

## ***Thema* version 1.1**

### **Basic User Instructions**

***Thema* International Steering Committee**  
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There is an accompanying document, *Thema* version 1.1 Worked Examples, updated independently of these User Instructions, which illustrates how selected titles would be classified.

#### **1. Introduction**

The *Thema* scheme is intended as a subject classification scheme for book content, for use with digital and physical products, for all sectors of the global book and e-book trade, and for both online and physical ‘bricks and mortar’ retail sectors. The scheme is free to use, and is maintained and managed by EDITEUR on behalf of the *Thema* International Steering Committee.

The first full release of the scheme, *Thema* Version 1.0, was launched in October 2013; *Thema* version 1.1, incorporating additions and modifications to headings only, was released a year later in November 2014. The changes were based on proposals from national *Thema* groups, often arising from initial use of the scheme, translation work and comparisons with national schemes. The nature and scope of the changes mean that all code values in v1.0 are still valid in v1.1.

An Excel file of the complete scheme, supporting documentation and an interactive multi-lingual search tool can be found at <http://www.editeur.org/151/Thema/>.

These Basic User Instructions are not intended to provide comprehensive guidelines, but simply to outline the fundamental principles of the application of *Thema* classification values. Detailed usage notes are included in the scheme itself for a number of values. More extensive notes, guidelines, tools and worked examples may follow, as appropriate.

The most significant change between these instructions and those for v1.0 is clarification and extension of the use of non-fiction codes with Fiction (F\* and YF\*) codes (see Section summaries below).

## 2. Composition of the *Thema* scheme

The *Thema* subject classification scheme comprises the following elements:

- Subject Categories, arranged over 20 sections as listed in Part 4b below, and
- Qualifiers, in six lists covering various facets, as listed in Part 4c below.

Of these elements, only a Subject Category is mandatory for the classification of a book or e-book; optional Qualifiers may be used in conjunction with Subject Categories to supplement and qualify or refine the meaning of the applied Subject Categories as required. A book can be classified using a single Subject Category, or multiple Subject Categories, and may have none, one or many Qualifiers added.

Each Subject Category or Qualifier consists of a code and a heading (which is available always in English, and in several other languages as translations are completed and approved); many entries also have associated usage notes, and 'see also' references to other *Thema* codes, to aid consistent application.

Codes and headings are arranged in a hierarchical pattern to simplify classification and manual searching for topics.

Subject Category codes are of variable length and always begin with a letter, *eg*

A	The Arts
FF	Crime & mystery fiction
NH	History
UGB	Web graphics & design
YBC	Children's picture books
QRRF	Zoroastrianism
LWKF	Shariah law: family relations
DNBB1	Autobiography: business & industry
MFKC3	Embryology

Qualifier codes are of variable length and always begin with an integer, *eg*

1HFGU	Uganda
2ACSC	Icelandic
3MD	16th century, c 1500 to c 1599
4GH	For International GCSE (IGCSE)
5AG	Interest age: from c 6 years
6BA	Baroque

In product metadata records and message formats such as ONIX, only the code is required to be communicated, which can then be translated by recipients as appropriate. This is important because typically a user is working with a particular language translation of the

*Thema* scheme specific to a language group or country, and while the codes are universal, the heading can be presented in the user's preferred language.

The set of Subject Categories is universally applicable and common to all language translations of the *Thema* scheme. The Qualifiers contain 'shared values' which are similarly common to all translations, and may also contain 'National Extensions' which typically relate to very specific topics identified as important in certain countries, but are presumed not to be of universal interest or applicability. The National Extension concept is designed to enable a global scheme to be relevant at a local or national level. The rules for applying National Extension Qualifiers are exactly the same as for shared value Qualifiers.

National Extension Qualifier codes are of variable length, but always have a stem which is a shared value. The stem is followed by the ISO Country Code (or an equivalent), hyphen-delimited, and then possibly by further letters: *eg*

1DNS-SE-BH	Västergötland	
3MPBGJ-ES-B	España: Guerra civil (1936–1939)	
4Z-US-	For US educational curricula	(note the trailing hyphen)
4Z-GB-SD	For Scottish Curriculum National 5	
5HC-US-A	US Independence Day	

However, not every user of *Thema* needs to recognise, understand or use every National Extension: they may decide that some or all National Extensions are too detailed and choose to ignore them.

