

# Thema International Steering Committee Minutes

---

*Meeting held Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> April 2014, 10:00–12:00 BST (UTC+1),  
Marlborough Room, Earls Court*

Attendees:

Mikolai Baliszewski (Nat. Lib of Poland) [obs]	Maiken Thorson (Bokbasen)
Graham Bell (EDiTEUR)	Diane Oulliet (BTLF)
Maria Börman (Bokrondellen)	Pierre Liboiron (BTLF)
Francesca Cacciapaglia (IE)	Jesus Peraita (DILVE)
Virginie Clayssen (EDITIS)	Christer Perslov (Bokrondellen)
Laurent Dervieu (Electre)	Simonetta Pillon (IE)
Simon Edwards (BIC)	Chris Saynor (ONIXsuite)
Fride Fosseng (Bokbasen)	Len Vlahos (BISG)
Bente Franck-Saetervoll (Bokbasen)	Michael Vogelbacker (MVB)
Noah Genner (Booknet Canada)	Howard Willows (Nielsen) [Chair]
Karina Luke (BIC)	Jon Windus (Nielsen)
Renek Mendrun (ISBN Poland) [obs]	Olaf Winslow (Boghandlerforeningen) [obs]
Kim Halling Mortensen (Boghandlerforeningen) [obs]	

1. Howard Willows (Chair) welcomed attendees to the meeting, and pointed out that this was different from all previous *Thema* meetings – we now have a live standard. Implementation of that standard is the next challenge, and 2014 must be the year of initial implementations. Attendees introduced themselves. HW noted the voting details as outlined in the Committee's Terms of Reference (the TORs are available at <http://www.editeur.org/153/Maintenance-and-Support>).
2. HW considered the minutes of the last meeting, noting a number of matters arising:
  - a. most but not all national groups have provided contact details for EDiTEUR's *Thema* web pages. Where these are missing, please provide them to Graham Bell ([graham@editeur.org](mailto:graham@editeur.org));
  - b. MV asked about the status of the original *Thema* provisional board and technical committees. These have been combined into the single International Steering Committee, as agreed at the previous Frankfurt meeting. EDiTEUR and the ISC will manage the future development of *Thema* in much the same way as ONIX for Books.

The minutes were approved.

3. GB outlined the main activities since the last meeting:

- a. the old Panthema website has been retired, and the URL now points to the EDItEUR website;
- b. all *Thema* content is available via EDItEUR, and updates such as translations, mappings *etc* are being added as they become available. Version 1.0 was posted (Excel file, in English) on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2013, following ratification at the Frankfurt meeting. GB noted this had been downloaded over 3000 times (counting only unique IP addresses) in the first three months. Full German, Norwegian and French translations of the subject headings are now available (Excel files), together with an executive-level briefing on *Thema* and a basic user guide;
- c. the online *Thema* browser at <http://editeur.dyndns.org/thema> has been updated with full German, Norwegian and French translations;
- d. the International Publishers Association endorsed *Thema* (IPA Secretary General Jens Bammel: “*Subject classification of books and e-books is critical for publishers and the need for a global scheme is clear, given the increasingly international nature of the book trade. A number of IPA members are now actively collaborating on Thema, which solves problems for publishers. We fully endorse the initiative.*”) and distributed a version of the exec-level briefing to all its members;
- e. further publicity for *Thema* includes LV’s article in *Book Business Magazine* (<http://digitaleditions.napco.com/publication?i=193797>) and GB’s article in *Publisher’s Weekly* book fair newsletter (to appear the last day of the London Fair).

HW stressed the momentum that has been built, and the difficulty of maintaining it.

