



EDItEUR: Newsletter February 2009

Mark Bide writes:

This month's EDItEUR newsletter represents my first opportunity to introduce myself to many of you, as well as giving me the chance to bring you up-to-date with what we are doing at EDItEUR.

For those of you who may be unaware of this, I took over the role of Executive Director of EDItEUR from Brian Green with effect from the beginning of January. I am delighted to say – both for my sake and for the sake of EDItEUR – that Brian is not leaving us, simply giving up some of his many responsibilities. He will remain with EDItEUR as Executive Director of the International ISBN Agency (EDItEUR provides the secretariat support under contract). In April this year, Stella Griffiths will be joining EDItEUR as Associate Director, supporting both Brian and myself in our respective roles.

This will complete the EDItEUR team – and will mean that EDItEUR is extremely well placed to continue and build on the legacy that Brian has created since 1991. Brian and I have worked together in many different projects since the early 1990s, and I am very much enjoying the new opportunities that EDItEUR is giving me to return to areas of work which are very familiar.

Although much will remain the same within EDItEUR, there are a number of new developments which I would like to introduce to you, while at the same time keeping you up to date with our ongoing work.

Establishment of Management Committee

Since EDItEUR was formally incorporated (as a not-for-profit company in the UK in 1994), its work has been overseen by a small Board of Directors (with four members, currently chaired by Friedemann Weigel of Harrassowitz). However, there has always been provision in the constitution of EDItEUR for the establishment of a rather wider Management Committee, and the Board and I have agreed that the time is now right to widen the governance input into EDItEUR.

We have therefore invited a group of organisations to become Charter Members of EDItEUR (for which they are paying an enhanced membership fee of £5000) and to join our Management Committee. At the time of writing, the following organisations have agreed to become Charter Members:

- The British Library
- Book Industry Communication (BIC)
- The International Federation of Reproduction Rights Organisations (IFRRO)
- The International ISBN Agency
- The International Publishers Association (IPA)
- Marketing- und Verlagsservice des Buchhandels (MVB)
- The Publishers Licensing Society (PLS)

Almost all of these organisations are “membership” organisations, with a combination of those with national and those with international responsibilities. We are still in conversations with a number of other organisations about Charter Membership, and we are optimistic that ultimately we will have about 10 to 12 members of our Management Committee to supplement our four Board members.

In the review of EDItEUR that is now beginning, the Management Committee will be working with the Board and the executive management of EDItEUR to answer some key questions about the future of the organisation, including:

- What are the appropriate areas of work in which EDItEUR should operate?
- How should EDItEUR be governed at a strategic level going forward?
- How should EDItEUR processes be governed?
- How should EDItEUR be financed?
- What should EDItEUR’s immediate priorities be?

We anticipate resolving these questions during 2009, to provide us with a firm platform on which to build for the next decade.

I will keep you informed of progress as this review continues during 2009. If you have any views that you would like to be taken into account, please do not hesitate to contact me. [mark@editeur.org]. Similarly, membership of the Management Committee is not closed, and if you believe your organisation would like to contribute to the future of EDItEUR in this way, please contact me straight away.

ONIX for Books v3.0

Meanwhile, EDItEUR’s development work continues uninterrupted, and in particular we have been moving towards the release of ONIX for Books 3.0. This has been a little delayed by some very last minute requests for changes, but we are now confident that we will be able to publish v3.0, with all its accompanying documentation, and Code List 9 before the end of March. In the meantime, we have also urgently added some codes to Code List 8, which were needed to comply with legislation in the United States (full details can be found on the EDItEUR website [www.editeur.org]).

ONIX for Books 3.0 is a major new release which embodies a number of important changes. It is the first release since 2001 that is **not backwards-compatible**. The major changes include rather more sophisticated management of information about digital products; and we have also been able to deal with the acknowledged problems with the description of series, sets and multiple-item products of all kinds. ONIX 3.0 takes a completely revised approach to this; however, it does not significantly affect the description of straightforward single-item products. We have also added better support for the wide variety of “marketing collateral” that publishers now provide for their titles.