In some translations, not all national extensions are translated into the target language. For example, a Danish translation may not contain translations of all French national extensions – while obviously it *will* contain translations of all the core subject headings and qualifiers, and all the Danish national extensions. National groups may choose to *recommend* such national extensions remain untranslated and unused within their domestic trade. However, *any* national extensions, including such untranslated codes, remain entirely valid whether an individual *Thema* user chooses to use or ignore them, and individual data recipients will inevitably receive the full range of extension codes from international data suppliers.

The procedures for handling the receipt of 'unknown' National Extensions are explained below.

### 3. Resolution of National Extensions

As shown above, all National Extension codes are suffixes, beginning at the first hyphen, that are added to ordinary shared Qualifier codes.

If a user encounters or receives a National Extension code that is not known or recognised, it can be resolved to a meaningful value by truncating the code string back to the shared value stem before the first hyphen.

Thus if a user does not recognise Canadian National Extensions,  
1KBC-CA-SGA Central Saskatchewan: Saskatoon  
is resolved and understood as  
1KBC Canada  
which is meaningful and correct (although less precise).

This resolution process can be done manually, or automatically by the application of simple rules to manipulate incoming data.

## 4. Allocation of *Thema* Subject Categories and Qualifiers

### 4a. General rules of *Thema* classification

The basic rules for assigning *Thema* Subject Categories and Qualifiers, put most simply, are as follows:

***Rule 1: Ensure the first Category entered is the primary subject***

Taking advantage of all available information about the subject and scope of the work, ensure the first Category indicates the single most pertinent and important subject of the work.

***Rule 2: Classify titles as precisely as applicable or as broadly as required***

If a book is solely concerned with a specific topic defined by a single Category, use that precise code only; if it is broad-ranging in its scope within a single subject area, use a single broad Category rather than listing all the more specific Categories listed beneath it (see Note A below). Not every title has to be assigned the most detailed *possible* Category, only the most detailed that is applicable.

***Rule 3: Assign as many Categories as are required***

If the book covers several subject areas, assign relevant Categories from across the *Thema* scheme to indicate this, as many as are required (see Note B below). Assign only Categories for subjects that the book is substantially about as a whole, not for subjects that are peripheral.

***Rule 4: Observe any scope notes and instructions.***

In the hierarchical listing, many Categories (and some Qualifiers) carry specific scope notes and 'see also' references. Sometimes these are listed under a broad Category (*eg* at level 1 or 2 in the hierarchy) but they apply to all Categories listed hierarchically under the broad Category. The scope notes give important and useful information about what it is covered by a heading, and how it should be used in conjunction with other *Thema* values to make full use of the scheme and maintain consistency. The 'see also' references point the user to other related *Thema* values that may be appropriate to be assigned instead of, or as well as, the value under consideration.

### ***Rule 5: Add Qualifiers whenever appropriate.***

The Qualifiers are a key feature of the *Thema* scheme structure and provide great flexibility, enabling the expression of a vast range of subjects with a comparatively small number of values. Note that the Qualifiers are associated with the book as a whole and not linked directly with a specific Category, although the link between Category and Qualifier is often implicit (*eg* Language learning material and Language Qualifiers, travel guides and Geographical Qualifiers *etc*). As with Categories, assign the most specific Qualifier values that are applicable (including National Extensions where available), as many as are required (see Notes A and B below).

### ***Rule 6: Consider Context***

Always view and consider specific headings in the context of the scheme as a whole. Sometimes a heading may seem appropriate when viewed alone, but its location in the scheme may indicate connotations that are not appropriate. This principle is particularly pertinent to selecting between similar headings that indicate different treatments of related subject matter (*eg* works for specialist or general readers, adults or children, *etc*). See the Section Summary below.

### ***Notes***

Note A: Because of the hierarchical nature of the codes, it is not necessary to use 'high-level' codes in conjunction with lower level codes denoting specific subjects. With the specific Category QDHR3 'Pragmatism' for example, it is not usually appropriate to add all or any of the preceding codes QDHR, QDH, QD or indeed Q. The fact that the subject is an aspect of QD 'Philosophy' is implicit in the QDHR3 code. Similarly, if assigning Geographical Qualifier 1HFGA 'Ethiopia', it is not appropriate to assign also 1H to indicate that country is in Africa, and so on.

On the other hand, if the book is about modern philosophy as a whole, with a chapter on Pragmatism, another on Phenomenology and a third on Positivism, *etc*, the correct code to apply would be the broader QDHR, not QDHR3 *and* QDHR5 *and* QDHR7.

