ONIX International Steering Committee Minutes

Wednesday 14th October 2020, 13:00–15:00 CEST (UTC-2) online

Attendees:
- Sawati Ahlawat (Nielsen, India)
- Graham Bell (EDITEUR, UK)
- Marie Bilde Rasmussen (Pruneau, Denmark, Chair)
- Maria Börman (Bokinfo, Sweden)
- Francis Cave (consultant to EDITEUR, UK)
- Cat Colwell (Australian Publishers Association)
- Piera Costantini (Informazioni Editoriali, Italy)
- Jonathan Fielder (BISG, USA)
- Fride Fosseng (Bokbasen, Norway)
- Alexander Haffner (MVB, Germany)
- Inari Happaniemi (Kirjavaalitys, Finland)
- Yoichi Kimata (JPO, Japan)
- Tone Løyland (Bokbasen, Norway)
- Vikrant Mathur (Nielsen, India)
- Brian O’Leary (BISG, USA)
- Naoki Onodera (JPO, Japan)
- Jesús Peraita (FGEE, Spain)
- Christer Persløv (Bokinfo, Sweden)
- Simonetta Pillon (Informazioni Editoriali, Italy)
- Vincent Pouvelarie (Dilicom, France)
- Johanna Roden (Bokinfo, Sweden)
- Suzanne Rozario (EDITEUR. UK)
- Sophie Salmon (CLIL, France)
- Bibi Satayesh (MVB, Germany)
- Chris Saynor (EDITEUR, UK)
- Henning Schönenberger (Springer Nature, Germany)
- Karina Urquhart (BIC, UK)
- Howard Willows (Nielsen, UK)

Apologies: none

Key decisions:
- Ratification of Codelists Issue 51 (with minor wording changes)
- Agreement of the outline XML structure for ONIX 3.0.8

1. Welcome and introductions
   MB welcomed attendees to the meeting – held via videoconference – and asked everyone to introduce themselves.

2. Minutes of ISC Meeting held 11th March 2020, and matters arising
   MB introduced minutes of the previous meeting; there were no comments or corrections and the minutes were approved.

3. Reports and updates from the National Groups – including progress of ONIX use across national supply chains, key adoptions of v3.0 and readiness for Amazon deadlines, plans for promotion, training etc. MB asked for updates from each of the national groups present.
   - Spain: JP said there was not much to report, as ONIX 3.0 has been adopted across the Spanish industry for several years and was running smoothly. He mentioned problem with Amazon requiring embargo dates for books (where no such embargo existed).
   - Japan: YK and NO reported the JPO was very happy with the use of ONIX 3.0, since it had been introduced into the Japanese supply chain in 2012.
   - USA: BOL reported the US publishing market to be ‘mostly’ ready for the deadline of December 2020 for adoption of ONIX 3.0. This has been driven by the fact that Amazon will require ONIX 3.0 for physical book feeds by this date. Overall, most publishers will be ready, with a few exceptions where publishers use in-house systems or those that that rely on solution vendors whose systems are not ONIX 3.0 capable. BISG is active in promoting ONIX 3.0, and focussed on August 2020 as a ‘realistic’
date to be ready, in order to ensure plenty of time for testing before the holiday peak. Those few which still rely on ONIX 2.1 may not deliver data direct to Amazon, and converting those last publishers to 3.0 will likely be very slow.

**Italy:** PC and SP reported that IE-Online has gone live with import and export of data feeds in ONIX 3.0, and it has some publishers sending in their catalogue updates in ONIX 3.0. Customers who receive IE-Online’s database also now receive Thema subject categories. With regards to the transition to ONIX 3.0 for Amazon, Italian publishers also report the same problems as Spain (re ‘embargo dates’). Amazon also requires the full date (ie, day/month/year) for publication dates – which is a problem for Italy as they do not always have such precise dates and do not think that a fictitious date should be sent in order to comply. They hope to overcome this problem by the end of year.

GB asked if this is a problem for others and would it help if Editeur approached Amazon to clarify how it should be used? SP said [on embargos] that Amazon appears to be asking IE-Online and publishers to provide something that does not exist, while refusing to state clearly exactly what is being required. JP added that Amazon will not accept [just] publication date or availability date, and this is causing confusion in ONIX. SP also noted that for Italy, there is no day or month of publication, just the year – and ONIX allows you to send just the year. Amazon however insists on day and month as their algorithms are based on embargo and release dates.

