Guest editor's preface

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This issue of *Lexicography* with a special theme “Medical Lexicography, Terminology and Terminography” introduces a series of papers featuring contemporary research on bilingual medical terminology and lexicography. Most of them were originally presented at an international symposium hosted by Fudan University in Shanghai 7–8 November 2016. Through their publication in this issue of the journal (3:2) and the next (4:1), they will reach wider readerships and contribute fresh approaches to specialized lexicography and bilingual terminography in the electronic era.

The first three papers in the series published here treat complementary aspects of bilingual (English–Chinese) medical lexicography and terminography. Gao’s scholarly paper traces the steadily increasing inventory of Chinese medical terms in English–Chinese dictionaries of the nineteenth century. He documents their evolution through somewhat variable translations in successive dictionaries to more systematic treatments by the end of the century, which became the cornerstones of modern Chinese medical terminology. The second paper by Peters et al. takes up the key translation issues in bilingual terminology—how to capture the inherent semantics of the English medical terms in their Chinese translations for different contexts of use. In the first instance, the translation equivalents need to reflect the precise meanings or the relative abstractness of each term, and thus allow them to function in semantic hierarchies or the ontologies of artificial intelligence. But terms whose meanings are indeterminate or euphemistic need full description in terminographic references, as resources for effective communication in everyday health care. Ding’s paper puts the spotlight on the consumers of medical terminography, specifically medical students and their experience of using an online English–Chinese termbank of cancer terms for decoding a medical text. This user feedback gave valuable insights into the scope

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of medical terminography, where the core terms with their specialized meanings are obvious candidates for inclusion, but semi-technical terms used beyond medicine by other scientific disciplines are also sought by users.

These three perspectives on bilingual medical terminology take us from its historical evolution in China to its linguistic subtleties in contemporary usage, and the challenges it presents to translators as well as terminographers seeking to meet the needs of users. Collectively, they take us to the lively frontiers of lexicographic research: the demands of bilingual terminology in expanding fields of medicine, new applications in online termbanks and machine translation, and the quest for the perfect translation equivalents.