ONIX International Steering Committee Minutes

Wednesday 10th October 2018, 1:15–3:00 CEST (UTC+2), Room Facette, Halle 3 via West, Messe Frankfurt

Attendees:


Summary of decisions in this meeting:

• Minutes of the previous meeting were approved
• Codelists Issue 43 ratified
• PART of the proposals for ONIX 3.0.5 ratified. Proposals for promotional events are to be considered further and presented to the committee at a later date.

1. Welcome and introductions

FF welcomed attendees to the meeting. Attendees introduced themselves.

2. Minutes of ISC Meeting held 10th October 2018, Frankfurt 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: there have been no new issues raised as a result of the sunset of ONIX 2.1 and the subsequent moonlight and twilight support phases. GB noted an issue that had been raised where a few 2.1 users were wrongly using ‘KX’ as a code for Kosovo, in the belief it was an ONIX 3.0 code. This is not correct, and the country code ’KX’ does not exist – either in the ONIX lists or in the ISO lists. In ONIX, Kosovo (region) can be specified using the code RS-KM.
ONIX 3.0 in the US: this is one of the biggest disconnects in the global use of ONIX, as the US has been notably slow to adopt the newer version of the standard. GB noted the effort put in by BISG to remedy this and generate some enthusiasm for change within the US metadata supply chain, and publicly thanked BOL for the personal effort he had put in. He asked BOL to give an update.

BOL described the BISG survey to build awareness of some of the benefits of ONIX 3.0, and the three metadata ‘summits’ held in an effort to build consensus. The first two summits, in May in NYC for providers and in July in Nashville for recipients, were positive in tone and largely agreed on the challenges and opportunities within the data supply chain. The dynamic of the third meeting was different, with a delegate from PRH US actively opposing every positive effort to discuss ONIX 3.0 as an option, and demanding that BISG ‘prove’ that any move to ONIX 3.0 would increase sales before it could be considered. In addition, the absence of delegates from either Ingram or Barnes & Noble was problematic – all three organisations are obviously key to the overall supply chain. The other side of this was that there were delegates who were positive, and the survey showed more than 55–60% of organisations in the US book supply chain survey were ONIX 3.0-ready. BOL was severely disappointed that no consensus on an overall plan could be achieved. Given the lack of success of the summits, BOL has recommended to the Board of BISG that the metadata committee be suspended for at least one year. Alternative arrangements for supporting existing and new US ONIX 3.0 users, EDItEUR and ISC business will be put in place.

DB asked if BOL knew the root cause of PRH US’s opposition? Despite considerable time and effort spent with the relevant PRH delegate, he did not.

GB noted that BISG’s efforts were part of a plan that also included potential consideration of minor adjustments to ONIX 2.1 in order to ease the transition in the US. No requests for such adjustments have been forthcoming, and BOL confirmed that none would be presented in the future.

NG – who had attended the third summit – emphasised the strongly positive attitude displayed particularly by digital retailers, who see the ongoing need to continue support for 2.1 as a problem. BookNet Canada is of course also in this position. He noted the irony of 2.1 users relying on ancillary ‘sidecar files’ to fill gaps in the functionality of ONIX 2.1, where those sidecar files are often structured similarly to ONIX 3.0 and use ONIX 3.0 codelists. Eventually, the costs of these ancillary files will likely create pressure to adopt 3.0 itself.

DB asked whether Amazon had taken part in the summits. BOL answered that they had – both Amazon Publishing and Amazon.com – and their attitude had been positive, but they were looking for an ROI. GB noted that Amazon does accept ONIX 3.0 in some circumstances (and has done for several years), so the opportunity lies in broadening the range of ONIX 3.0 that could be delivered to them.

Codelists: GB reported that issue 41 of the ONIX codelists was approved and released just after the London 2018 meeting, and issue 42 was released following agreement via e-mail. Issue 43 had been prepared for ratification at this meeting. He noted that recent codelists issues included a number of clarifications and definitions – some taken from the Best Practice Guide, and others intended to avoid translation difficulties. The online browser https://ns.editeur.org/onix had also been updated with improved translations. GB reminded delegates that it had also moved https (rather than http), which provides better security and trust, greater privacy (if that’s a concern) and a slightly boosted search ranking.

