

Thema International Steering Committee Minutes

*Wednesday 8th October 2014, 10:00–12:00 CEST (UTC+2),
Room Brillanz, Hall 4.2, Messe Frankfurt*

Attendees:

Mikolai Baliszewski (Nat. Lib of Poland)	Karina Luke (BIC)
Alaina-Marie Bassett (BIC)	Martin Lüning (MVB/VLB)
Detlef Bauer (Libri)	Renek Mendruń (ISBN Poland)
Graham Bell (EDITEUR)	Diane Ouellet (BTLF)
Maria Börman (Bokrondellen)	Jesús Peraita (FGEE/DILVE)
Francesca Cacciapaglia (IE-Online)	Christer Perslov (Bokrondellen)
Michel Cervellin (BTLF)	Simonetta Pillon (IE)
Virginie Clayssen (SNE)	Chris Saynor (Giant Chair)
Fride Fosseng (Bokbasen)	Len Vlahos (BISG)
Bente Franck-Saetervoll (Bokbasen)	Ketil Stadskleiv (Bokbasen)
Noah Genner (Booknet Canada)	Howard Willows (Nielsen) [chair]
Alex Ingram (EDITEUR)	Jon Windus (Nielsen)
Kong Xiaohua (CNPIEC) [obs, part]	Olaf Winslow (Boghandlerforeningen)

1. Howard Willows (chair) welcomed attendees to the meeting, and Graham Bell noted that a recording would be made of the meeting for the sole benefit of the Japanese *Thema* group who were unable to attend in person. There were no objections to this. Attendees introduced themselves.
2. HW considered the minutes of the last meeting, noting that any matters arising would be covered under the main meeting agenda:

The minutes were approved without changes.

 1. draft minutes of *Thema* ISC meetings are circulated to attendees for initial comments, then posted publicly on the EDITEUR website. However, they remain 'draft' until formal approval at the next meeting
 2. 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)
3. HW summarised the main activities since the last meeting:
 - a. The major work programme has been the development of the draft for version 1.1 of *Thema*. HW expressed thanks to the technical subgroup set up following the London ISC meeting, which consisted of Detlef Bauer, Fride Fosseng and Michael Olenick as well as HW and GB. Although there were some delays in establishing the group because of

uncertainties arising from the US representation, this group's draft was made available to members of the ISC at the end of September.

- b. GB has continued to post translations of version 1.0 on the interactive *Thema* browser (<http://editeur.dyndns.org/thema>) as they have become available. The browser now provides German, French, Norwegian, and Swedish in addition to the English text, plus partial translations in Italian, Spanish, Arabic and Russian. Other translations are in progress – Simonetta Pillon noted the Italian translation was still ongoing. Jesús Peraita reported that the Spanish translation was complete, but publication must be held back in order to avoid mixed messages within the Spanish market. GB noted he had recently received an improved German translation plus an early sample of a partial Japanese translation, and that a Danish translation has been commissioned. Diane Ouellet suggested there could be an issue with translations of educational qualifiers in Canada, where French and English language qualifications and curricula differ, but GB noted that these could exist 'in parallel' as Canadian national extensions.
- c. Various training and promotion events have been held to increase awareness of *Thema*.

HW said that the momentum of the early months of *Thema* development had been maintained over the past six months, and the focus of the next year should be on adoption, particularly by retailers.

4. HW began by outlining the status of the proposals for version 1.1 of *Thema* which were developed by the technical subgroup. These were circulated prior to the meeting (file "THEMA v1.0.99 proposal.xlsx"). Within the core of the scheme, there are three areas where there are significant changes:

Note that the agreed scope for version 1.1 mean that all changes are *additions* of new categories and codes and in a few cases *very minor refinements* of existing categories. There are no relocations of categories within the hierarchy, and no deletions of existing categories.

- a. Many additional categories are proposed within the sciences, following useful suggestions from the Royal Society of Chemistry and from staff within Elsevier. Note that the new categories maintain (and in fact strengthen) the distinction between 'science' and 'technology' – in many cases there are 'parallel' subject categories for books that deal with subjects from an academic or an industrial viewpoint.
- b. The fiction section has been bolstered by additional genres, some of which have unusual names in English in order to avoid confusion with some familiar terms that convey slightly different meanings. Within fiction, there are many combinations of codes or categories that carry nuanced meanings. Several (particularly FW–FY*) are used *almost exclusively* in combination with other F* codes and are therefore somewhat like 'pseudo-qualifiers'. GB asked whether these combinations of codes required an 'advanced' user guide or an addendum to the existing basic user guide. HW noted that most combinations were explained in the scopenotes for each category, and this approach should be extended wherever necessary. JP suggested an advanced guide should be produced containing many detailed worked examples. HW reminded all national groups to consider and propose some useful and well-known works to include as worked examples within the guide. Particularly useful will be illustrations of the use of codes in combination.