Note B: There is no defined upper limit of the number of Subject Category values or Qualifier values that may be assigned to an individual book product record, but multiple values must be allowed for to enable the scheme to function effectively. It is suggested that a maximum of *five* of each type would more than sufficiently cover most circumstances.

## 4b. Section summary – Subject Categories

Codes beginning A	THE ARTS
Treatment	Specialist and some General Adult; prefer W* codes for practical and hobbyist approaches
Qualifiers	Particularly STYLE and others as appropriate
Special Features	

Codes beginning C	LANGUAGE & LINGUISTICS
Treatment	Specialist and General Adult
Qualifiers	Particularly LANGUAGE and others as appropriate
Special Features	

Codes beginning D	BIOGRAPHY, LITERATURE & LITERARY STUDIES
Treatment	Specialist and General Adult
Qualifiers	Particularly LANGUAGE & STYLE, and others as appropriate (see instructions for LANGUAGE Qualifiers below)
Special Features	For Literary Studies, use LANGUAGE Qualifiers to indicate the language of the literature in question; use GEOGRAPHICAL Qualifiers only to indicate national context where significant, <i>eg</i> literature in English of Australia

Codes beginning F	FICTION & RELATED ITEMS
Treatment	General Adult; see also X* codes for graphic novels
Qualifiers	GEOGRAPHICAL and/or TIME PERIOD Qualifiers where these aspects are particularly pertinent & significant; SPECIAL INTEREST Qualifiers as appropriate
Special Features	FX* and FY* codes must only be used with (after) F* codes; subject codes from non-fiction sections may be used with (after) F* codes to indicate key topics of fiction works where particularly pertinent & significant

Codes beginning G	REFERENCE, INFORMATION & INTERDISCIPLINARY SUBJECTS
Treatment	Specialist and General Adult
Qualifiers	As appropriate
Special Features	GBC must only be used with (after) other code denoting subject

Codes beginning J	SOCIETY & SOCIAL SCIENCES
Treatment	Specialist and some General Adult; see also V* codes for practical approaches to many topics
Qualifiers	As appropriate
Special Features	JN* codes may be used with YP* codes without the need for educational-level audience codes

Codes beginning K	ECONOMICS, FINANCE, BUSINESS & MANAGEMENT
Treatment	Specialist and some General Adult; see also VS* codes for practical approaches to many topics
Qualifiers	As appropriate
Special Features	Certain K* codes (KFCX, KFFC, KJBX) indicate subject-specific treatment, <i>ie</i> study & revision guides

Codes beginning L	LAW
Treatment	Specialist only; see VS* codes for General Adult items
Qualifiers	GEOGRAPHICAL must be assigned to LN* codes
Special Features	LX indicates subject-specific treatment, <i>ie</i> study & revision guides

Codes beginning M	MEDICINE & NURSING
Treatment	Specialist only; see V* codes for General Adult items
Qualifiers	Not generally required
Special Features	MR* codes indicate subject-specific treatment, <i>ie</i> study & revision guides & reference material

Codes beginning N	HISTORY
Treatment	Specialist and General Adult
Qualifiers	Particularly TIME PERIOD & GEOGRAPHICAL, and others as appropriate
Special Features	

Codes beginning P	MATHEMATICS & SCIENCE
Treatment	Specialist only (except see PDZ for popular treatments); see WN* codes for General Adult items
Qualifiers	Not generally required
Special Features	

Codes beginning Q	PHILOSOPHY & RELIGION
Treatment	Specialist and some General Adult; prefer VX* codes for 'Mind, Body, Spirit' approaches
Qualifiers	As appropriate
Special Features	QRV* codes should be used with (after) other QR* codes

Codes beginning R	EARTH SCIENCES, GEOGRAPHY, ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING
Treatment	Specialist and some General Adult; prefer VS* and WN* codes for General Adult items
Qualifiers	Particularly GEOGRAPHICAL and others as appropriate
Special Features	

Codes beginning T	TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, AGRICULTURE
Treatment	Specialist only; see WG* codes for General Adult items
Qualifiers	Not generally required
Special Features	

Codes beginning S	SPORTS & ACTIVE OUTDOOR RECREATION
Treatment	General Adult
Qualifiers	As appropriate
Special Features	

Codes beginning U	COMPUTING & INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
Treatment	Specialist and General Adult
Qualifiers	Not generally required
Special Features	

Codes beginning V	HEALTH, RELATIONSHIPS & PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT
Treatment	General Adult; see C*, J*, K*, L*, M*, Q*, R* codes, as appropriate, for Specialist works
Qualifiers	Particularly SPECIAL INTEREST and others as appropriate
Special Features	