Proposals for ONIX 3.0.5: there are effectively two proposed updates, for promotional events and for chapter-level metadata for audio products, both inspired by real-world use-cases and demand. EDItEUR has proposed a new structure for a series of promotional events, with place, time, ticketing and so on. Separately, while chapter-level metadata for text (paginated material) was already well-covered and was used by (eg) academic and scholarly publishers in particular, this is not possible for audio, video (time-based material), so a second new structure specifically for timecodes in audio has been proposed. GB also discussed the addition of Pallet quantity with DB, and the documentation of the use of empty elements for Blocks 2, 3 and 5 in Block updates (empty blocks make no sense in any normal ONIX records – only in block
updates). SB asked how granular block updates are, and GB explained that it is at ‘block level’ rather than at field or composite level because of the conflict with field and composite deletions.

**Strict schema**: the XSD 1.1 schema is now much more mature. GB noted that in testing, EDItEUR had not found an ONIX 3.0 file without errors when validated using the strict schema – though these were most often ‘systematic’ errors occurring in every record, rather than errors in the underlying metadata. Systematic errors could often be fixed relatively easily in the system that generated the ONIX. GB related the story of Salt Publishing in the UK, a company using an IT system developed in-house, which over a single weekend reduced the errors in its ONIX 3.0 output from several thousand to single figures. The strict schema definitely allows publishers and system developers generating ONIX to improve their conformance to the standard, and is a valuable tool for retailers while onboarding new vendors.

LA emphasised the strict schema has not changed the ONIX Specification in any way – it merely validates the existing ‘rules’ in the Specification more rigorously than the ‘classic’ XSD schema.

GB also reiterated the offer to use the strict schema and provide a report on test files sent to EDItEUR, and outlined the technical requirement for anyone running the strict schema – essentially you need an XSD 1.1 compatible parser:

- oXygen and XML Spy are compatible with XSD 1.1
- Java application using Saxon or Xerces are compatible with XSD 1.1
- .Net application with Saxon is compatible with XSD 1.1 (but .Net with the standard MS parser is not)
- applications built on the libxml library are not compatible (ie most free of charge XML tools)

**ONIX training**: GB noted an uptick in demand for ONIX training, both in-house courses that can be delivered for EDItEUR members, and the third-party courses delivered to non-members via organisations like BIC or BISG.

TD asked whether training was linked in any way to existing certification? GB said that the BIC certification (PDEA) scheme used the classic XSD, and was not expected to adopt the strict schema. NG said BookNet Canada’s certification scheme also used the classic XSD, but there was in addition a rules engine somewhat like that in the XSD 1.1 – but the report cards it produced were a little too challenging.

GB asked for any questions on his report. DB asked whether the previously discussed ‘production block’ was a part of the proposals for 3.0.5. GB answered it was not.

HS reported that there were some additional requirements from the German ONIX group for the promotional events. AH clarified that these were in addition to those in the proposal presented by the German group to EDItEUR earlier, in particular a demand for contributors to an event and a structured address. AH asked that further consideration be given to these before ratifying the existing 3.0.5 proposal for promotional events.

**4. Proposals for ONIX 3.0.5**

Chair FF agreed that items 4 and 5 be taken in reverse order. GB introduced the proposals for 3.0.5. Promotional events, chapter-level audio timecodes, pallet quantities and empty blocks had already been mentioned. The only remaining item in 3.0.4 proposals was the <TaxExempt/> element. GB drew the distinction between Price type 01 (no tax specified in the ONIX), Price type 02 (tax is specified, but may in some cases be levied at 0%) and ‘tax exempt’. BFS asked whether this was necessary, as it might cause confusion where the rate of tax is zero – Norway, Ireland and the UK? CS clarified this was about legal status in places like Chile and Peru, and may require a little education to avoid European ONIX providers using it inappropriately.

AF described the Quebec position where books are exempt from tax at Provincial level and exempt at taxable at Federal level. This may cause an issue, and GB said EDItEUR would look at this.
Post meeting update: modifying the proposed structure to allow for this would be complex (you would need a larger structure to specify which tax a book was exempted from). The recommendation for Quebec remains to use two tax composites, one of which shows a 0% tax rate, as at present.

GB returned to the question of the two major additions for ONIX 3.0.5.

First, chapter-level audio timecodes. These, GB averred, are uncontroversial, and there were no issues raised by the Committee.