- c. There were a very large number of suggestions for additions to the children's fiction section, particularly from the US *Thema* group, arising from the large number of Juvenile Fiction headings in the BISAC scheme. A potential dramatic increase in the number of codes has been avoided by a simple strategy, suggested by the technical subgroup, whereby the former 'non-fiction' codes at YN* are re-labelled 'general interest': used alone, they remain non-fiction as before, but the subgroup proposed they can be combined with children's fiction codes to provide a wealth of detail for children's fiction, which enriches *Thema* for all users (as well as greatly improving the BISAC to *Thema* mapping). It should also be noted that this solution uses the existing principle of combining values to create a richer subject description (the 'building block' approach, which in technical terms is known as 'post-coordination') that is inherent in *Thema*. This suggestion has met with approval from the US group. HW noted one outstanding issue with this approach – whether the Children's picture books (YBC) could be combined with Children's fiction (YF) codes – and the meeting agreed that they could.

The technical subgroup has also prepared an update to the basic user guide.

GB has uploaded the various proposals for version 1.1 (as per v1.0.99) to the online browser at <http://editeur.dyndns.org/thema2/>. Note that this is only temporary, and once 1.1 is ratified, it will simply replace version 1.0 at the usual /thema/ address. GB also noted that unexpectedly few suggestions for national extensions had been received by the technical subgroup, so only a handful were included in v1.0.99 proposals.

HW presented the outcome of discussions within the technical subgroup that centred on the so-called 'Spanish literature issue'. The consensus was that 'Spanish literature' and similar concepts cannot be clearly and universally indicated within a global subject classification scheme (even if the inherent confusion over the meaning of qualifiers used with literature could be resolved) – primarily because there is no universal agreement on what constitutes 'Spanish literature' and similar concepts: the definition varies between users and in different contexts. Accordingly, it was recognised that 'Spanish literature' cannot adequately be defined by subject alone – but may be identified by some combination of subject, the nationality or culture of the author, and the language it is written in, and thus requires other data (outside of *Thema*), according to the requirements of the user in a given context. Len Vlahos accepted the consensus but requested that the TISC should not rule out the possibility of re-visiting the issue at some later date.

GB presented a paper on geographical extensions. The French national group had previously proposed that geographical detail below national level would be required for countries without a national group. The German group had presented additional national extensions (within Germany) that raised questions of how the hierarchy should be managed. The principles outlined in the paper were generally accepted by the meeting. LV suggested that a new technical subgroup should be convened to propose an initial set of geographical extensions for countries without national groups. LV also noted that such proposals should be presented to contacts within the affected countries, and could act as encouragement to become involved directly with *Thema*. JP questioned whether any extensions should be designed to be disposable in the event that the affected country creates a national group, but GB replied that if designed correctly, the extensions are in most cases likely to be suitable for continued use (while allowing for the possibility of modification, and for elaboration by any newly-created national group). It was suggested that a new technical subgroup (perhaps with rolling membership) be set up to process

and approve such proposals before uploading to the Google Group (see below) for consideration by the wider TISC.

Noting that the proposals for version 1.1 had been delivered only a short time before the ISC meeting, HW suggested the following timetable for ratification of the proposals:

- a. A two week period for final suggestions for new categories (particularly national extensions) until 24th October
- b. Two weeks for final comments on the proposals, until 7th November
- c. In the absence of any further issues, ratification on 14th November

At the end of stages a. and b. EDItEUR will circulate a new draft together with notes on any comments received. After stage c., EDItEUR will circulate the final version 1.1, together with updated translation templates *etc.*

Note that further national extensions can be suggested at any time and may be incorporated into the scheme after 'fast track' agreement by e-mail. This is likely to be managed quarterly, in a similar way to ONIX codelists.

HW also noted that a *Thema* version 1.2 might be expected towards the end of 2015 (or perhaps early in 2016), and that the timetable for such a revision would be an agenda item for the next meeting of the ISC. Beyond 1.2, the aim is to reduce the frequency of *Thema* revisions (a cadence of one revision every two years has previously been seen as an aim, with national extensions being added more frequently as necessary).

Chris Saynor mentioned that the French national group may wish to suggest changes to the core categories. Bente Franck-Sætervoll reminded ISC members of the Google Group set up earlier in the year, and that this is the preferred route for such suggestions. GB said that there had been very little engagement with the Google Group, but agreed that it had not been promoted properly, and that discussion on the group is preferred wherever possible as it is then visible to all.

