

Thema International Steering Committee Minutes

*Wednesday 13th April 2016, 10:00-12:00 BST (UTC+1),
The Dark Room, Olympia, Hammersmith, London*

Attendees:

Luc Audrain (Hachette Livre)	Karina Luke (BIC)
Graham Bell (EDItEUR)	Martin Lüning (MVB / VLB)
Marie Bilde Rasmussen (for Dansk Forlag)	Dominique Parisi (CLIL)
Emiel van Bockel (CB)	Jesús Peraita (FGEE)
Bente Franck-Sætervoll (Bokbasen)	Christer Perslöv (Bokinfo)
Lisbeth Håkansson Petré (Bokinfo)	Suzanne Rozario (EDItEUR)
Alex Ingram (EDItEUR)	Chris Saynor (Giant Chair)
Delphine Katrantzis (SNE)	Howard Willows (Nielsen), chair
Anna Lionetti (AIE)	Jon Windus (Nielsen)

1. Welcome and introductions

HW welcomed delegates to the 6th meeting of the *Thema* International Steering Committee (TISC), noting that many in attendance had been part of the committee since the inception of the *Thema* project.

2. Minutes of ISC Meeting held 14th October, Frankfurt Book Fair, and matters arising

HW introduced the minutes (which as usual had been available in draft form from the EDItEUR website since soon after the Frankfurt meeting). He highlighted the fact that since the meeting, the BISAC scheme had added its planned range of YA (young adult) codes, and suggested that the *Thema* ISC should watch this development carefully, to assess whether it solves the problem it is intended to. If successful, it should help guide future developments in *Thema* too.

HW also highlighted the 'mission statement', which had been developed further as a result of discussion following the last meeting. It now states:

Thema is a multilingual subject category scheme designed to meet the needs of publishers, retailers and trade intermediaries in all sectors of the global book publishing business. It is managed by an international group of stakeholders, and is free to use. Thema aims to enhance the merchandising, discoverability and potential sales of books by simplifying the communication of accurate and detailed subject information across international markets and reducing the need to maintain numerous national subject schemes.

The statement has become a little lengthier, but now highlights the main benefits of *Thema*. **Delegates indicated their approval of this statement**, but further comments are welcome.

GB noted that there had as yet been little traffic on the Thema_implementation Yahoo group (though there were a slowly increasing number of members), and similarly little on the Google Group set up for the use of ISC members between meetings but particularly for discussion of *Thema* 1.2 (direct e-mail between working group participants had proved more effective).

GB asked ML whether there was significant need for implementation discussion in Germany, as a result of the adoption of *Thema* within VLB. ML replied that that publishers had made use of workshop sessions offered in Germany, but he saw no need for a German-language mailing list. ML also highlighted the fact that VLB's lower charges for contributing high-quality data including *Thema* had provided impetus to the adoption.

HW said other matters arising from the minutes would be covered in the main agenda, and **the minutes were approved.**

3. Summary of activities since last meeting

AI took the committee through his Activity Report, noting that most work had been linked to the development of version 1.2 of *Thema*. He highlighted ongoing work with translations, including the upcoming addition of a new Hungarian translation due to be used within the new Magyar Books in Print service, and completion of the Italian translation. Chinese, Greek, Turkish and Portuguese are all essentially complete, but await approval from their various sponsor organisations before being made more generally available.

AI described the work of the Technical Working Group, which had met over several months to consider the over 250 suggestions and requests for *Thema* 1.2, and thanked those who took part in the working group for their efforts. The working group had the specific remit of creating a version 1.2 that was fully back-compatible, while increasing the available level of detail in many areas across the scheme, and responding to issues that had arisen from the translation and mapping exercises carried out in many countries since the release of version 1.1 at in November 2014. The group also aimed to extend the idea of ‘narrative themes’ which were introduced with 1.1. AI explained that a significant proportion of the suggestions for version 1.2 could not be implemented while retaining back-compatibility, but the working group had noted that they should be taken into account at some future date when a *Thema* version 2.0 was considered (2.0 would be a breaking release which would not be required to maintain full back-compatibility).

The draft of version 1.2 was available for previewing (in English only) on the interactive browser – see <http://editeur.dyndns.org/thema19>.

[NB version 1.0 still remains available on <http://editeur.dyndns.org/thema10>, but this will most likely be withdrawn when version 1.2 is released.]

AI then completed the activity report, noting remaining items were in the rest of the agenda.

4. Discussion of development of *Thema* 1.2

HW moved on to the proposed version 1.2 of *Thema*. At the last meeting in Frankfurt, a Technical Working Group was created to study the proposals and make a recommendation to the Steering Committee, with the intention of publishing *Thema* 1.2 on the ‘early’ timetable (*ie* around April/May 2016).