GB then questioned whether the current EDItEUR proposals for promotional events that had been based in part upon business requirements from German ONIX users (particularly VLB-Tix), then distributed and considered by the various ONIX National Groups, could be seen as a ‘subset’ of the enhanced requirements the German National Group, as AH had now presented them. That would allow the current proposals to move forward, and additional data elements to be added at a later date. Or, were the current proposals somehow not compatible with the enhanced requirements. AH replied that the German Group wanted more time to refine its suggestions before anything was added to ONIX. HS noted that the German ONIX group planned a meeting the following day to discuss this. AH and DB said that final refined proposals from the German group could be forthcoming within a few days or two weeks. SB asked if they expected significant change? AH characterised the changes as mostly additions, but this was less clear to HS.

GB explained that this would mean a new set of proposals in November at the earliest. These could be ratified by e-mail for January, or if face-to-face ratification were necessary, for March 2019.

AH asked whether other organisations were planning to use promotional events. NG and others replied that they were.

GB put forward the suggestion that 3.0.5 be postponed for 3–5 months in order to incorporate further updates to the proposals for promotional events, but GB, FF, KU and several others noted that would be problematic as the chapter-level audio timecode proposal was a real-world requirement that was needed right away. That argued for doing 3.0.5 now, with audio timecodes, then a 3.0.6 later with promotional events. AH suggested that a delay to 3.0.5 would be short (days or a couple of weeks), but GB reminded him that new proposals would have to be circulated and commented upon by national groups before it could be ratified. The minimum delay would be three months.

FF and others felt that moving 3.0.5 forward now, with a 3.0.6 including promotional events in January was preferable. HS (for the German group) agreed to splitting audio from promotional events. GB asked whether there were further questions. There being none, he called for the 3.0.5 proposals (other than promotional events, as discussed) to be ratified, and there was general agreement.

GB confirmed that 3.0.6 promotional events proposals could be put forward in November for ratification in January at the earliest, if enhanced proposals from the German group were produced within a couple of weeks, or for ratification in March (London Book Fair) if proposals and feedback took longer.

5. Proposals for Codelists Issue 43

GB noted that the proposals had been distributed to the national groups, and he highlighted a few of the key additions:

a. List 51, Adapted from / Adapted as are codes to link ‘original’ novels to playscripts, dramatisations, (or vice versa, to link plays and filmscripts to novelisations)

b. List 73, Website Privacy statement – this is largely for electronic products such as classroom courses which require online registration

c. List 74, Neutral Latin American Spanish. CS explained that this was not a language, but a specialist spoken variant of Spanish used for audio products that are intended to be sold commercially across many Latin American markets (it was originally developed for dubbing telenovelas). JP said there could be a problem where an audio product intended for Mexico (and thus using a Mexican
variant of Spanish) is not easily intelligible in Argentina. Neutral Latin American Spanish was the opposite of this. He described the current usage in Spain, where in general Spanish is qualified with a country code within the `<Language>` composite. If it is NOT qualified with a country, it could be assumed to be neutral and suitable for any Spanish-speaking country. On this basis, a neutral language code is unnecessary. CS emphasised Neutral Latin America Spanish should be used ONLY with audio. JP suggested guidance should be given about separating the language of the book (code 01) from the language of the audio track (code 08). BFS asked whether we were planning to identify dialects and accents, and GB suggested this was not the intention at present. DB asked about Swiss or Austrian German. These can be covered at present. GB suggested that Spanish was something of an exception having this neutral accent, though as LK suggested, the same issue will probably crop up with Arabic. And it has something in common with the ‘Transatlantic’ English accent cultivated by film stars of the 1930s and ‘40s. (It blended upper class New England American and English Received Pronunciation – think Cary Grant. As with Neutral Latin American Spanish, no-one naturally speaks with this accent.)

d. List 153 now allows both back cover and flap copy to be delivered separately. AF and AH asked why not simply redefine the existing code, rather than nominating primary and secondary copy? GB explained this was to retain full backward compatibility.

e. List 163, Linked purchase price allows future commitments to purchase to be included in prices

f. List 175, Authenticity tokens. The best example is the use of the Banderol in part as an anti-piracy measure and in part within the royalty payments process within the Turkish book market. Such authenticity tokens are now being added to high-price college textbooks and similar products, as a way of deterring reimportation of low-cost ‘export only’ versions of those same books.