If any ISC member is not a member of the Google Group and wishes to join, please contact Graham Bell for an invitation to join.

5. HW called for any updates on activities from the national groups.
 - a. Francesca Cacciapaglia noted that the Italian translation work continues
 - b. FF reported that the Norwegian translation was complete, and that Bokbasen had begun classifying new books using *Thema*. From June, data provided to Norwegian retailers included *Thema*, and Bokbasen is working on promotion of *Thema* in the Norwegian trade.
 - c. For English-language Canada, Noah Genner reported the development of the online BISAC to *Thema* conversion service, and that over 1000 files had already been processed. Some Canadian presses have already adopted *Thema*, and Powells bookstore had announced adoption plans for 2015.
 - d. For French Canada, Diane Ouellet noted that *Thema* had provided new impetus, and that BTLF was restarting dialogue with BookNet Canada.
 - e. Maria Börman reported the availability of the Swedish translation of *Thema*, and the use of the BIC to *Thema* mapping within Bokrondellen. She also noted that Swedish retailers were unwilling to begin using *Thema* until Nielsen was able to provide *Thema* subject codes in its data (see 5.m below).

- f. LV noted that the annual revision of the BISAC scheme – now all but completed for this year – will prompt a revision of BISG’s BISAC to *Thema* mapping (which is used within the BookNet Canada mapping service, for example).
- g. Virginie Clayssen reported that some within the French book trade were waiting for *Thema* 1.1 before beginning work. However, a mapping from the latest version of the CLIL subject scheme to *Thema* is underway, and is expected to be complete before the next meeting of the ISC in London. VC also noted that even if publishers in France do not supply *Thema* codes, they will be added into their product metadata by the major French distributors and metadata aggregators.
- h. BIC has decided that its own BIC subject scheme will not be developed further, and all future activity would be focused on *Thema*. Karina Luke also reported significant promotional activity within the UK, including imminent publication of a ‘BIC Bite’ briefing document on *Thema*. BIC’s product data certification scheme will adjust the weighting of subject information to encourage the use of *Thema* by publishers, and specific *Thema* training will be introduced.
- i. Renek Mendruń reported early interest in *Thema* from Polish organisations active in e-commerce. He noted there were already Polish translations of BIC and BISAC schemes, and that a *Thema* translation would be created. Integration of *Thema* subject codes into the eISBN service provided by the Polish National Library is planned for 2015.
- j. Martin Lüning noted the significant progress made on *Thema* in Germany, including significant improvements in the German translation provided by NewBooks in order to make some *Thema* terms more familiar to users of the legacy Waregruppen (WGS) classification scheme. MVB promotes *Thema* on its website, and has delivered a number of workshops for publishers to encourage adoption. *Thema* subject information was incorporated into the VLB books-in-print service in May.
- k. JP noted again that a full Spanish translation of *Thema* has been completed, but the very recent rollout of a modified BIC scheme across the Spanish book trade means that the Spanish Publishers Association (FGEE) requests that efforts to encourage *Thema* adoption be delayed. However, the translation has been provided privately to contacts in Argentina and Colombia to encourage interest in *Thema* in those countries.
- l. Olaf Winslow reported that the Danish Booksellers and Publishers Associations have agreed to coordinate their efforts on *Thema*, and a Danish translation has been commissioned from the Danish National Library.
- m. Jon Windus reported that 7 million existing Nielsen product records have *Thema* subject codes attached and that *Thema* codes have been included in Nielsen data feeds since July (these have been produced by mapping from pre-existing BIC codes; Nielsen has not yet begun classifying primarily in *Thema*).

Additionally, Kong Xiaohua privately reported initial interest in *Thema* within China (specifically within the TC505 committee that also works with ONIX in China). This group has received funding to create a Chinese translation of the *Thema* scheme.

Hidaka Takashi also separately reported ongoing work on a Japanese translation of *Thema*, which also includes mappings from the C-code subject classification used in some parts of the Japanese book trade, and from NDC (Japanese library classification). The Forward Book

Information Centre system that provides pre-publication information from publishers to Japanese retailers will revise its specifications to include *Thema* in 2015.

6. HW asked whether there was any other business. GB asked ISC members to ratify creation of a Chinese national group, and this was accepted unanimously.

7. There being no further business, HW announced that the next face-to-face meeting of the *Thema* International Steering Committee will be during the London Book Fair. It will be held in Conference Room 1 within the Olympia Conference Centre at 10am on Wednesday 15th April.

Note that the venue for the London Book Fair is not the same as in recent years. It will be held in Olympia, and the Olympia Conference Centre is adjacent to (but not within) the main Fair venue.

Graham Bell
EDItEUR
8th October 2014