Innovation as a
key word for news
- categorizing the digital overflow

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Innovation as a key word for news
- a suggestion of using the term innovation as a subject code in advanced news data bases

The term innovation is used both as a buzz word on the covers of magazines at newsstands and sells as an ad word at Google. But is innovation accepted among the angle brackets in the databases as a key word? If not: will it find its way there?

The paper establishes that innovation journalism is spread out in many different news categories. To gather or survey innovation journalism today is complicated and takes a deeper understanding of the term than necessary to find innovation journalism useful, interesting and profitable.

One aim of the paper was to add the term innovation in the vocabulary of a wire based news service's taxonomy. It suggests that the term innovation should be added in advanced classification systems – a process initiated during the writing of this paper.

The paper discusses the term innovation as a keyword in specific and categorizing and coding news data in general.

Focus is on classification of news content distributed in wire feeds to media companies and the further spread by its readers on the open Web.

1 Introduction

The feed of information into news rooms are greater than ever. Faxes, news wire feeds, TV and radio broadcasts, telephone calls and emails compete with the web, newspapers and magazines for the attention of reporters and editors.

Every journalist has hers or his own way to survey the flow of data in order to pick out the most potential news items and many reporters would probably agree that the press corps does not share a common systematic work procedure. One reason would be that the way of getting the news is a competitive tool in itself; another that journalists primarily think that they decide on what is newsworthy based on a gut feeling.[1]

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1 Dr. Robert M Steele, The Poynter Institute wrote in an email March 23: "I believe journalists often 'go with their gut' as they judge newsworthiness in an event or with an issue ... That was my observation when I worked in newsrooms, it was my conclusion when I examined the thinking and behavior of journalists for my Ph.D. Dissertation in the 1980s, and it's my opinion now as I work with hundreds of journalists every year who attend Poynter seminars and workshops." In his teaching Steele asks his students to make time to make a good decision and use a more systematic process in their reporting and editing.

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Despite the absence of obvious common denominators for news gathering, many news operations depend upon an important exception: news wire feeds.

News bureaus are obliged to deliver their news material in a consistent way understandable for anyone in the mentioned motley community of professional media customers and lay persons.

News bureaus also have an interest in publishers and broadcasters adapting to a conformed coding and categorization of news data in order for the bureaus to use one standardized feed for many customers.

This paper will study how an article published in a news wire feed is taken care of by both its professional recipients and Web users such as bloggers.

1.1 Problem

Why is the term innovation understood as vague and difficult to define?

How can the coverage of the innovation process be more popularized?

How should an analyst or journalist covering emerging technologies and the innovation process more effectively gather information in the field?

1.2 Basic definitions

Innovation: The combining of factors in a new way, not including current adaptations, in order to bring a new product to the market.[2]

More about the definition of the term in chapter 3.

Innovation journalism: Described by David Nordfors, who coined the term, as journalism covering technical, legal and political aspects of innovation, innovation systems and the innovation process.[3]

Meta data: Data about data, that is, name, length, relations, valid values et cetera, as a description of an information element such as a news article. Metadata should preferable be machine understandable in order to automate categorization.[4]

Taxonomy: Although traditionally encompassing the science of identification, naming, and classification of organisms, taxonomy is from here on used as the orderly classification of any object, for example news items.

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[2] Schumpeter, Joseph A., Business Cycles, New York: McGraw-Hill Books Co., 1939

[3] D. Nordfors, The Concept of Innovation Journalism and a Programme for Developing it, 2003

[4] www.w3.org/Metadata/

2 Categorization of news data

2.1 Method

I have gathered information from other journalists and media professionals in Europe and the U.S., primarily within the IDG sphere. Contacts have also been taken with librarians, researchers in information studies, communications and journalism. Furthermore I have received information from consortiums and working groups providing frameworks and standards for classification and coding as well as software vendors related to the media industry.

The interviews were done by email correspondence, telephone and in person.

Some conclusions are based on my own experience as a journalist after more than ten years in various positions in Swedish print and online media.

The case study begun February 22 with the posting of the innovation journalism article; March 07; surveying appearances in traditional online news services and blogs via direct access to specific URLs, using the news sites own search engines and Google.com; and March 21; follow up on appearances in blogs using Google.com and blog aggregators.