GB asked whether there were any further comments on the proposals. There being none, Issue 43 was approved for release.

6. Updates on key migrations and adoptions from national groups

FF asked delegates to update any specific initiatives in their countries.

TPT (Finland) reported that basic work with publishers, training and development of the Kirjavalitys platform was continuing.

KU (UK) reported that the results of the BIC survey on the use of ONIX 3.0 were available, and in general were encouraging, with three quarters of survey respondents having adopted 3.0 and the majority of those remaining have plans to adopt it within a year. The survey report is available from the BIC website.

MBö (Sweden) ‘business as usual’.

MGS (Australia) nothing specific to report.

FF (Norway) noted Bokbasen was working on implementing complex structure on price and price constraints. BFS also mentioned Bokbasen was running an accreditation scheme that rewarded publishers for producing correct ONIX via a financial rebate. It has already led to more attention being paid to the quality of the metadata. FF and BFS also noted that retailers purchasing metadata from Bokbasen were going to be required to use it correctly (via a strict service level agreement?), and also rewarded via a rebate. GB reminded delegates that experience in Germany was that very small rebates produced large changes in behaviour, and FF, BFS agreed.

TM (Poland) noted that ONIX was being used mostly to supply e-book distributors.

VP (France) was investigating how Dilicom could deploy the latest version of 3.0 within the French trade, and encountering some issues with mapping of some new elements from 3.0.3/3.0.4 back to 3.0.0 or 3.0.1 for recipients who had not yet updated.
HS (Germany) noted the meeting the following day of the IG Productmetadaten the group which encompasses ONIX, Thema and other metadata issues. The IG has numerous working groups, and HS was recently elected to represent the IGP at the Steering Committee.

RC (Brazil) reported that there is now an ONIX committee, and that EDItEUR had done an online briefing to kick off that group. The good news is that Brazil is adopting 3.0 from the outset.

LK (Czechia and Slovakia) so far there is no national group, so it’s slow progress, but there is building interest in both ONIX and Thema.

JP (Spain) Arantxa Mellado delivered a presentation on the Spanish metadata supply chain at the EDItEUR International Supply Chain Seminar. Among other things, she revealed that 70% of data uploads to DILVE in ONIX, most of those in ONIX 3.0. The remaining publishers are split equally between those using an online form to enter data for DILVE and those who use Excel files – but these are Excel files that use ONIX codes and data columns. However, only 20% of data recipients in Spain use ONIX, while many of the remainder use Excel files with ONIX codes. JP agreed with GB that requiring ONIX codes, even without ‘difficult’ XML builds a culture of precision and shared understanding. DILVE has started a campaign to improve the quality and accuracy of the metadata in the Spanish supply chain with monthly, personalised e-mail messages pointing out specific problems with their metadata (with links to their ISBNs). These problems can be fixed via a special online portal.

MBi (Denmark) reported that the Danish ONIX working group has – over the past year – worked to agree a common subset of ONIX with some key mandatory features (eg Thema) and this has now been launched with all the stakeholders. A lot of work has gone into ensuring all the features of distributor’s legacy systems can be supported, and has included mapping distribution answer codes (‘excuse codes’) to ONIX availability codes.

BOL (USA) nothing further to report.

NG (Canada) said that (like Norway) BookNet Canada is offering a small discount for high-quality metadata, and provision of ONIX 3.0 is a requirement for that discount.

AF (French Canada) reported that more or less all publishers and the majority of suppliers (ie distributors and wholesalers) are using ONIX 3.0. BTLF has moved from simply recommending to ‘strongly recommending’ or requiring ONIX 3.0, and the transition has largely worked well.

SS (France) nothing particular to report.

SPI (Italy) IE-Online is testing ONIX 3.0 for e-publications, both inbound and outbound, so from 2019 should be able to both accept and provide 3.0. GB noted this was a big step forward in Italy.

SPa (Belgium) No major developments, but still encouraging major data suppliers to move to 3.0.

7. Any Other Business and Next Meeting

FF asked for any other business. DP reported that he was retiring from the CLIL and this was his last International Steering Committee and thanked the Committee and EDItEUR for the welcome and the support he had had. He particularly thanked CS for the help had provided to the CLIL and other meetings concerning both ONIX and Thema.

There being no other business, FF closed the meeting. The next meeting will be in London, on 13th March 2019.

Graham Bell
EDItEUR
11th October 2017