

Minutes of the ONIX for Books International Steering Committee 13:30–15:00 Wednesday 10 October 2012, Frankfurt Book Fair, Room Europa 1

Present

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|-------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Luc Audrain | Hachette Livre | Yoichi Kimata | JPOIID |
| Graham Bell | EDItEUR | Dai Lin | CNPIEC |
| Mark Bide | EDItEUR | Anna Lionetti | AIE |
| Maria Börman | Bokrondellen | Karina Luke | BIC |
| Francis Cave | EDItEUR | Giulia Marangoni | AIE |
| Jean-François Chéatalat | BTLF | Diane Ouellet | BTLF |
| Piera Costantini | Informazioni Editoriali | Tuula Pelkonen-Tiri | Kirjavälitys |
| Laurent Dervieu | Electre (arrived in item 4) | Jesús Peraita | DILVE |
| Simon Edwards | BIC | Christer Perslöv | Bokrondellen |
| Emad Eldeen Elakehal | Elkotob.com | Simonetta Pillon | Informazioni Editoriali |
| Fride Fosseng | Den Norske Bokdatabasen | Kengo Sakamoto | Maruzen |
| Bente Franck-Sætervoll | Den Norske Bokdatabasen | Henning Schoenenberger | Springer |
| Noah Genner (Chair) | BookNet Canada | Diana Skibinskaya | Guild of Book Dealers |
| Stella Griffiths | EDItEUR | Len Vlahos | BISG |
| Takashi Hidaka | JPOIID | Nicole van Wijhe | Centraal Boekhuis |
| Uwe Janssen | KNV | Howard Willows | Nielsen |
| Tan Jiajun | NTCPDSAC | Nick Woods | EDItEUR |
| Mirjam Kessler | Springer | | |

Welcome and introductions

Noah Genner welcomed the participants to the International Steering Committee meeting, and the participants introduced themselves in turn. Noah asked the Committee if there were any additions to the agenda. There were none and the agenda was approved.

1. Minutes from ISC Meeting 12 October 2011, Frankfurt Book Fair

Noah asked if there were any additions to the minutes of the previous ISC meeting. There were none and the Committee was asked to approve the minutes. The minutes were duly agreed as an accurate record and were **unanimously approved**. Graham Bell also confirmed that the minutes for each ISC meeting are published soon afterwards.

2. Report on current ONIX developments

2.1 Written Activity Report

Graham drew delegates' attention to the separate activity report. He confirmed its purpose, namely that it is essentially a record of his recent activity and the work he is planning for the near future. Graham then highlighted the key parts as follows:

2.1.1 Release of Codelists 17 and 18

Graham advised the ISC that the update cycle has become very regular, with releases of codelists every 3 months. There have therefore been two releases since the last ISC meeting – 17 and 18. Issue 17 was approved at the last meeting whereas issue 18 was approved by the various national groups via e-mail.

Graham spoke about Issue 18. He discussed the concept of content warnings, used on, for example, a particularly racy romance or a violent thriller. The purpose of the warning is to ensure buyers are aware of the nature of a book. Graham also noted that issue 18 includes a clarification regarding dates/times: publishers are increasingly often stipulating to retailers a specific *time* to begin to sell a book (*i.e.* more specific than just ‘don’t sell before 11th October 2012’). A difficulty here is that one needs to also include time zone information. You must clarify whether you mean, say, 11:15 in CET (and thus at a different time in other timezones), or alternatively, 11:15 in each time zone around the world (known as ‘rolling time’.)

2.1.2 Tightening of Schema Requirements in DTD, XSD and RNG

Graham confirmed that his work tightening up the requirements for schema for ONIX for Books 3.0 has continued. Graham illustrated an example of this involving ‘territory’: this composite contains four optional elements, but not all of the 16 combinations of elements make sense (in fact, only eight do). If ‘countries included’ is included, it clearly doesn’t make sense to also include ‘countries excluded’. The schema proposed for release with codelists issue 19 will only include the eight sensible options for ‘territory’. Graham advised that the ISC approved work of this type with the initial release of 3.0.1 in January, but these are further tightenings and will be released with issue 19. Although this has the side-effect of producing a slightly more complex schema, the schema is not intended to be human-readable. Nicole van Wijhe then asked what kind of errors would be produced during validation if the record didn’t follow this rule? Graham confirmed that there would typically be a message to indicate “this entire message doesn’t make sense” and it may point you to the exact record – just as with any other schema error.