2.2 Background on categorization of information

In the beginning of the 1100 century, Saxony philosopher, theologian, and mystical writer Hugh of St. Victor in Paris wrote Eruditionis Didascaliæ including advices of how to read the arts. He classified things, works, philosophy/wisdom and arts in a logical way. According to Professor Hope A. Olson at School of Information Studies University of Wisconsin, Hugh's classification was of a western classificatory structure characterized by mutual exclusivity, progression of disciplines and hierarchy[5].

Hugh wrote: "For every universal is more fully defined by its particulars: … we ought to begin with universals …; and then, by descending little by little from them …; we ought to investigate the nature of things those universals contain.[6]" The quote shows an approach squarely in the western classificatory tradition.

The decisive difference on Hugh's goal with his classification and his contemporary fellows, which I have studied for this paper, is while Hugh was guiding the users to knowledge via a certain linear route, today's classification systems are aimed at giving direct access to a specific knowledge -- to help retrieve and sort information as fast as possible.

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[5] www.ucl.ac.uk/isko2004/sysweb/9aOlson.ppt, 2004

[6] The Didascalicon of Hugh of Saint Victor, Columbia University Press, ISBN: 0231096356, 1991

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2.3 Current traditional classification systems

NMM HJA UP. This specific combination of characters on the spine of a book would tell any librarian familiar with the Bliss classification system that the book's content is about technological innovation in Great Britain relating to economic history in the 19th century.
The classification code, class mark, is derived from Bliss' Bibliographic Classification schedules (BC2) used primarily in libraries all over the world. BC 2 is a modern universal scheme updated approximately every second year. Similar systems are LLC (Library of Congress Classification System) DDC (Dewey Decimal Classification) and UDC (Universal Decimal Classification).

When broken down in digits NMM HJA UP stands for:
N: Great Britain
MM: Narrow period 19th century
H: Historical aspect - Economic history
JAUP: Technical innovation, invention (in Production: economics)

Bliss attempts to include as wide a range of concepts as possible, with terms drawn from literary warrant. Generally applicable ideas, such as innovation, appear early in the schedules, but may also be one of the later cited elements in compound subjects, so that a work on innovation in general will file in a linear sequence before one on innovation in science or industry.

The term innovation also appears in the following locations in the published Bliss schedules:
AXQ N   Innovation processes (in Stochastic processes: statistics and probability)
JBG V   Innovation (in Education)
JKB GV   Innovation (in Curriculum: education)
JJC Q   Innovatory methods of teaching
JJV V   Innovatory techniques: training: education
K9G U   Innovative planning (in Methodology: social sciences)
KCG   Innovation (in Society)
DUK CHG   Diffusion: innovations: social geography
KLW X   Innovative groups
KSL MP   Innovation (in non-literate societies)
KWR LK   Innovation in folklore
QAT RVW   (in Organizational change & development: activities of organizations: social welfare)
RBC G   Innovation (in Political change: politics)
SBV 6J   Innovation, discovery (in Research: cultural law)
TRF Q   Innovation in work study (in Management)

TRV W   Innovation Organizational change & development: activities of organizations: management

TVN T   Product innovation, new products (in Product development: operations management.

There are also drafts developed among the users including the term innovation that might be published and become a part of the accepted standard in 2007.

Although originally designed to help putting books in its right place, Bliss is adjusted to the electronic environment and is today mainly computer based used in assisting the retrieval of publications relating to certain concepts using the subject elements as starting points, or used to help construct broad or narrow searches for more specific information.

2.4 Current meta data for news

One of the most widely used taxonomy in the western media industry is the International Press Telecommunications Council's News Codes. IPTC is a consortium of news agencies and other member of the news industry established in 1965 by the World Association of Newspapers (WAN), the Associated Press (AP) and United Press International (UPI) and other news organisations. [7]

The Deutsche Presse-Agentur (DPA), UPI, AP and Agence France Press wire feeds consist of IPTC's News Industry Text Format, NITF, and/or News Markup Language, News ML, sharing a default taxonomy -- a general set of IPTC News Codes.

The News Codes are designed for describing news objects such as texts, photos, graphics, moving images and audio regarding its layout, context, urgency, location, content and nature, journalistic or intellectual characteristic. The paper will from here on mainly focus on the News Codes topic set Subject Codes which provide a means of describing the content.

