

ONIX International Steering Committee Minutes

*Wednesday 11th October 2017, 1:00–3:00 CEST (UTC+2),
Room Facette, Halle 3.via West, Messe Frankfurt*

Attendees:

Luc Audrain (Hachette Livre)	Martin Lüning (MVB/VLB)
Veronique Backert (Dilicom)	Merve Okçuoğlu (Turkish Publishers Assoc)
Detlef Bauer (Libri)	Brian O’Leary (BISG)
Graham Bell (EDItEUR)	Dominique Parisi (EDITIS)
Marie Bilde (Pruneau)	Jesús Peraita (FGEE)
Pierre Boudigues (Electre)	Christer Perslöv (Bokinfo)
Francis Cave (EDItEUR consultant)	Tuula Pelkonen-Tiri (Kirjavalitys)
Ricardo Costa (Metabooks)	Simonetta Pillon (Informazioni Editoriali)
Fride Fosseng (Bokbasen), chair	Vinent Poulvelarie (Dilicom)
Alain Fournier (BTLF)	Suzanne Rosario (EDItEUR)
Bente Francke-Sætervoll (Bokbasen)	Sophie Salmon (CLIL)
Noah Genner (Booknet Canada)	Chris Saynor (EDItEUR)
Lisbeth Hakansson Petré (Bokinfo)	Henning Shoenenberger (Springer Nature)
Alexander Haffner (MVB/VLB)	Edeman Viotto (Metabooks)
Karina Luke (BIC)	Howard Willows (Nielsen)
Anna Lionetti (AIE)	Johanna Worsaae Petersen (Gyldendal)

Summary of decisions in this meeting:

- Minutes of the previous meeting were approved
- Proposals for Codelists issue 39 were approved
- Proposals for ONIX 3.0.4 were approved

1. Welcome and introductions

FF welcomed attendees to the meeting. Attendees introduced themselves.

2. Minutes of ISC Meeting held 15th Mar 2017, London Book Fair, and matters arising

FF introduced the draft minutes of the meeting, which had been previously distributed. There were no comments and **the minutes were approved.**

3. Report on current ONIX development work

GB introduced his activity report, which had been distributed previously. He highlighted some of the main points:

Sunset: after sunset of ONIX 2.1 and later ‘twilight’ support, we are now in the ‘moonlight’ phase. Specifically, this means that issues of the codelists released since the last meeting of the committee have not included support for ONIX 2.1. The last issue that is compatible with 2.1 is 36 – issue 37 and 38 (below) are ONIX 3.0 only.

Adoption: GB detected a slight acceleration of adoption in some of the bigger markets that have been slowest to move to ONIX 3.0.

Codelists: issues 37 and 38 were released on time following ratification of proposals either at the London 2017 face-to-face meeting or via e-mail. Among others, there were new product forms for general

merchandise, new contributor codes, new physical measurement dimensions, new supplier roles, a new contact role for return requests, and a clarification of the meaning of ‘ghost author’. There were also two codes added at the request of the e-book accessibility community, to cover compliance with the new EPUB Accessibility Specification.

Application notes: GB highlighted the release of a number advanced ‘application notes’. These are focussed papers, for example on ONIX for open access monographs or ONIX for audiobooks. He asked for suggestions for other application note topics. He also promoted the BIC Bites, even shorter introductory documents aimed at a beginner audience.

Online browser: the ONIX codelist browser was introduced over the summer, at <http://ns.editeur.org/onix>. This works similarly to the established *Thema* browser. The ‘main version’ will be kept up to date with the ‘current’ release of the codelists, but for 2.1 users, there is a ‘legacy’ issue 36 variant available too. The browser provides multi-lingual access to the codes, labels, notes and issue number of introduction / last modification of each code. Both *Thema* and ONIX browsers were also updated (a few days after introduction of the ONIX browser) to support https (for security and privacy reasons).

The browser should act as a hub for translations in the future. National groups were invited to supply their translations of the ONIX codelists, in whatever form they are available, and a translation template will be produced so this can be made a little more efficient in the future. CP asked whether there could be partial translations, and GB agreed this was quite okay.

GB noted that the implied hierarchy within some lists (eg list 150) is not present in the browser, and the browser does not support SKOS for linked data use though these two features can be added if there is demand.

Strict schema: previous work on Schematron had shown the potential use of a strict schema for more rigorous validation of ONIX messages. However, Schematron is not viewed as ‘easy to use’ and many XML developers remain unfamiliar with it. Now, similar rule-based validation can be carried out using more familiar XSD, if your validation tool supports XSD 1.1. (unfortunately, libxml, the most common XML validation library, does not). After an internal proof of concept, GB stated that an initial strict XSD would be released (for testing purposes) with the next version of the codelists. It will only check ISBN check digits and a handful of other rules – but if useful, the rulebase can be widened over the next few months.

Training: activity on training is low during the summer, but the winter programme is beginning to come together.

