Methods for auditing medical terminological systems
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What I see way off there is too nebulous to describe,
but it looks big and glittering.
That’s what I love about this business,
the certainty that there is always
something bigger and more exciting
just around the bend;
and the uncertainty of everything else.

_Walt Disney in 1940, on the future of animation,
cited from "The Disney that never was" by Charles Solomon_
I have felt privileged to have the opportunity of performing doctoral research, especially as I was given the freedom to choose my own bumpy road in the land of science. Moreover, being in a position where I could combine this research with other work, there was never a dull moment, as there was always a reason to do something else. So instead of having the research condensed into a four-year period of full-time research, it was possible to spread it over a six years’ period.

For some people, the primary reason for performing doctoral research is to generate sufficient content for a doctoral thesis. For me, the primary reason was the research itself. Luckily, this thesis does not imply the end of this research, but it is rather a description of the current state of affairs.

This thesis reflects the work that was performed within the subproject “Evaluation of terminological systems”, which is part of the project “Terminology and Semantics; Making semantics explicit: supporting terminology needs of CPR users” in the program “Information & Communication Technology in Healthcare” (ICZ) of the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO).

The focus of the work being methodological, it was embedded in the group “Principles of Medical Informatics” in the department of Medical Informatics at the AMC in Amsterdam. This group is chaired by dr. A. Abu-Hanna. The project was initiated in the mid 1990’s when dr. J.H.M. Zwetslot-Schonk headed the department. At the time the project did actually start, in 2000, prof. dr. M. Limburg had taken over the chair. Since September 2004, prof. dr. ir. A. Hasman is chairing the department.

I have enjoyed performing the research, and putting together the results in this thesis. I hope you will derive as much pleasure from this thesis. Read it like a novel if you will, browse through it, or use it for reference. But keep in mind that this thesis is a series of snapshots, taken during the research journey, a journey that hasn’t ended yet, as “there is always something bigger and more exciting just around the bend”.

(to be continued)

Ronald Cornet