News ML provides a general metadata vocabulary but does not dictate which set of news codes is used and different sets of taxonomies can be used in the description of one object as long as the sets follows the defined standard. One of the characteristics of News codes subject code sets is its hierarchy.

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[7] A selection of IPTC members as of March 2005: The Associated Press (AP), USA; BBC Monitoring, United Kingdom; Agence France Presse, (France); PR Newswire, UK; Reuters Limited, UK; The New York Times Company, USA; Japan Newspaper Publishers & Editors Association (NSK), Japan, Tidningarnas Telegrambyra (TT), Sweden; Kyodo News Services, Japan; TMNEWS-APCOM, Italy; United Press International (UPI), USA; World Association of Newspapers (WAN), International. Source: www.itpc.org

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The hierarchy is based on the same principles as Bliss and other topic sets approaching the news item from a general view to a more specific description in the lower levels. The 8 digit code is broken down from the left were the first two digits describes a very broad category called the Subject. The different levels are often called parents, children and grandchildren. IPTC News codes has tree levels while Bliss has four (Yes, the grandchildren in Bliss have kids.)

The choice of numbering is sequential as to when new terms were added which means that one can not interpret any meaning from the actual numbers within the groups of bits, without knowledge of the actual meaning of the digits.

One example:

If an article carries the subject code **04003009** it relates to transmission of information through means other than point-to-point wired hookups; thus, wireless technology; according to the News ML subject codes.

04000000 describe the Subject economy, business and finance defined as "all matters concerning the planning, production and exchange of wealth."

04003000 describe the Subject Matter computing and information technology defined as "anything to do with the computing and/or transmission of information from one point to another."

04003009 describe the Subject Detail wireless technology defined as transmission of information through means other than point-to-point wired hookups.

Other than the wide spread News Codes, there are many company specific taxonomies in the news industry such as the classification used at IDG News Service, an internal news wire serving more than 300 technology related publications in 85 countries including InfoWorld, The Industry Standard, PC World, Computer World, Network World, CIO and CSO magazines and their web sites.

IDG NS use a one level classification system including the following categories:

Software
Hardware
Networking
Internet
Telecommunication
Distribution Channels
Legislation & Regulation
Services
Entertainment
User news & IT Management
Legal Matters
Financial
Personnel & Reorganisations
Mergers & Acquisitions

Security
Bio-IT
Consumer Electronics
Marketing

The reporter, copy desk and news desk editor suggests categories for each story but it is the news desk editor who makes the final decision before an article is posted.

The categories are periodically revised by the editors. However, the News Service has noticed demand for a more meta data enriched feed and will implement a new taxonomy and classification system in 2005. "The request for a more thorough classification system was made by IDG editors so they can more easily search our story database," Nancy Weil News Desk Editor at IDG News Service said.

2.5 Case study

One way of testing how the news industry and web users actually categorize its content would be to toss out an article and see where it ends up. That's what I did.

I opted for an article covering the first Fedora users and developers conference which was held at Boston University in Boston, Massachusetts, February 2005.

The community supported open source project Fedora is sponsored by software vendor Red Hat which use it as a proving ground for new technology. The open source operating system Fedora Core provides the base for Red Hat's commercial product Enterprise Linux 4.0. According to Michael Tiedmann, Vice President for open source affairs at Red Hat, the Fedora project is applied user-driven innovation.

The article's headline deliberately does not include the term innovation, yet it's still a piece of innovation journalism.

I choose one particular article written by myself instead of following the general coverage of the conference in order to not get the news selection biased by search engine algorithms – unavoidable if surveying the general coverage.

The article was published on the International Data Group internal news wire 18:42 PM February 22 2005 with the headline *With Fedora, Red Hat recreates its lost community*. The story was picked up by publications within the IDG sphere as well as blogs, news aggregators and online discussion forums within the next days.

The News Service desk editors on duty the evening of February 22 found the article to fit in the *Software* and *Distribution channels* categories. (See 2.2 for the selection of categories used by IDG News Service.)

Following is a table with the online publications and web logs featuring the story in its whole or in a summary accompanied by reader comments. Downright news aggregators only mirroring the article with a link are ignored in the selection.

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The aspect of whether the sites publishing the piece have copy rights or not is also ignored in the selection.