Proposals for Issue 39 and ONIX 3.0.4: these have been developed on the usual timetable (quarterly for codelists, more or less biennial for the 3.0.4 schema update. However he explained that 3.0.4 is a more limited update than originally envisioned, as development of a ‘production block’ for e-book and POD production to replace ‘sidecar files’ is not included at this point. If the production block is developed for a 3.0.5, that update could also include information about planned promotional events (author tours, readings, etc).

4. **Proposals for Codelists issue 39**

GB introduced the proposals, which include a few new codes and a number of clarifications to the wording and terminology. He highlighted clarification of the terms ‘multi-component products’ (those products that have several parts) and ‘multi-item products’ (products that contain multiple, separately saleable products). Another set of clarifications affects list 51 (product relation) and are intended to ensure ONIX users do not continue to get the direction of relationships wrong (eg 3rd edition replaces the 4th edition). He also highlighted the ‘pocket book’ term, which is known as *taschenbuch*, *livre de poche*, *tascabile*, *livro de bolsilo* and so on across several countries – and noted that care is needed because in Italy, there is also a distinct *super-tascabile* category. SP confirmed this, and said there are even separate bestseller lists for

tascabile and *super-tascabile* books. *Super-tascabile* books are mass-market, whereas *tascabile* are not necessarily so. SP and AH also noted that some pocket books are larger than 205mm high, so the definition should include the phrase ‘usually less than about 205mm’.

Clarifications like this are the beginning of a multi-year process to add more notes to the various ONIX codes, to align the understanding of the meaning of the codes across multiple countries.

GB listed and explained the requests for the other proposed new codes – for Discs (as a proxy for duration, eg of audiobooks), for GRID (an organisation identifier), for Duplex-printed covers, for Errata, for an e-book with additional AR/VR (augmented reality) elements, for streamed audiobooks and so on. FF requested that a code for ‘downloaded or streamed’ audio also be added, and GB agreed.

GB explained the policy on language codes. The ONIX list is based on the ‘middle size’ ISO language list (around 500 languages and macro-languages [language groups]) which covers almost all requirements. However, there is a policy that codes from the long ISO list (around 8000 languages) will be added to the ONIX list on request, and that the ONIX list can also incorporate proprietary ONIX codes if there is no agreed ISO code (in any of the ISO lists) for a particular language. This illustrates the difference that is maintained between the ONIX lists and the underlying ISO lists. He also noted another difference is that the ISO lists sometimes remove codes (which ONIX does not do) and that for some lists (eg currency), the ONIX list is a subset of the ISO list.

GB also explained a change of terminology used with work relation (where ‘parent work’ is renamed ‘grandparent work’ and ‘parent work’ is now used for ‘the work on which the manifestation is based’).

CP raised a question about list 238 (Brazil education levels) – where should the line be drawn between creating a new ONIX list, or simply using a pre-existing locally-defined list. GB explained that that if there is a well-defined local list, it should be preferred to creating an ONIX list. AH queried whether school grades should be in ONIX <AudienceRange> or in Thema, and GB said this had been discussed in detail in the *Thema* meeting earlier in the day.

GB asked whether there were further questions. There being none, **he called for the proposals to be ratified, and there was general agreement.**

Post-meeting update – Issue 39 was published 24th October. An oversight prevented addition of the word ‘usually’ to the Pocket book term in list 175, but this has now been rectified.

5. Proposals for ONIX 3.0.4

GB updated the committee on the relatively simple proposals for ONIX 3.0.4, described in a separate paper. Normally these proposals would go first to a working group. Since many of these were so simple, they could be ratified now, with more complex proposals going forward to 3.0.5.

- a. Supplier contact (originally <ProductContact>) – NG supported this proposal, and it was approved
 - i. AH raised the question of whether addition of a dedicated telephone number field was useful, and this was referred to a future working group
- b. Price part description (originally <TaxPartDescription>) – this is for use in France, and was agreed
- c. <EpubLicense> within <Price> – adding the licence for each business model, agreed
- d. <Measure> within <ProductPart> – no support, so referred
 - i. AH questioned what other elements might be added to <RelatedProduct>. This is relevant to a different part of ONIX, and his requirement to identify related e-books should be handled via <ProductForm> and <ProductFormDetail> within <RelatedProduct>. GB invited AH to discuss this separately
- e. Extend <NameAsSubject> to fictional characters – approved
 - i. FF suggested a flag to specify that a name is fictional – this was referred. GB noted that the binary flag in MARC21 is not particularly suitable, as it allows for fictional or real, and does not cover *fictionalised* characters (fictional versions of real people).