AI had provided documentation on the recommendations of the Technical Working Group, but summarised them for the group to enable discussion. The proposals recommended:

- a use of existing X* codes to distinguish between graphic novels and manga artwork
- extra detail in architecture
- extra detail in scripts for TV / film / plays *etc* (and their recorded forms)
- a new category for blogging /vlogging *etc*
- extra detail on learning to play music and musical instruments – with added categories for violin and piano based on the of volume of books published (other instruments may be added in future revisions)
- new category for biographies of philosophers and social scientists
- new distinctions for misery memoirs (tales of survival...)
- new *terroir* fiction within Fiction: narrative themes

BFS asked whether ‘*terroir*’ was a suitable term, since it was a loanword within English, and not widely understood (outside the context of wine, at least). AI noted that ‘regional’ was not a suitable substitute, and GB clarified that *terroir* fiction was so strongly rooted in a particular place that the landscape or location was almost a character in the story in its own right. The story simply could not be set in another

location. JW questioned whether there were other ways of describing this type of book, eg one having a 'strong linkage to the landscape, or a sense of place'. MBR suggested 'characteristic of an area' (but noted the area would have to be quite small). In contrast, JP agreed with '*terroir*' (Spanish word *terruño*). LA also supported '*terroir*' as it is also used for chocolate, coffee etc. LHP also was happy, as new words are used all the time (eg '*urban fantasy*', an English loanword into Swedish). HW summarised the views of the group – that '*terroir*' might capture the meaning well, particularly in relation to its accepted use in oenology (wine), but as a French-derived loanword into English, it may not be ideal as a source for translation into other languages. At minimum, it needs more explanation in the scope note.

- within psychology, headings had been revised headings to standardise their style a little
- minor changes to political headings. JW provoked some discussion about the status of parochial governance (parishes and other hyper-local government). There was general support for addition of the term 'local' back into JPR
- change to NHQ has got rid of 'other' and put in 'specific' matching style of NHT (in reference to lands not covered within the continents).
- clarification of the difference between mineralogy and a general interest in crystals and gems. BFS noted that the term 'mineralogy' was used in two quite different contexts, and further clarification of terminology might be required
- significant revision to clarify physical geography and geology categories
- AI explained various changes in sport, exemplified by clarification of 'Football' to 'Association football', to contrast with 'American football', 'Canadian football' etc. EvB suggested further separation of scuba diving from snorkelling. HW agreed to review the hierarchy here. Skiing disciplines were also discussed
- additional detail in Building construction
- GB suggested a scopenote was necessary for 'mindfulness' (if only for clarification of translations, as the word had acquired a layer of meaning that was not reflected in the dictionary definition)
- some extra detail in handicrafts
- extra category for yuri, to ensure more complete coverage of manga traditions
- extra details in children's, mostly filling gaps that had been revealed particularly by mapping efforts
- new qualifiers for extra-terrestrial locations in the Solar system, together with a new qualifier for 'World' as opposed to 'The Earth', the former being used for specific contexts like 'world history' and the latter being used for contexts where Earth is considered as a planet
- GB noted that holidays and celebrations don't necessarily happen on the same date in all countries – it is the concept of the celebration that matters
- a small number of addition in styles. Changing 'heavy metal' to 'metal' breaks the (English) alphabetic order. Other style additions deal with styles or types of poetry

JW offered thanks to the technical working group for tackling this in such detail.

HW raised the issue of Shakespeare. In the BIC scheme, there were several codes (DDS = Shakespeare's plays, DSGS = study and criticism of Shakespeare's works, YQES = school editions of Shakespeare's works). The UK *Thema* group had put forward similar codes for *Thema* 1.2, but the Technical Working Group had not recommended them. HW questioned whether it was appropriate to add special codes for Shakespeare. CS noted that the issue was not simply whether to add codes for Shakespeare, but in what context and where would it stop? Would it lead to requests for codes for Dante, Cervantes, Luo Guanzhong? Each country and language has its own key literary figures. And if literary figures, why not composers, visual artists, politicians or simply any other key historical figure?

JP suggested a solution: we 'should think of *Thema* as always being used in the context of a range of other metadata'. And that other metadata covers these needs. LA supported that view – the fact that a book is

to do with 'Shakespeare' can be precisely expressed by appropriate use of contributor name, name as subject, or simply as a keyword, within a well-formed metadata record, so a specific code within a subject category scheme is not required. KL agreed with this too, and there was general agreement with the views of the Technical Working Group that special Shakespeare codes should *not* be added. [GB noted the parallels with 'Spanish literature', where the category is emergent from the combination of several metadata facets, not simply subject.]