Table 1: Publication of an innovation journalism article

PUBLICATION, WEB LOG	CATEGORY	KEYWORD	PUBLISHED
Computer World, US edition (IDG)	News section, Knowledge Center	*Development*	Feb 23
Computer World, Australian edition (IDG)	News section Linux & Open Systems (Not in the Software Development category)	*Massachusetts Institute of Technology*, *MIT*, *Red Hat.*	Feb 23
Info World (IDG)	News section, Open source, Open source operating systems, Open source standards, Operating systems, Platforms, Standards		Feb 22
IT World (IDG)	News section Open (sub web site)		Feb 23
Linux Today (Jupiter Media):	Developer news sections of Linux Today and Enterprise Linux Today	*News*, *Community*, *Red Hat*	Feb 24
Heng-Cheong Leong's The Tomorrow Web log	The web log carries the sub title Emerging Technologies. Innovative Applications. New Economy.		Feb 23
TechJamaica.com's Forum:	Software, Nix category (Anything Unix, Linux or BSD related)		Feb 24

Linux news site Lxer: (covering open source technologies)	News	*Fedora*, *Red Hat*, *Community*	Feb 23
Philipp Esselbach's Linux compatible news site	News, Latest Linux News and Red Hat sections		Feb 23
Dico du Net (Web based dictionary on technologies, French)	Current events, Internet Standards (Actualités Normes d'Internet)		Feb 25
Jonathan Hedley's bigblog.com (Australia)	Linux section		Feb 23
The CodingTheWeb.com NewsLog ("continually updated list of news stories and technical articles")	Red Hat		Feb 23
Os Views ("community-driven technology news, opinion and information resource)	*Nix Unix views (*Nix is a term for Unix and Linux operating systems.)		Feb 24
ITNetwork365 ("compiles and disseminates IT related resources")	Open source		Feb 23

The categories vary from different areas of interest or genres such as Developer news or Open source to specific categories relating to operating systems such as Linux or trademarks such as Red Hat.

The key words are also not consistent as they are represented by journalistic beats, social grouping of people and trademarks.

The wide selection of categories and keywords, deriving from trademarks as well as social concepts, associated with the news article; shows the lack of a common category for innovation journalism at news sites and in the contemporary open Web environment.

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2.6 Automated categorization

At many news services, manual classification is partly or completely replaced by automatic categorization performed by classification software. Cambridge based linguistic product maker Teragram has developed the products Teragram Categorizer and Teragram Taxonomy Manager used by The New York Times and Boston.com, publishing news from The Boston Globe and AP. "Teragram observed a growing need to automate categorization of documents which reflects the increasing amount of data available electronically. For example, Internet search engines grew in the past 7 years from 10 million documents indexed to several billion today." Yves Schabes, founder and President of the company and an Associate to the Division of Applied Science, Harvard University, said. According to Schabes, Teragram has experienced revenues growth of its categorization products of more than 50 percent annually over the last years.

The basic principles of the methods used in automatic categorization are the same as if made by a living person, with the prerequisite that someone with knowledge in semantic, has made thoroughly preparations setting the rules by relating words to the categories. The programs then take into account the words and the morphological, syntactic and semantic circumstances and, based on the context, separates identical words with different meaning or names relating to different bearers of the name. "The software not only looks at the word "Giants" but it looks at its meaning in the document and sentence. For example, a rule might say that the word 'Giants' refers to the football team (and therefore to the New York Giants). If the word is in the context of sentences, which also refer to football, or to 'baseball' (therefore the San Francisco Giants baseball team), the word is in the context of sentences which also refer to football," described Schabes.

A common practice in automatic categorization today is having the software proposing categories out of which an editor makes the final selection.

3 The term innovation

3.1 Current use of the term

The word innovation is widely used in the technology trade press. MIT Technology Review, one of few large technology magazines surviving the IT crash, tops its front page with the motto "MIT's magazine of innovation."

The term is also finding its way into the mass media. In 2004 PBS broadcasted a program series called "Innovation" with the sub title "Life, Inspired".
Furthermore, every Monday the Boston Globe adds "& Innovation" in the head of the Business sections front page beneath "Business". When asked why the Science section does not use the term in the head when the Business section does, Health and Science Editor Gideon Gil answered: "They grabbed it first."