2.1.3 Continuing Development of Schematron

Graham advised the ISC that he has also been looking at an enhanced schema using Schematron, which builds on work by EDItEUR consultants Francis Cave and David Martin from a couple of years ago. Graham has expanded this work and now has a usable enhanced schema. An early, work-in-progress version is now available on the EDItEUR website – and has had 3 downloads so far! Schematron can implement business rules that can’t be processed in the XSD or RNG schemas. Graham then addressed further Nicole’s query: the Schematron can actually implement best practice guidelines and it can state “you could improve your message in this way” *etc.* Graham noted that Schematron is not a tool for everyone. There is more work to do to add in extra rules, and in total there will be eventually several hundred rules. Noah stated that this was important work and highlighted that the Schematron will be useful for implementing rules specific to an individual

aggregator, for example. Graham agreed: the Schematron can be supplemented with rules that are specific to a particular recipient.

2.1.4 Linked Data and ONIX

Graham next talked about linked data. The essence of linked data is all relationships are expressed as a 'triple' (for example, book – role - author). All metadata can be expressed this way. Linked data additionally requires that everything in this 'triple' be identified using a URI (which ideally should also be web accessible – the URI should link to an explanation of the subject, object or relationship within the triple. (Graham noted that linked data as a purely technical approach should be contrasted with 'Linked Open Data', an ideological view that suggests that all linked data should be free of restrictions on its use). Graham explained that linked data in itself is not something that conflicts with ONIX, rather that these are two different ways of doing XML. Graham illustrated the point with on-screen examples of the ONIX approach and, by contrast, the linked data approach.

The library world is looking at using linked data (and possibly Linked Open Data) as a replacement for MARC. Librarians may, however, want to use some semantic elements (codelist entries) from ONIX. Graham advised that EDItEUR would like to try to facilitate this by publishing codelists in another additional format. Graham's suggestion is that, probably from issue 20, the ONIX codelists would be allocated URIs, and a server would be set up to respond to requests to the URIs.

2.1.5 Other developments and activities

Graham spoke briefly about his work during the summer: EDItEUR has completed several training courses, and has improved the UML modelling diagrams (further details of which are available in the Activity Report.)

3. Proposals for ONIX for Books Codelists Issue 19

The Issue 19 proposal was sent out prior to this meeting of the International Steering Committee. Graham advised the ISC that he received no notification of any problems with the proposal.

Graham highlighted that there are two items worth raising with the ISC. Firstly, there is the addition of another codelist for 'returns conditions' codes. This parallels the existing BISG (BISAC) Returns codes, but the Japanese ONIX group noted that returns terms in Japan are slightly different from the United States. The new list will be used in Japan, but could equally be used elsewhere. The second item is to include an extra hierarchical level to titles, following a proposal from the United States ONIX group. For example, children's publishing often uses master brands (such as Thomas the Tank Engine, the Berenstain Bears, or Barbie). This master brand is often owned by a third party (not the publisher). To accommodate this arrangement within ONIX, a new code has been added to List 149.

Noah then asked the Committee for approval, and the publication of Codelists Issue 19 was **unanimously approved**.

Action: Graham to complete and publish Codelists Issue 19 (completed).

4. Proposals for development of ONIX for Books 3.0.2

Graham drew the ISC's attention to his discussion paper regarding development options for ONIX for Books 3.0. ONIX for Books 2.1 has been through four sub-versions, released irregularly over a period of eight years or so. Similarly with ONIX for Books 3.0, there is no fixed schedule of updates to the schema. Graham noted that EDItEUR looks to the ISC and the national ONIX groups for guidance to say when they require changes. In recent months, EDItEUR has received some suggestions and comments on this matter.

The most notable suggestion is that an ONIX 'reply message' could be a useful development. At present a publisher sends out an ONIX message but has no idea whether a recipient has received or understood the message. The proposal is to facilitate a reply message which says either "these changes have been implemented" or alternatively "no, your ONIX message is not acceptable and so has been ignored". Len Vlahos endorsed this proposal, noting that the heart of communication breakdown in the supply chain is between data senders and recipients. Graham agreed and advised that the reply message would be optional, but that data senders and recipients would be able to agree to implement it. Jesús Peraita agreed with the optional status. Although DILVE does send a response, Jesús noted that the reply message should be mentioned in the best practice guidelines but not introduced as standard.

There then followed a discussion about the usefulness of such a reply message. On one hand, as noted by Emad Eldeen Elakehal, a valid ONIX message should not be a problem for a system that has got ONIX right, and a reply is not necessary. On the other hand, as noted by Len and by Luc Audrain, at present it is not possible to tell which fields are being used and if even the core metadata is being updated. Even an acknowledgement gives the publisher an extra layer of assurance. Emad and Henning Schoenenberger discussed the implication that the sender's data is flawless and Graham suggested that the decision to use a reply message system must taken on a one-to-one basis – perhaps the reply could state "we are not going to implement this because we received better data elsewhere". Uwe Janssen and Howard Willows approved of the idea of the error message if the ONIX is wrong, but then discussed how onerous it would be to reply with what action has been taken, or why it has not been taken; additionally Uwe noted that, for example, a book may not be taken into stock for a reason completely different to any issues with the ONIX message.