Codes beginning W	LIFESTYLE, HOBBIES & LEISURE
Treatment	General Adult; see A*, K*, N*, P*, R*, T* codes, as appropriate, for Specialist works
Qualifiers	Particularly SPECIAL INTEREST and others as appropriate; particularly GEOGRAPHICAL for WT* (Travel)
Special Features	

Codes beginning X	GRAPHIC NOVELS, COMIC BOOKS, CARTOONS
Treatment	General Adult, plus Teenage & Children's
Qualifiers	GEOGRAPHICAL and/or TIME PERIOD Qualifiers where these aspects are particularly pertinent & significant; INTEREST AGE & SPECIAL INTEREST Qualifiers as appropriate
Special Features	Items will typically need a "type" from XA* plus a "genre" from XQ* for full classification; note inclusion of Teenage & Children's material

Codes beginning Y	CHILDREN'S, TEENAGE & EDUCATIONAL
Treatment	All Teenage & Children's material (except see X* codes above), <i>ie</i> up to c 16 years, and minimum school leaving age for Educational material
Qualifiers	Particularly INTEREST AGE and others as appropriate; particularly EDUCATIONAL PURPOSE for YP* (Educational) codes
Special Features	YN* (General interest) codes may be used with (after) YF* (Fiction) codes to indicate key topics (or further detail of key topics) of fiction works where particularly pertinent & significant; YX* (Personal & social issues) may be used with (after) YF* (Fiction) codes to indicate issues addressed in fiction



#### 4c. Section summary – Qualifiers

Codes beginning 1	GEOGRAPHICAL
Use	To indicate the geographical scope or applicability of book content – such as the location of a travel guide, the setting of a novel, the jurisdiction to which laws apply, <i>etc.</i> (Do not use: for fiction & literature texts, to indicate the literary tradition of the work <i>eg</i> literature of Peru)
Nat Extensions	Typically available for participating countries

Codes beginning 2	LANGUAGE
Use	To indicate the language(s) to which the book content applies – such as a linguistics or literary studies work, phrasebook or dictionary, <i>etc.</i> ; that is, the language a book is about, not necessarily the language it is written in. (Do not use: to indicate the language of the text itself) (Do not use: for fiction & literature texts, to indicate the literary tradition of the work <i>eg</i> Spanish literature)
Nat Extensions	Not applicable (all codes are shared values)

Codes beginning 3	TIME PERIOD
Use	To indicate the time period range of book content – such as for a history book, memoir or biography, historical fiction, <i>etc.</i> (Do not use: to indicate the year of an annual, road atlas, travel guide, conference proceedings, <i>etc.</i> ) (Do not use: to indicate the first publication date of a work, <i>eg</i> of classic fiction or literature)
Nat Extensions	Typically available for participating countries

Codes beginning 4	EDUCATIONAL PURPOSE
Use	To indicate the curriculum, examination or level for which educational material is specifically designed – such as school textbooks, language learning coursework, revision and study aids, vocational training material. (Do not use: to indicate educational institutions that are the subject of a book, <i>eg</i> a history of a school or university)
Nat Extensions	Typically available for participating countries

Codes beginning 5	INTEREST AGE & SPECIAL INTEREST
Use	To indicate a variety of characteristics relating to content: the particular reading age or level (especially for children’s books); related events ( <i>eg</i> religious or public holidays); groups of people that book content is related to, and/or, in some cases, specifically intended for ( <i>eg</i> for women; relating to religious & ethnic groups, Gays & Lesbians, <i>etc.</i> ); and to indicate explicit content. Pay particular attention to the scope notes for 5J* and 5P* codes
Nat Extensions	Some present

Codes beginning 6	STYLE
Use	To indicate the particular style of artistic or creative expression covered by book content – such as books on art, architecture, music, literary studies – or exemplified by fiction & literature texts, <i>eg</i> use 6RA with DC* to indicate Romantic poetry
Nat Extensions	Not applicable (all codes are shared values)