Consumer electronic giant Sony and underwear retailer Jockey feature their gadgets and boxer briefs as "innovative" every day in main stream media.

One indicator of a terms commercial value is to see how it sell as a Google ad word. In February 23, 2005, 45 companies had paid for getting their ads presented at Google.com when the search query "innovation" was entered by a user.

The corresponding figures for "Bio-IT" and "Consumer Electronics", two categories used in the IDG News Service taxonomy and, together with innovation; terms often used in the technology trade press, was respectively 2 and 51.

Many Google ad word customers have also bought combinations of word including innovation. The 20 most popular combinations are:

- innovation
- innovation centre
- business innovation
- innovation luggage
- innovation group
- innovation center
- museum of innovation
- tech museum of innovation
- league for innovation
- product innovation
- technology innovation
- innovation management
- diffusion of innovation
- innovation unit
- workforce innovation
- the innovation group
- micro innovation
- innovation research
- small business innovation
- technological innovation

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The list represents a broad spectrum of industries and is based on the ad buyer's expectation of how their potential customer would type a search query. Innovation Luggage, a New York based suit case vendor, is an odd exception, yet, representing a clear example of a speculative use of the word.

Business reports points out on a weekly basis the ability to spur innovation as crucial for countries economies well being and growth. The two competing President candidates for the 2004 US election, and their representatives, used the term during their respectively campaigns.[8]

As mentioned earlier, innovation is well established in the taxonomy of one of the leading classification systems for libraries.

3.2 The definition

The word innovation, parts of it origin from Latin novus, meaning new, is used in many languages. It is defined in dictionaries as the introduction of something new, the introduction of a new method, idea or device[9].

French sociologist Gabriel Tarde used the term innovation in the publication Les lois de l'imitation published 1890 discussing psychological interactions among individuals, grouping them as belonging to the innovators or imitators. American communication researcher Everett Rogers and other sociologists have furthered Tarde's ideas ever since still using the term innovation and innovators.

The lawyer and researcher in economics, Joseph A Schumpeter narrowed the meaning of innovation in terms of business development in the '30s. He distinguished between minimizing the cost of producing goods or delivering services within a given production function from innovation, in which a new or at least structurally different production function is established. "If, instead of quantities of factors, we vary the form of the function, we have an innovation." he wrote.[10]

Innovation as a term has been used in many fields of research slightly altering the meaning of the word in the respective field over the years. However, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, OECD; which has developed standard guidelines on measuring technology-driven innovation,[11] defines technological product and process (TPP) innovations as the implementation

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[8] Business Week, US Edition, October, 2005

[9] Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary 1999 ISBN-0-87779-708-0

[10] Schumpeter, Joseph A., Business Cycles A theoretical, historical and statistical analysis of the Capitalist process, McGraw-Hill Books Co, 1939

[11] OECD, "The Measurement of Scientific and Technological Activities. Proposed Guidelines for Collecting and Interpreting Technological Innovation Data. Oslo Manual", 2nd edition, DSTI, OECD / European Commission Eurostat, Paris 31 Dec 1995

of "technologically new products and processes and significant technological improvements in products and processes." Furthermore OECD considers a technologically new product implemented if "it has been introduced on the market (product innovation) or used within a production process (process innovation)." The OECD guidelines also states that TPP innovations comprise a series of scientific, technological, organizational, financial and commercial activities

When I asked a selection of US media professionals[12], most of them journalists at IDG, individually via email to define innovation, they agreed that it means a unique or novel enhancement to an existing product or technique.

Basically, they also shared their distinction between innovation and invention. "Invention is the generation of a completely new concept or thing. Innovation is the enhancement of an existing concept or thing," answered one respondent mirroring the shared view.

However, 8 out of 10 questioned the use of innovation as a category for news data. "It's too difficult to determine what is innovation and what isn't. Everyone thinks they are an innovator," one respondent wrote probably meaning that everyone wants to be an innovator.

"I believe taxonomy should use absolute and concrete classifications while my definition of innovation is fluid and intangible," another journalist wrote thus contradicting his own sharp definition.

The journalists were asked to answer from the top of their heads and were granted anonymity.

4 Conclusion

The term innovation and its inflection innovative are used in many connections: In different fields of research, trade press, and in the popular mass media; as both advertisement and in editorial context, financial reports and in political rhetoric.

