

An Interview given by Ruggero Gilyarevskiy

- How did you become interested in Information Science?

I graduated from Moscow State University in 1953. My degree work was “Esthetical principles of Lope de Vega”. Five years before Norbert Wiener has published his “*Cybernetics*”. It was the time of new ideas; the notion *information* became very popular.

I worked as a cataloguer in All-Union State Library for Foreign Literature. My PhD thesis was “*On description of foreign books for Soviet libraries*”. That is why I submitted the paper entitled “*On bibliographical description as element of information*” when I was invited to the University conference in 1961.

This marked my new scientific career connected with information. Next year I began to work with Professor Alexander Mikhaylov in his Chair on Scientific Information at the Moscow University and five years later in All-Union Institute for Scientific and Technical Information – famous VINITI, where I work till now.

- What were the most significant steps in your career?

I consider as the most significant steps in my career the participation in the writing of the books “*The fundamentals of scientific information*” (1965), “*The fundamentals of informatics*” (1968) and “*Scientific communications and informatics*” (1972) with Cherny and Mikhaylov.

Arkady Cherny had just returned home from American and European training and made acquaintance of many specialists in information science. He was informed about all important achievements of this science. Mikhaylov was the real chief of information activities in the country – director of VINITI. They wanted to write a book.

I asked them if they knew how to bake doughnut-shaped bread roll. I explained a joke: it is necessary to get a hole from the roll and coat it with pastry. I said that I had a hole — ability to write books and they had pastry — facts about information science.

Those three books were very popular in our country and even abroad, especially the first two books. They were translated into English, German, Italian, Spanish, Polish, Czech, Chinese and Japanese. Many new specialists came in this profession from industry and librarianship. They had to learn information science and needed such monographs.

I was one of those three persons who introduced the term *informatics*, *informatika* in Russian, as the synonym of English *Information Science*. Unfortunately now in Russia often we see misusing of the term *informatics* as synonym of *Computer Science*.

- What in your opinion did you contribute to the field?

It seems to me that I have formulated the main principles and features of the scientific literature system as a foundation of scientific communication

I extended the interpretation of the term *document* in the sense of Paul Otlet whom I consider as a real pioneer of information science. I translated into Russian his “*Traité de documentation*” for the book “*Selected works of the pioneer of informatics*” (2004).

In my scientific information activity I tried to associate *Information Science* with *Librarianship* and *Documentation*. I defended the ScD thesis “The common trends in development of scientific information and communication disciplines” (1989).

- Can you tell us of colleagues who were most influential in your work?

I was lucky in having good chiefs – I worked with Margarita Roudomino (1900-1990), director of All-Union State Library of Foreign Literature to which her name was assumed now and Alexander Mikhaylov (1905-1987), director of VINITI. They were wise people and I learned a lot from them.

There is no doubt that Arkady Cherny was my teacher in information science. From literature sources the most influential were works of Derek de Solla Price.

- What do you consider as the most significant achievement of information science?

I think that we wouldn't have Internet, searching engines such as Google or Yahoo without achievements of information science; we wouldn't understand without them how the information world is organized. In my opinion the laws of growth, obsolescence and scattering of publications are the most significant, especially Bradford's law. Information retrieval, of course, is the basis of the information science, but these problems have not been resolved till now.

- What has been ASIS&T role in this and in your own work?

I could assist at the annual meetings of American Society of Information Science and Technology twice, first time in 1991 in Washington invited by Belver Griffith from Drexel University to speak about scientific information activities in Soviet Union.

Second time I was invited by Pamela Richards from Rutgers University at the Conference on the History and Heritage of Science Information Systems, to be held October 23-25, 1998 (immediately prior to the annual meeting of ASIS) in Pittsburg, PA to speak on "Soviet Scientific and Technical Information System: Its Development, Impact and Dismantling". It was the opportunity to see how much is the Society for self-consciousness of American information specialists. I appreciate very high the *Journal of American Society for Information Science* for which I wrote an article once.

- What do you see as the main challenges and opportunities for information science?

The impact of electronic technologies relaxes our attention to the theory of communication, to the problems of essence and nature of information itself. It is the main challenge for information science today. Yes, we have an opportunity to have a big library in our pocket now. But our understanding of what information is and what it realized don't increase. It would be changed if we wish to go further.

- What would you say in order for young people to get excited about a possible career in information science?

First what I wish to say, it is prestigious to have an information profession in the era of information.

Second, that information career is very prospective because it opens many roots. The new information disciplines and professions emerge each year.

Third, that it is very interesting to work in information environment. You need to contact with all branches of human knowledge and with philosophy and religion not in the last turn.

I wish to young people, to my students in the first place, to choose the career in information science.