4. HW began a wide-ranging discussion of various outstanding proposals for the next version of *Thema*, referring to a paper which had been circulated prior to the meeting. He noted that over the past two months, there had been a ‘flurry’ of requests for clarification and new suggestions, and that these continue to be received. These queries illustrate the fact that as people study the scheme for translation or implementation purposes, they naturally see ambiguities or areas where the scheme does not quite capture the whole value of existing national schemes. On the other hand, the relatively small number of suggestions imply the broad structure of *Thema* is well founded, and does not suggest any urgent need for updates. During 2013, there was an expectation that a 1.1 might be necessary in the first half of 2014, but this does not appear to be the case. Many of the suggestions can be handled through clarifications in the *Thema* user guidelines. Only a few require new codes, and none appear to be urgent.

HW noted that *Thema* must balance stability and responsiveness, and suggested the group considers the timetable for the first minor update.

LV noted that BISAC is updated annually, whereas (per HW) the BIC scheme is on a four-year update cycle, and GB noted that the previous meeting suggested the long-term update cycle for *Thema* should be between these two. BFS suggested ‘the sooner the better’ for an update of *Thema*, with a 1.1 around Frankfurt. MV and JP specifically supported this, and it was generally agreed.

GB also noted that there had been previous discussion of a ‘fast track’ for approval of national extensions, in particular for new groups joining *Thema*. LV, JW suggested such extensions could

simply be approved by the chair. BFS suggested rapid discussion and approval of national extensions via a mailing group, and MV agreed this would be a useful way forward.

HW then summarised some of the current outstanding suggestions, to clarify how they might be treated:

- a. Use of style qualifiers for literature (eg poetry in the romantic style);
- b. New codes to avoid loss of detail in the Children's section;
- c. Use of qualifiers for literature (eg 'Spanish literature', as distinct from literature by a Spanish author, literature in the Spanish language, or literature set in Spain).

The first of these can be handled easily via additions to the user guidelines, but no change in the scheme itself. The second demands only a little discussion, but requires a new 1.1 release of the scheme. The third is more difficult, as there is a conflict between the use of the obvious geographical qualifier for the setting or location and for 'culturally Spanish'.

LV, MV suggested that an informal *Thema* technical subgroup be selected to process and summarise issues such as this one month prior to Steering Committee meetings. Membership of the subgroup would vary according to the issues at hand, but should not exceed around six members (including the Chair and a representative of EDItEUR). It was agreed this was a good way to progress the various issues around version 1.1. GB said the role of this subgroup is to process proposals, to summarise the issues, and to recommend solutions to the main Steering Committee. If an ISC meeting in Frankfurt aims to finalise and ratify Thema 1.1, then any suggestions for inclusion in 1.1 must be submitted to the Chair and EDItEUR by mid-June, in order to ensure sufficient time is available for the technical subgroup.

**ACTION** GB to set up Google Group and invite members of the ISC to join

**ACTION** nominations for the technical subgroup to discuss current issues to GB by 23<sup>rd</sup> April

**ACTION** deadline for final suggestions for version 1.1 to be fixed and publicised

5. Each national group provided an update on its activities.

- a. HW noted the establishment of the UK *Thema* group as a subsidiary of BIC's Metadata committee, and that this includes a representative from Amazon. BIC has made the decision *not* to update the BIC scheme from 2.1 (as would normally happen this year), and no future updates are planned. BIC committed that should such updates prove necessary, they would *only increase* the compatibility with *Thema*. GB noted that some UK-based system vendors had already implemented *Thema* within their product management applications. BFS asked when Nielsen would be ready to export Thema (based on mapping from existing BIC codes), and JW confirmed this would be by end of June;
- b. MV noted the dissemination efforts in Germany, with 120 publishers attending *Thema* seminars and briefings. A full German translation of the scheme has been completed. VLB, the German Books in Print, now handles *Thema* subjects and qualifiers, and will cope with ONIX including *Thema* codes from May. *Thema* classifications for all books will be available via a mapping from the existing Warengruppen Systematik classification. German system vendors Klopotek and Triagon have stated they'll have *Thema* solutions 'soon';

