ISKO UK Pilot Project: Research Grants to Students

Background and context

Over the last decade or more, undergraduate and postgraduate courses offering studies in Knowledge Organization (KO)[1] have been cut down at several UK universities, and it appears that the pursuit of KO research too may be in decline. To help stem the tide, ISKO UK would like to stimulate more interest in KO among students and researchers, particularly where the research responds to practitioner needs. Such activity would work towards at least two of our Chapter's objectives:

- to explore the scope and role of KO and its value to society;
- to encourage and support the next generation of KO researchers and practitioners.

Following a series of successful events, the ISKO UK Chapter has sufficient funds to give limited financial support to some student research projects (though not enough for full underwriting of any one project). While this surplus continues, we shall experiment in supporting a small number of research projects, starting with students at The Department of Information Studies in UCL, one of our corporate members. As well as the direct results emerging from these projects, we hope to gain experience of how best to interact with an academic department and its students.

Aims

We want to encourage more students to take up studies and research in KO. Likewise we want to encourage KO research which is practice-oriented.

Eligibility

In this first experimental year, we shall work with academic establishments where we have contacts, such as UCL and the Robert Gordon University (RGU). In future years we hope to work with these again, and if possible extend the offer to students in other UK universities.

ISKO UK inputs

ISKO UK can potentially offer three types of support: firstly a contribution towards expenses incurred in the course of the project; secondly some advice, guidance or comment on the structure of the project, methodology and results; thirdly a forum or community through which the results can be publicized/disseminated. The size of the funding and the feasibility of the other types of support are among the aspects to be explored and clarified during this experimental year.

Obligations of the recipients

As a minimum each applicant for ISKO UK research support will need to submit:

- An application for the types of support needed;
- A report of the research results (which could take the form of the final thesis or dissertation).

Depending on the nature of the research, other requirements could emerge, and would be clarified at the time when the funding is approved. They are likely to include some occasional communication at key stages of the project.

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[1] The field of KO is expanding but traditionally includes classification and indexing, tagging, thesauri and metadata. See also the Wikipedia discussion and the application notes found on the ISKO UK website.

Procedure

ISKO UK will maintain and make available a list of broad topics/themes for research projects, leaving scope for individual students to develop their own specific research questions.

Inspired by the list, or by their own KO interests, students may develop the idea for a research question, following the normal procedure at the university. As part of this they should set out a budget for the expenses anticipated, and a request for the type of advice or comment from ISKO members that would be appreciated. When approved by the student's supervisor, the request for funding and/or advice should be submitted to ISKO UK, together with a statement clarifying which portion of the expenses, if any, will be met by the university. The application should be sent by email to the ISKO UK Secretary via <info@iskouk.org>, for consideration by the Executive Committee.

As soon as possible after receipt of the application, the Committee will reply with:
- any comments on the research project;
- details of the funding (if any) it is willing to offer;
- a response re any other types of support requested.

When the research is concluded to the satisfaction of the university, an electronic copy of the thesis or dissertation should be emailed to the ISKO UK Secretary. Normally it will be made available as a downloadable file on the ISKO UK website. If there are other opportunities for publication, or for a presentation, these will be offered for discussion with the student.

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