- f. Extend <CollectionSequenceNumber> – approved
 - i. GB explained the limitations of collection sequence number when there are subcollections (first when one level of the collection–subcollection–book hierarchy includes an unnumbered level, and second where books in a sub-collection need to be numbered in the context of the collection itself). JP spoke to explain how this affects real-world publishers, particularly for comic publishers. He agreed the extension (to include hyphens for unnumbered levels) would work, but also raised the question that a ‘suggested reading order’ sequence type might also be required. This will be added to a future set of codelist proposals
 - ii. AH re-raised the known issue that it is not possible to supply separate identifiers for collection and sub-collection. Both identifiers can be included, but cannot be clearly associated directly with the level of the collection. GB explained this is a structural question, not soluble without a significant (non-compatible) change in ONIX, and should not be considered as part of minor update
- g. Add elements for ‘reserved stock’ – approved
 - i. HS asked whether there were publishers who take back ONIX from suppliers? GB replied there were (though not many)
- h. Add elements for language within <ContentItem> – approved
- i. Make <ProductPackaging> repeatable – referred
 - i. GB explained that some common combinations of multiple packaging layers can be described in ONIX, but others cannot. He asked for real-world use cases where multiple layers of packaging are in use and cannot be properly described
- j. Make <Subtitle> repeatable – referred
 - i. GB noted there are a number of real-world cases of books with multiple genuine subtitles. However, he had heard from some national groups (who were present in the room) that they were reluctant to approve this proposal because it encourages the misuse of subtitles for marketing text. GB agreed that this is likely to make subtitle misuse a little worse – and at the same time was unlikely to be supported by retailers. He asked for views from the national groups.
 - ii. Among others, HS, DB both noted that subtitle was widely misused, while FF noted that this misuse applies to other fields too. BFS questioned whether repeatability would itself make misuse worse
 - iii. LA reported the French group had rejected the proposal to make subtitle repeatable. There are very, very few real cases where there are multiple subtitles. FF disagreed, citing Norwegian schoolbooks – most of which have two or more subtitles. GB noted he had asked for examples from a UK schoolbook publisher, who provided four – but three of these were examples of misuse
 - iv. AH noted that e-retailers would only display one, and if the field was repeatable, there was no way to indicate ‘the most important of the several subtitles’
 - v. HW reported that the UK group is against, because of the current prevalence of misuse of the subtitle
 - vi. AL asked FF whether the workaround of listing all of them, concatenated, within the single <Subtitle> tag. FF replied she would be reluctant to add separators to the subtitle. RC noted that separators like semi-colon can occur within genuine subtitles
 - vii. JP said that there is a real need, and no evidence that it would be misused *more*
 - viii. AH suggested that second and subsequent subtitles be put in marketing text. FF was against this, and GB noted that marketing material – so often the cause of subtitle misuse – has a correct place in marketing text... and yet people do not use it!

- ix. GB asked for any further views. There were clear indications from some national groups of strong disapproval, and clear indications of strong approval from a couple of national groups. Based on the lack of consensus, this must be referred.
- k. Add <SalesRestriction> within (eg) <TextContent>. GB suggested this should be referred.

6. Updates on key migrations and adoptions from national groups

Dropped due to lack of time.

7. Any Other Business and Next Meeting

BO'L introduced the question of ongoing ONIX 2.1 support, which had originally been raised at the prior meeting in London. BISG had created a working group to create a generic business case for ONIX 3.0. BISG found that in the US market, while system vendors are generally able to support ONIX 3.0 in their systems, publishers have not yet concluded there is a case to do so and the major retailers have made no significant adoption of 3.0. In particular, the positions of Amazon and Barnes and Noble are that they don't accept 3.0 (even though Amazon does in limited circumstances, and B&N formerly did). On the other hand, other retailers *eg* Rakuten Kobo, are keen to move forward.

BO'L called for other national groups to provide BISG with advice and examples of cases that indicate the value of 3.0 (*eg* through increased efficiency or extra sales), and the way the transition was promoted in their own countries. He also said BISG would like to work with EDItEUR on a limited set of updates to 2.1 [codelists which are currently frozen at issue 36]. He committed to report back to the ISC on the progression of the plan to promote ONIX 3.0 in the US.

GB replied he understood BISG's problem with this, and particularly the 'political' aspects of it. He suggested that BISG now understood it needed to develop a promotion plan for 3.0 that would be turned into real actions and progress on the transition. He suggested a gesture by the ISC to return to 'twilight' support of the 2.1 codelists on a strictly one-time basis.

BFS asked what the benefits of a one-time update were: isn't that simply sending a message that 2.1 is still a viable option? BO'L replied that this was about bolstering the credibility of the effort to move the US market forward. KL also questioned the message that was being sent? GB noted that the message would have to be carefully constructed – not '2.1 is okay again', but 'this is our (and your) last attempt to gain some momentum'. BFS made the point that the US market is dependent on Amazon, and nothing is likely to change in the US until Amazon changes. GB noted the problem extends to B&N and (reminded by NG) to Indigo. And the problems with Amazon extend to other countries too. He agreed it could send the 'wrong' message, but – he said – we have to try.

BO'L and GB suggested a compromise: broadly, the ISC will consider a one-off return to limited 'twilight' codelist support if and when the BISG metadata group defines a concrete and realistic plan for promotion of and transition to ONIX 3.0 with significant commitment from some of the major stakeholders. There was general agreement to this.

FF closed the meeting, saying that the next meeting will be in London, on 11th April 2018.

Graham Bell
EDItEUR
11th October 2017