Intersectionality and the social construction of Knowledge Organization

Abstract
The aim of this paper is to identify, systematize and analyse the political and conceptual needs that guide the composition and update of knowledge organization devices in contemporary times, along with their ties to socio-historical conditions and ethical modes of existence. The analysis took as a reference the intersectional processes of representation of knowledge in the themes of gender, race, sexuality and feminist studies in distributed and networking information systems.

Introduction
The processes of information and knowledge production, circulation and organization have undergone several transformations in the last few years. We can readily see a rise in intense questioning about the limits for knowledge organization systems which, from the perspective of pervasive criticism, tend to reify knowledge for a shared verisimilitude within hegemonic groups. Such procedures would lead, ultimately, to the production of a partial mirroring of reality, rendering the presence of some themes, representations and subjectivities rarefied.

Accordingly, approaches calling for a transversal and intersectional turn based on devices structured in the context of knowledge organization are growing in numbers.

Considering the context of socio-technical changes and shifting power relations, the concerns and public perception that knowledge organization devices can be used as tools for domination systems has become more widespread (Berman 1971, Olson 1998; Drumm 2000; Mai 2010; Higgins 2016; Adler 2016).

Consequently, we are at a social-historical moment in which the theme of discursive reparations in communication and knowledge organization domains finds room for reflection.

Foucault (1995) emphasizes that contemporary struggles are transversal, targeting the effects of power; these struggles are no longer limited by geographical boundaries.

Through an analysis of power relations, Foucault (1995) identifies a triple typology marked by support, imbrication and functioning as an instrument. They are as follows: communication relations, power relations and objective capacities. The author highlights that these relations are neither uniform, nor constant. However, “there are also ‘blockages’ in which the adjustment of capacities, the bundles of communication and power relations constitute regulated systems and accords” (Foucault 1995, 241). Disciplines, then, have their role under the spotlight because they “show, according to
artificially clear and decanted schemes, the way objective finality systems, communications and power systems may articulate over each other”.

Foucault understands that power is “a way for some to structure the field of possible actions by others”. For that reason, it was considered pertinent for this work to reflect on the unfolding of such a perspective in the composition and update of knowledge organization devices. It was also perceived that it is relevant to identify remains kept by these devices with socio-historical conditions and ethical modes of existence presumed in the discourses that promulgate them.

To achieve that, we adopted as reference the methodological principles used by Foucault to approach issues of power, particularly in regard to his archaeology of knowledge, which focuses on discursive formation entering the genealogy, in which the philosopher may integrate non-discursive relationships and acquire knowledge through strategies and tactics of power. In that aspect, we believe that it is possible to understand the workings of interlacement of discursive and non-discursive practices in relation to power and knowledge in informational contexts and specific devices.

Foucault’s genealogy is an attempt to de-subject historical knowledge and aims at activating local, discontinuous, unqualified, unlegitimized knowledge against the unitary theoretical instance, intending to debug and set them in a given hierarchy in the name of a single true knowledge.

From that perspective, Foucault’s genealogy encompasses:

- A historical ontology (us – ourselves in our relationship with truth – us as knowledge subjects);
- Our relationships with the field of power (subjects acting over others);
- Our relations with morals (allowing us to construe ourselves as ethical subjects).

In the development of this study, we considered Foucault’s guidance regarding power relations, seeking to describe, in the field of information organization, the distinction between objective capabilities and communication relations. The objective capacities involve power exerted over things, that is, the capacity to modify, use, consume and destroy such elements. Information/communication relations involve interactions linked to transmission processes in symbolic systems.

Intersectionality is a concept proposed by Crenshaw in 1989 that refers to the multiple interactions that constitute the human being. These interactions are invariably crossed and informed by different systems and power structures. From a structural perspective, intersectionality reveals schemata and interfaces that prevent egalitarian access to power structures and, from the political point of view, emphasizes the perpetuity of the marginalization of certain social strata.
According to Crenshaw (1993, 1.242),

Race, gender, and other identity categories are most often treated in mainstream liberal discourse as vestiges of bias or domination – that is, as intrinsically negative frameworks in which social power works to exclude or marginalize those who are different. According to this understanding, our liberatory objective should be to empty such categories of any social significance.

Lutz (2015) claims that concept of intersectionality can be considered a heuristic device or method.

The perspective of adopting intersectionality as a method to study social inequalities can, according to Lutz (2015, 43), avoid certain traps. In this context it is necessary to question positions of privilege. In that sense, Floya Anthias (1998 *apud* Lutz 2015, 40) proposed a “multi-level analysis that works on four levels: the level of discrimination (experience); the actor level (intersubjective praxis); the institutional level (institutional regimes); and the level of representation (symbolic and discursive)”.