The final draft is currently with national groups for comment – the period for comments closes on February 28th. If you need urgently to understand more about all the changes,

please do not hesitate to get in touch [mark@editeur.org]; we have a brief summary of the key structural changes available which we will be happy to share with you.

ONIX-PL and OPLE

v1.0 of the ONIX-PL specification, and its supporting schema and dictionary, were published on the EDItEUR website in November of 2008. v1.0 of OPLE, the open source editor which we have developed (with support from the JISC and from the Publishers Licensing Society) to facilitate the creation of licences expressed in ONIX-PL is also now published and can be downloaded from the EDItEUR website.

Some of the documentation needed to support users of ONIX-PL and of OPLE is still in preparation, but we anticipate having much more documentation available during the course of March.

Other work in progress

We have a number of other active projects, the most significant of which are:

- An initial appraisal of the extent to which **ONIX for Serials** messages are applicable to non-text media and to non-serials publications which are made available on subscription. We expect this to lead to additions to Code Value lists, rather than any fundamental structural alterations to the messages.
- Continuing work with **ICEDIS** (the International Committee on EDI for Serials) to express one of its key messages – the pricing message – in XML. We are currently compiling requirements, and will then draft the message (which is likely to be an extension to the existing ONIX SPS message).
- We continue to develop the **EDItX** suite of book trade XML EDI messages. We intend before the end of 2009 to carry out a complete review of our EDI activities to ensure that we are in a position to meet future market place requirements.
- We are working with EPC Global and GS1 to agree a standard for book trade **RFID** tags.

There are a number of other possible projects on the horizon, and again you will be kept in touch as these develop.

Looking to the future

It is early for me to be looking too far into the future, but you may be interested to know about some of the things that are currently on my mind with respect to the development of EDItEUR. Aside from resolving issues relating to the governance and sustainability of the organisation to which I have already referred, my initial thinking about planning for 2009 and beyond includes the following elements:

- The standards development process requires leadership and vision, something which Brian has provided to EDItEUR since its inception. I believe that it is vital that EDItEUR continues to provide this leadership for the global book trade. In terms of new developments, I believe I need to be in listening mode for a while, as our stakeholder communities tell me where we need to go next. However, it is clear that

we need to retain the agility which has enabled EDItEUR to deliver new and revised standards very quickly in response to changes in the environment.

- EDItEUR needs to market itself (and its standards) rather more effectively – to ensure that everyone properly understands what we do and why (and how important this work is to the sectors it supports). On the standards themselves, the emphasis needs to shift from a period of intensive development towards supporting the widest possible implementation.
- We have been going through a period since the early 1990s (or even earlier) when the media as a whole has experienced an enormous proliferation of standards and standards organisations. This has brought with it a considerable risk of redundancy and competition, which has largely been avoided because of collaboration at a relatively informal and personal level; however, there is a growing recognition that this is no longer an appropriate model. It is now becoming essential to reach out beyond "publishing" – media convergence is real and cannot be ignored. EDItEUR has an important part to play in this process, as we seek more effective ways of managing standards development and maintenance into the future.

EDItEUR also faces some immediate, rather more tactical issues relating to resources and succession planning. My own appointment is only the first step here – and an important part of my role is to prepare EDItEUR for a much longer-term future than I can provide. Part of the solution is already in place with the announcement of the appointment of Stella Griffiths.

Advance notice – EDItEUR Steering Committee at the LBF

The EDItEUR Steering Committee meets 21 April, 2-4pm at the London Book Fair. This will continue to be an opportunity for all members to discuss our work and provide suggestions for new work items, and I look forward to seeing many of you there.

Conclusion

This has been a rather long newsletter, but I hope it has been useful in bringing you up to date with everything that is happening at EDItEUR. I am very keen to hear from our members, so please do contact me if you have any questions or want to contribute to any of the issues raised in this newsletter.

Thank you.

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