-seminal level*. In this paper we elaborate on this implication. In schemes for classification use of seminal mnemonics consists in having the same digit or digit group to 'denote seminally equivalent ideas in whatever subject they may occur, even though different terms may be used to denote the ideas in the different contexts.'¹

The intuitive application of seminal mnemonics in the coding of unit ideas or groups of them in the schedules for subject classification in different domains can be found in literature¹⁻². Seminal mnemonics as a pattern for systems analysis examined by Neelameghan³⁻⁵ and Pratap Lingam⁶ have demonstrated the usefulness of seminal mnemonics in the presentation of ideas in technical writing. Judge⁷ has commented on the difficulties of applying seminal mnemonics and the need to go beyond. Beghtol⁸ in a discussion of relationships in classification of concepts

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