Noah then concluded the discussion by noting that one in five ONIX files fails validation and Graham summarised that this reply message would definitely be optional and he would consider items such as the level of granularity and how much detail should be reported back

to the sender. Graham also noted that it seems some people are already providing replies in an unstandardised way.

Graham then mentioned a number of other much smaller potential additions, suggesting that while each might be useful, none were considered urgent, and then asked the group for its views. There is the balance between updating the standard to meet business requirements and not updating it to preserve stability. Luc and Howard agreed that stability of the standard is important, and an update roughly every 18–24 months is sufficient. Francis noted that we should draw a distinction between changes that cause compatibility issues and those that don't – and Graham answered that changes such as those suggested so far definitely would be backwards-compatible: these would in fact be 'optional additions' rather than changes. Francis suggested it would be helpful if examples of what can't be specified in 3.0.1 but could in a potential 3.0.2 were provided, and Graham agreed to do this for consideration at the next ISC.

Howard suggested that a proposal for a new version should be included in future ISC meetings as a standing agenda item. If the ISC agree to a new version, it is rolled out; if not we will ask again at the next ISC meeting in six months.

Action: Graham and Noah will finish the paper, updating it with these suggestions. This will be presented as an agenda item at the ISC Meeting at London Book Fair 2013.

5. Any Other Business

Noah asked if there was any other business. There were several other items raised for discussion:

- In response to recent requests received by KNV from wholesalers, Uwe asked how members of the ISC handle instances of non-book items (*e.g.* audio CDs, toys) that can't be described in ONIX and Graham asked, more broadly, how much should the standard be extended? Noah noted that GS1's GDSN data pool is developed with different categorisation for these different items, and Graham and Noah suggested that GDSN would be worth looking at. It was noted that it would be very difficult to develop anything with any degree of commonality. Len suggested that the national ONIX groups should try to understand what specific areas might be worth expanding. Howard asked how far one should go and Francis advised that either we extend ONIX or we allow people to embed within ONIX descriptions, or links to descriptions, of these items outside of the message.

Action: national ONIX groups are to look at the areas where their supply chain is handling non-book items and report back.

- Luc then referred to a discussion at the last ISC meeting about inclusion of website reviews and similar. We don't need to embed other tagging, but we need to link to

this as well as including, for example, the rating. Luc asked if we can have a code for a comment (as opposed to a full review) of a book.

Action: Graham will include the comment code in issue 20, but the ratings area would only be able to be included in a 3.0.2 version of ONIX.

- Emad asked the group about progress with use of ONIX 3.0 as opposed to ONIX 2.1. A discussion then followed: users of 3.0 need to trim their messages to fit 2.1 users, although it was noted that at least it is easier to go backwards to ONIX 2.1 than the other way round. Christer Perslöv confirmed that in Sweden there were a couple of months testing, then the shift to 3.0 itself occurred over a weekend (for all data suppliers and recipients). Henning Schoenenberger advised that Springer has also now implemented ONIX 3.0. Graham and Mark Bide illustrated the support that EDItEUR provides with training, with the Users and Services Directory (BISG also produces such a list) and clarified that conversion *is* happening. This discussion concluded with Len, Mark, Graham and Nicole agreeing that the announcement of a sunset date has helped and that 3.0 naturally becomes more valuable as e-books take off. People need to understand that 3.0 is a natural progression.
- Noah then asked for a THEMA update. Howard advised the ISC that THEMA is a project to develop a global subject classification scheme. The current issue is that everyone has their own proprietary schemes. Howard explained the name change from IBIC to THEMA – the catalyst has been potential for adoption in North America. THEMA is working to formalise governance and elect a board. Karina Luke noted that a THEMA press release was issued today, which has gone to Frankfurt Buchmesse press office. There is a website (<http://panthema.org>) and a Twitter hashtag (#panthema). Howard announced that the aim is to release a pilot draft at London Book Fair 2013. There will a cut-off in January, after which THEMA will move forward with those who've shown interest, but then other organisations will be able to join again at a later date. Jesús highlighted that it was important to note that the main root of THEMA is IBIC because it shows that this is not a new project. He advised that a temporary Board has been created to begin this initiative.

6. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held during the London Book Fair on Tuesday 16 April 2013 at 13:30 GMT in the Victoria Room at Earl's Court (room available from 13:00).

There being no further business, Noah closed the meeting and thanked participants for their attendance.