- c. In Norway, BFS and FF noted that Bokbasen has completed a full translation of the scheme, and has noted significant interest from booksellers. Bokbasen will begin exporting *Thema* codes (based on mapping from the existing proprietary scheme) in June. HW has delivered *Thema* training in Oslo to Norwegian, Swedish and Danish delegates;
  - d. CP and MB noted that Bokrondellen in Sweden has formed a *Thema* group, and is working on a Swedish translation of the scheme (expected to be complete around May). Implementation of *Thema* within Bokrondellen's system is expected in October, with old titles mapped from the existing scheme – but going forward, classification will primarily use *Thema*;
  - e. The French national group is meeting quarterly, said LD and VC. It has completed a full French translation. Although French publishers are still concentrating on implementing recent updates to the CLIL classification system, they are expected to implement *Thema* after that – and a CLIL to *Thema* mapping is underway;
  - f. In French Canada, there has been little activity so far, but BTLF is studying mapping of subject codes from Thèmes Electre to *Thema*, and is interested in the French translation;
  - g. For the Italian group, SP and FC noted that it has completed a mapping from the existing CCE subject scheme to *Thema*, and that a full translation of *Thema* is underway (expected completion around July);
  - h. JP explained that the Spanish trade has recently completed an industry-wide change to a modified Spanish form of the BIC scheme, which involved a lot of software changes. In Spain, these codes are mandatory for ISBN registration, and are printed on the books themselves. There is no expectation of adoption of *Thema* in the short term, and no promotion yet (so that the message on the modified Spanish version of BIC remains clear). However, initial *Thema* mappings and translations are in place, and developments are expected in a couple of years.
  - i. The US *Thema* group – essentially BISG's subjects committee – is notably diverse, including representatives from Kobo, Amazon, Barnes and Noble *etc*). There has been a significant amount of promotion and seminars, and a mapping from the existing BISAC scheme to *Thema* is available (under the same licence terms as the BISAC scheme itself). This mapping will be kept up to date with changes in both schemes. At present, activity centres around coding for export products.
  - j. For the Canadian national group (in which BTLF participates for French Canada), NG reported that Booknet Canada's Biblioshare service already both accepts and exports *Thema* codes via ONIX. Indigo, Canada's largest bookstore chain, plans on implementing *Thema* in its systems in 2015. And Booknet Canada in association with BISG has developed an online BISAC to *Thema* translator ([http:// bisactothema.biblioshare.org](http://bisactothema.biblioshare.org)). This is free for all to use, and provides both one-off and batch translation functions.
6. HW called for any other business.
- a. MV asked for clarification about the licensing costs of *Thema*. GB explained that *Thema* – like all EDItEUR standards – is free for all to use, subject to a very permissive EDItEUR licence, and that this was one of the reasons why management of *Thema* was

transferred to EDItEUR. GB noted that a link to this license should be added to the *Thema* web pages.

- b. GB asked that a number of new national groups that are being formed be considered for provisional approval, so that representatives from these countries can take part in the discussions leading up to the agreement of version 1.1. All were approved, although the formation of a Danish group is still dependent on internal discussions within Dansk Boghandlerforeningen:
    - i. Poland – RM and MB in attendance;
    - ii. Denmark – OW and KHM in attendance;
    - iii. Australia – the group will be facilitated by the Australian Publishers Association, (but in line with the agreed Terms of Reference for Thema National Groups, will also be open to participation via the Australian Booksellers Association);
    - iv. Japan – the Japan Publishing Organisation will facilitate the group, in parallel within its existing ONIX group.
  - c. OW noted that he would seek endorsement of the scheme via the European and International Booksellers Federation (of which he is Treasurer)
7. HW announced that the next face-to-face meeting of the *Thema* International Steering Committee will be during the Frankfurt Book Fair.

It is likely to be 10am on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> October 2014, but this is dependent upon room availability in Frankfurt. Details will be confirmed as soon as possible.

Graham Bell  
EDItEUR  
9<sup>th</sup> April 2014