Lutz (2015, 40) proposes that, before information which seems to be “about gender”, it is necessary to ask about "other questions" that regularly involve the reflexion about the subject "exposing multiple positions and power inequalities", for example, class interests, patriarchy and sexism.

In the sphere of knowledge organization processes, guarantees work as analytical operators guiding the methods for knowledge organization systems (KOS). Historically, these operators have been under suspicion due to their naturalization
function and its risk for perpetuating prejudices, absences and regimes of oppression they may engineer.

In that sense, semantic guarantees, as Campbell (2008) apud Roger (2016, 110) claims, reveal a “permanent commitment from systems and information contexts for analysing, justifying and reviewing semantic elements that structure the represented knowledge”.

According to Fox (2016, 582),

Epistemology, the study of knowledge, examines who can “know”, who “creates” knowledge, what authority and interests they possess and what it means to how a concept is understood. KO research took an epistemic turn in the mid-1990s, as researchers began to recognize the social influences on classification and began to examine how knowledge was legitimized for classification purposes. (…) A relative of epistemology is ontology or the study of what “is” or “exists”, and specification for determining something that exists. (…) Here I refer to it in somewhat of hybrid sense in that if epistemology reveals how people decide how knowledge is legitimized at specific points in time, ontology provides embodiment of that knowledge, whether through literature or other means.

In this study, our effort is to try to understand the possibilities of the intersectional method for consolidating and updating KOS considering the interface between epistemology /ontology and social context.

Objectives
The study aimed at analysing the relations between intersectionality, power relations and language as theoretical scales of explication and knowledge organization device updates. It sought to rethink the analytical assumption represented by canonical warranties (literary, of use, and structural) historically used as inhibitors for language subjectivation in situations of knowledge representation. In order to achieve these aims, a KOS was built, guided by the intersectional perspective in the themes of race, gender, sexuality and feminist studies and based on specialized literature and the language used in spaces for sharing information, focusing on social activism on those themes.

The KOS created was compared with the speeches from the SlutWalk Movement in Brasília (Brazil) and the Women's March in Washington (EUA) with the objective of identifying limits and possibilities for intersectional representation in the proposed themes.

Methodology
In this study, the potential for updating KOS in interface with the information and knowledge production flow was analysed along with its ability to capture and represent the multiple discursive disputes that are established in the context of knowledge production. For that, the speeches about the transnational movement, SlutWalk, and the Women's March on Washington of 2017 were analysed.

We sought to understand the main concepts adopted by these movements and their
main distinctions. Wes also sought to understand the intersectionality within the discursive production of these movements, having, as reference, the multilevel analysis proposed by Anthias (1998).

The SlutWalk Movement, established in Toronto (Canada) in 2011, was motivated by protests against the direct connection between the dress code and violence against women. In the context of the emergence of SlutWalk Movement, there were a number of sexual abuses against women at the University of Toronto. At the time, the police officer Michael Sanguinetti said that women could avoid such violence if they did not dress like whores, which gave rise to numerous protests internationally.

At the first march, held on April 3, 2011, about 3 thousand people took to the streets. According to Carr (2013, 21-28),

SlutWalks represent the spontaneous outrage of women, the LGBT communities, and pro-feminist men around the world against patriarchal rhetoric (...). The SlutWalk movement presents an opportunity for scholars to apply feminist theories to a new form of transnational feminist activism located at the margins of mainstream society, drawing upon transnational feminist and social-movement theories.

The Women's March on Washington, held on January 21, 2017, the day after the inauguration of Donald Trump, thematized an intersectional social agenda that articulated the defence of human rights, the fight against racial inequalities, the strengthening of labor rights and the reduction of environmental impacts.