Innovation is used for classifying literature and the word has proven to be of commercial value for advertisers.

Still, there is no known category in the news industry effectively gathering innovation related stories.

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[12] 13 journalists and pr professionals received the questions via email. 10 answered.

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4.1 Problems using the term as a subject code

The term innovation is considered vague or to broad among journalists despite the contradictory fact that the journalists define the word and clearly distinguish it from invention

It is also used in different fields of interest and research which might alter the definition if the research is not properly communicated. However, the correlations of sociologist Gabriel Tarde's and economist Joseph Schumpeter's work was already mapped out by Adrien Taymans in the '40s and '50s.[13]

Today innovation is understood as the introduction of a new feature, product or service to the marketplace.

The confusion reflected by the IDG journalists stating that the term innovation is vague, nevertheless showing thoroughly familiarity with the word by defining it practically unanimous, is probably more a matter of whether "innovation" should comprise the whole innovation process or only be applied to the very introduction of a new product or service.

4.2 The need of using the term as a subject code

The mentioned news article, describing the Red Hat effort to create a user community in order to foster new business ideas and technological improvements, ended up in five traditional online news services labeled with key word such as *community*, *development*, *news* and *MIT* and was categorized, for instance, in the *Knowledge Center*, the *Software Development*, *Linux* and *Open Systems*, *Standards* and *Open source* sections. Some of the section names referred to the same meaning, yet, there was practically no common denominator in the vocabulary.

Interestingly enough, the bloggers picking up the story and commenting on it consider themselves belonging to or aiming their content to a community dealing with innovation. That is not always pointed out as clear as Heng-Cheong Leong's indexing his site with the sub title Emerging Technologies and Innovative Applications but indicated by the Australian blogger Jonathan Hedley's sections named Top Tech and Web Developer, IP & Patents, E-commerce and Robotics or the community-driven Os-views' headlines like "Intel make the leap to 64 bits", "SCO encounters new listing problems" and "Record industry about to die, says Elvis Costello."

So, people initiated in the innovation process will probably find their news sources even if they are not labeled. But in order to popularize and more effectively manage innovation journalism categorization is needed.

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[13] Taymans, Adrien "George Tarde and Joseph A. Schumpeter: a Similar Vision." *Explorations in Entrepreneurial History*, 1, No. 4, 1949

For example, if a daily newspaper should find the resources to edit a weekly section of innovation journalism, a wire feed serving the editor would be of great help or even necessary.

With the increase of automated categorizing, a wire feed comprising innovation journalism in a separate category is a must in order to keep an online section named Innovation decently updated.

The IPTC News code vocabulary does not include the term innovation because no member has made that suggestion.[14] However, after discussions with John Minting, chairman of the News Codes Working Party which maintains all existing sets of IPTC metadata topics and creates new topic sets; a suggestion of using the term innovation is about to be sent to IPTC by me. Adding a Subject detail takes 21 days for circulation and comments from IPTC members and 7 days for a jury to consider comments before deciding on adding the Subject detail in the controlled vocabulary. Therefore, the acceptance of the term innovation as an ITPC News code is possible before the end of April 2005.

In the summer of 2005, IDG News Service will implement a new taxonomy and classification system with more than one level of categories. I will suggest the term innovation to be added in that new vocabulary.

5 Acknowledgements

Johan Boström is a News Desk Editor and Reporter at the online news department of Göteborgs-Posten, the second largest morning daily in Scandinavia, specializing in business and technology. He is currently hosted for six months at the IDG News Service in Boston as part of the Innovation Journalism Fellowship. He was the Managing Editor of the online news department and Deputy Executive Editor of GP's electronic edition 1998-2001. Prior to that he was one of four journalists developing and running the online edition, one of Sweden's first interactive news services on the Web. He holds a BA in journalism from the University of Göteborg but first encountered professional information management as a Fighter Controller and Air Reconnaissance Officer in the Swedish Air Force including developing new technology with the Swedish Defense Research Agency FOA and the Swedish industry.

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[14] In an email March 17, 2005 Michael Steidl, Managing Director of the International Press Telecommunications Council wrote: "The terms are added on request of IPTC members, so apparently no one felt this has to be made an explicit term."

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