There was general agreement with the draft of *Thema 1.2*, subject to minor changes following the ISC discussion. AI outlined the timetable for finalising version 1.2, saying he aimed to create a tweaked version the week after the Book Fair, and to distribute it to the Working Group and the ISC. [This would include making the tweaked version available on <http://editeur.dyndns.org/thema19>.) There would then be a two week period for review and comments, and following that, AI expected *Thema 1.2* would be published in mid-May.

5. *Thema* national extensions

AI explained that alongside of new subjects and qualifiers, the proposals for *Thema 1.2* incorporated a range of new national extensions, particularly from the US national group. [Strictly, the national extensions can be added at any time, and a set from Danish group had been added in October 2015. They are not dependent on version 1.2, but for convenience should be considered as part of the update.] The US extensions are much more developed than the existing US geographical qualifiers, with lots more detail to city level than in BISAC or *Thema 1.1*. This could form an interesting model for other national groups.

GB noted that a set of national geographical extensions from the Chinese group were under discussion. There had been some disagreement about the exact coding to use, and its implications for the existing code for Tibet, but he felt this would be resolved.

LA asked about revision of a set of French national extensions relating to reorganisation of internal regions within French local government, but these are more likely to be available June/July.

BFS asked about promotion of these new codes, and of *Thema* in general – does EDItEUR talk to Amazon? GB noted that Amazon had joined the UK *Thema* national group, and is being increasingly public about support for *Thema* now (it has been supporting it privately for at least a year, warning publishers that it would become important). GB suggested more would be said on this at the BIC Supply Chain Seminar the day after this TISC meeting.

[At the seminar, Amazon released this public statement: “Amazon EU SARL, UK Branch, supports the roll out and use of *Thema* classification codes to improve the discoverability and quality of book data globally.”]

6. Translation and localisation

AI and GB reported that the structure of the *Thema* scheme, and the technical infrastructure of the online browser, did not just support translations of the headings and scopenotes into multiple languages.

There are options – so far unused – for separate translations in different versions of the same language (Mexican Spanish vs. Castilian Spanish, Canadian French vs. metropolitan French *etc*). And each translation should include the scopenotes and cross references (see also...), but could add *extra* scopenotes and relationships where they would aid use of the scheme in that language.

GB emphasised EDItEUR is always happy to either link to or host any translations produced, and encouraged any efforts to use *Thema* in a consistent way. There is also a need to translate collateral material such as the executive briefing and user instructions, but so far, there have been no translations that EDItEUR is aware of.

7. Updates from National Groups

HW then called for updates from each of the national groups present.

- EB reported that the Dutch group led by CB was considering a Dutch translation.
- JP and GB noted that the Spanish translation was complete, though for good reasons was not yet available as a spreadsheet.
- KL reported she had spoken about *Thema* at a recent IT vendor event. HW and GB had articles published in various book trade newsletters and magazines in December. HW would be providing *Thema* implementation training as part of BIC's training programme later in the year.
- MBR reported good progress, but that at the request of the booksellers, the overlap period between use of the old Danish subject scheme and *Thema* had been extended by six months.
- AL reported that Italian Books in Print now ingests *Thema* subject information, and a handful of publishers had adopted it.
- BFS reported that in Norway, *Thema* codes were attached to all books, and a major Norwegian bookseller was starting a project to use *Thema* at retail level. There had been good experience with training and seminars.
- CS for the French group reminded the committee of the need to change the French geographical qualifiers. DP noted the group was maintaining the French translation (it has recently been updated).
- CP and LHP reported more than a year of experience with using *Thema* for all new books in Sweden, and that there was good adoption across the trade (with the exception of the single largest retailer).

8. Any other business

HW noted that his three-year term as chair of the *Thema* International Steering Committee was drawing to a close, and invited any committee member interested in chairing future meetings to get in touch with EDItEUR. Nominations for a new chair would be accepted up until a day or two before the next meeting.

HW and the committee also thanked AI, who would be leaving EDItEUR over the summer, for his contributions to *Thema* over the previous two years, and particularly for his work on the Technical Working Group that defined version 1.2.

GB raised the question of two new national groups, for the Netherlands (which had not previously had an official *Thema* group, though it had attended some meetings) facilitated by CB, and for Hungary facilitated by Magyar Books in Print which had recently joined EDItEUR as a member. **No objections were raised to recognition of these groups.**

9. Date and location of next meeting

AI advised that the next *Thema* ISC meeting will be during the Frankfurt Book Fair, **10:00am on Wednesday 19th October** (the first day of the Fair). The room location is to be advised later.

GB noted EDItEUR's **38th International Supply Chain Seminar** would be at 1:00pm on Tuesday 18th October (the day before the Frankfurt fair opens), with arrangements similar to the successful 2015 seminar. There would very likely be a session on *Thema*.

There being no other business, HW closed the meeting.

Graham Bell / Alex Ingram
EDItEUR
13th April 2016