## 5. Dissemination and communication of *Thema* Categories and Qualifiers

In ONIX 3.0, a book about a particular artistic school of late 19<sup>th</sup> Century French painting might be classified and communicated like this:

```
<!-- ***** ONIX 3.0 ***** -->
<Subject>
  <MainSubject/>
  <SubjectSchemeIdentifier>93</SubjectSchemeIdentifier>      <!-- 93 = Thema subject -->
  <SubjectSchemeVersion>1.1</SubjectSchemeVersion>          <!-- version 1.1 -->
  <SubjectCode>AGA</SubjectCode>                             <!-- AGA = History of art -->
</Subject>
<Subject>
  <SubjectSchemeIdentifier>93</SubjectSchemeIdentifier>
  <SubjectSchemeVersion>1.1</SubjectSchemeVersion>
  <SubjectCode>AFCL</SubjectCode>                            <!-- AFCL = Paintings and painting in oil -->
</Subject>
<Subject>
  <SubjectSchemeIdentifier>94</SubjectSchemeIdentifier>      <!-- 94 = Thema geographical qualifier -->
  <SubjectSchemeVersion>1.1</SubjectSchemeVersion>
  <SubjectCode>1DD-FR-FB</SubjectCode>                      <!-- 1DD-FR-FB= Finistere -->
                                                           <!-- note 1DD = France if the national extension is unknown -->
</Subject>
<Subject>
  <SubjectSchemeIdentifier>96</SubjectSchemeIdentifier>      <!-- 96 = Thema time period qualifier -->
  <SubjectSchemeVersion>1.1</SubjectSchemeVersion>
  <SubjectCode>3MNQX</SubjectCode>                          <!-- 3MNQX = 1880s -->
</Subject>
<Subject>
  <SubjectSchemeIdentifier>99</SubjectSchemeIdentifier>      <!-- 99 = Thema style qualifier -->
  <SubjectSchemeVersion>1.1</SubjectSchemeVersion>
  <SubjectCode>6SV</SubjectCode>                             <!-- 6SV = Synthetism -->
</Subject>
```

This subject classification might be accompanied by keywords such as ‘Pont Aven’ or ‘Post-impressionist’, ‘name as subject’ composites for Paul Gauguin and Émile Bernard, and in this case, it might also be useful to details of the target audience to distinguish between popular and more academic treatments of the subject. This example is taken from the *ONIX 3.0 Implementation and Best Practice Guide*.

In ONIX 2.1, there are only minor differences: the first <Subject> composite would use <MainSubject> instead of <Subject> and <MainSubjectSchemeIdentifier> instead of <SubjectSchemeIdentifier>, and it would omit the <MainSubject/> flag:

```
<!-- ***** ONIX 2.1 ***** -->
<MainSubject>
  <MainSubjectSchemeIdentifier>93</MainSubjectSchemeIdentifier> <!-- 93 = Thema subject -->
  <SubjectSchemeVersion>1.1</SubjectSchemeVersion>           <!-- version 1.1 -->
  <SubjectCode>AGA</SubjectCode>                             <!-- AGA = History of art -->
</MainSubject>
<Subject>
  <SubjectSchemeIdentifier>93</SubjectSchemeIdentifier>
  <SubjectSchemeVersion>1.1</SubjectSchemeVersion>
  <SubjectCode>AFCL</SubjectCode>                           <!-- AFCL = Paintings and painting in oil -->
</Subject>
<Subject>
  <SubjectSchemeIdentifier>94</SubjectSchemeIdentifier>      <!-- 94 = Thema geographical qualifier -->
  <SubjectSchemeVersion>1.1</SubjectSchemeVersion>
  <SubjectCode>1DD-FR-FB</SubjectCode>                       <!-- 1DD-FR-FB= Finistere -->
                                                           <!-- note 1DD = France if the national extension is unknown -->
</Subject>
<Subject>
  <SubjectSchemeIdentifier>96</SubjectSchemeIdentifier>      <!-- 96 = Thema time period qualifier -->
  <SubjectSchemeVersion>1.1</SubjectSchemeVersion>
  <SubjectCode>3MNQX</SubjectCode>                           <!-- 3MNQX = 1880s
</Subject>
<Subject>
  <SubjectSchemeIdentifier>99</SubjectSchemeIdentifier>      <!-- 99 = Thema style qualifier -->
  <SubjectSchemeVersion>1.1</SubjectSchemeVersion>
  <SubjectCode>6SV</SubjectCode>                             <!-- 6SV = Synthetism -->
</Subject>
```

As with ONIX 3.0, keywords, 'name as subject' and audience details should ideally also be included.

*Thema* code values or headings may of course be transmitted between trading partners in other message formats, displayed on websites, and used in catalogues and in promotional material. Headings may be displayed in any language as appropriate, but to increase intelligibility and interoperability, it is always useful to display the code along with any *Thema* heading.

Howard Willows  
Nielsen, and chair of the *Thema* ISC

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