The manifesto of the Women's March on Washington claims that,

The Women's March on Washington includes leaders of organizations and communities that have been building the foundation for social progress for generations. We welcome vibrant collaboration and honor the legacy of the movements before us – the suffragists and abolitionists, the Civil Rights Movement, the feminist movement, the American Indian Movement, Occupy Wall Street, Marriage Equality, Black Lives Matter, and more – by employing a decentralized, leader – full structure and focusing on an ambitious, fundamental and comprehensive agenda.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVELS</th>
<th>SLUTWALK MOVEMENT (1)</th>
<th>WOMEN'S MARCH ON WASHINGTON (2)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Discrimination (experience)</strong></td>
<td>Protest against sexual violence; in favor of sex positivity and sexual empowerment, -We have been called sluts because we wore short clothes, we were called sluts because we have already made love before the wedding, we were called sluts for simply saying &quot;no&quot; to a man, we were already called sluts because we raised the tone of voice in a discussion, we were called sluts because we did not follow what the society or our family expected of us.</td>
<td>Black women, Native women, poor women, immigrant women, Muslim women, queer and trans women</td>
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| Intersubjective praxis | feeling unsafe; slut-shaming;  
- We march for the health of black women, because we have less access to health services;  
| Gender Justice  
Racial Justice  
Free of violence against our bodies  
Kidnapped, Trafficked, Economic Justice  
| Institutional level | - we marched because there were about 684 police inquiries into rape crimes - an average of two women raped each day,  
- We march because many of us depend on the precarious public transportation system of the Federal District, which forces us to walk long distances without any security or lighting to protect the various women who are sexually abused along these routes.  
- We will continue marching because we live in a patriarchal culture that activates diverse devices to repress the sexuality of the woman, dividing us into "saints" and "whores.  
- We will continue to march because women are still a minority in positions of power and receive on average 70% of men's wages. We will continue to march because there are jobs performed by a female majority that are not recognized or endowed with economic value because domestic workers are invisibilized, exploited, discriminated against and have not secured some of the most basic fundamental rights of work.  
- We will continue marching because prostitutes are part of the functioning of a macho and hypocritical society that, while using their bodies, insists on denying their citizenship.  
- Safe and healthy environments free from structural impediments  
- we must protect and restore all the constitutionally mandated rights to all our citizens”  
- We believe Civil Rights are our birth right.  
- Immigration reform must establish a roadmap to citizenship  
- We believe it is time for an all-inclusive Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. We believe in immigrant and refugee rights regardless of status or country of origin.  
| Representation (symbolic and discursive) | - We are sluts: feminist women, who are struggling against discriminations of race, sexuality, gender, religion and class. We are entitled to our lives, and to live them as we wish, and free from any form of violence.  
- We believe that the end of violence against women is directly linked to the transformation of conservative and hegemonic values in our society, as well as the overcoming of patriarchy, all fundamentalisms, lesbophobia, biphobia, transphobia, homophobia, machismo (chauvinism), racism and the capitalism.  
- We argue that we all have the right to choose about our bodies.  
- Recognizing that women have intersecting identities”  
- Our liberation is bound in each other’s  
-We are empowered by the legions of revolutionary leaders  
-We believe that Women’s Rights are Human Rights and Human Rights are Women’s Rights”  
We believe in accountability and justice for police brutality and ending racial profiling and targeting of communities of color.  
-We believe that our environment and our climate must be protected, and that our land and natural resources cannot be exploited for |
corporate gain or greed - especially at the risk of public safety and health.


Main results

Considering that power and oppression regimes present a multiform perspective that is often naturalized as language, the work resulted in the understanding of possibilities for articulation and increasing compatibility of cultural warranties as an umbrella concept (Guedes 2016, 90), incorporating other warranties. From that point of view, a dialogical and intersectional KOS was consolidated, considering in its formulation the fundamental role of sensibility concepts (Guedes 2016, 114-115), such as ideology, culture, intersectionality, power and ethics. From the perspective of modelling and language agency, an attempt was made at demonstrating, through “COEXISTENCE | Thesaurus of intersectionality | race | gender | sexuality | feminist studies”. The Thesaurus is based on diverse layers that compose identity politics in the social sphere and the possibilities for critical modelling of the language derived from these practices.

Conclusions

Understanding the socio-cultural, arbitrary and plural characteristics of language makes explicit an increasing demand for an interdisciplinary dialogue and a return to theoretical and experimental issues previously effected in the field of knowledge organization.

We believe that the use of the multilevel analysis method, proposed by Anthias (1998), allowed us to create this thesaurus and to identify the intersectional themes related to the analysed social problematic. In this way, it was possible to reveal, in discursive terms, the contradictions, the regimes of oppression and the positions of privilege in the context of the social struggles fought by contemporary feminist movements.

We conclude that the elaboration and consistent application of KOS results from discursive disputes in the socio-cultural context presented as semantic relations mediated by socio-technical devices.

In this study, the translation of a multiform dynamics of contemporary identity processes in KOS required the acknowledgement of the historical effort done by researchers from the field of knowledge organization, followed by an admission of the need for new forms of preventing crystallization in infinite discursive disputes, existing within knowledge representation systems. In these terms, the concepts of power and structural and political intersectionality provided an understanding of the multidimensional character and the reciprocal influence that are present in social
relations mediated by the combined presences of racism, sexism and patriarchalism. This allowed for a reduction in the effects of an essentialist view of the concept of woman and social hierarchies that result from it, in the experience of creating a dialogic and intersectional KOS.

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References