GB explained that ONIX 2.1 contained an on sale date field which was frequently misinterpreted, and perhaps that misinterpretation has been transferred into ONIX 3.0. Editeur could write a paper to clarify that while all books have a publishing date, only some have a sales embargo date. and if there is no embargo date, Amazon and any other retailer can release the books as soon as stock is available. In contrast, if there is an embargo date, then they must keep books in their warehouses until the embargo expires.

**Action:** GB to produce a document on publication and embargo dates, which can be provided to Amazon. [See https://www.editeur.org/files/ONIX 3/APPNOTE Lifecycle dates in ONIX.pdf]

**Sweden:** JR reported the Swedish metadata supply chain was using ONIX 3.0, and Bokinfo had a new release which included new features and supports the <MainSubject> (this is important for publishers and retailers using Thema).

**Germany:** HS said German publishers are trying to move towards ONIX 3.0, but for an interim period they were using a temporary workaround issued by Editeur to make adoption slightly simpler. This workaround – which was agreed in last meeting – consists of a special XSD for Germany which allows the use of an ROW code within Price in Block 6. GB reminded the group that the workaround is valid only until mid-2021.

The German IGPM has contributed minor requirements for latest issue of ONIX 3.0. The next meeting of the German IGPM ONIX group will be on 2nd Nov for and will address ‘accessibility’ (in ONIX, mostly List 196) – the group was pleased to hear that accessibility was on the agenda of the ISCS and hopes it will gain more visibility in the coming months/years. GB noted that accessibility had been part of Editeur’s agenda since 2010, and that the European accessibility regulations will become increasingly vital for publishers leading up to 2025. Kogan Page delivered a good presentation on this topic at the ISCS and has been certified by Benetech as a Globally Accessible Publisher across their full range of books. Slides and video from the ISCS are available on Editeur website regarding all presentations (see https://www.editeur.org/3/Events/Event-Details/561).

AH added that since early 2020, a couple of new German retailers (including Amazon and Telia, one of the biggest) have moved to ONIX 3.0. Moving forward, VLB has a plan to implement ‘promotional
events’ (ONIX Block 7) starting in Spring 2021. On this latter point, GB remarked that a delay of 18–24 months was quite normal before implementation of any new feature added to ONIX.

**Norway:** FF and TL reported they were working on best practices for booksellers and publishers – a lot of effort put into the use of licence metadata, prices and sales restrictions for new products and services, and Bokbasen was still working on improving how these could be expressed.

FF noted that using an online system, Norwegian booksellers and publishers can search for books, view prices and status information for all books in Norway. Bokbasen has received a warning from the Norwegian authorities regarding this system, alleging that Bokbasen is facilitating anti-competitive behaviour. If Bokbasen is unable to convince the authorities that this is not the case, they will likely be fined heavily.

**France:** VP said the French supply chain has been using ONIX 3.0 widely since 2015, though small publishers and distributors who are unable to use ONIX can provide data to Dilicom using an online form or a spreadsheet. Work continues extending ONIX to cover toys and games which are distributed via the book supply chain or retailed alongside books – the French ONIX group has driven the addition of some codes to list 150 and 175, enabling ONIX to cover these products. GB stressed ONIX is trying to cover the need for trading toys and games within the normal book supply chain.

**Australia:** CC reported that ONIX 3.0 was enabled within the Australian Publishers Assoc new TitlePage bibliographic database, and the APA had set a 12-month deadline for the Australian publishers to transition. She reported good progress, with around 65% titles are ready in ONIX 3.0 for large trade publishers, but educational publishers have some way to go. A month ago, TitlePage started to receive ONIX 3.0 feeds from a large distributor and some of its publisher clients using Block updates. Because TitlePage was generally seen as around two years ahead of publishers’ developments, there is rarely a reason to update brand new codelists – but the APA was caught out when one forward-moving publishers used some brand new codes added at codelist issue 48. TitlePage has now been updated.

TitlePage is also now sending aggregated feeds to Amazon in ONIX 3.0 – representing 95% Australian publishers. A few will not make the deadline for direct data supply to Amazon, but will be able to use via APA feeds. Addressing an earlier question, Amazon has not not asked for an embargo date, but is accepting the availability date from TitlePage. The APA has been requested to customise certain things in feeds – for example Amazon only want contributors that meet certain roles, or certain types of identifiers, which should in principle not have to be removed (they should be ignored by recipients if not required).

Other booksellers and retailers are not ready to receive ONIX 3.0 and are still happy 2.1. However, owing to the pandemic lockdown, some independent publishers finding that they are now in need of a website – and inertia seems to be shifting.

**Finland:** IH reported that ONIX 3.0 has been used in Finland exclusively for a while, and no further developments are required at present. However, ISNI is gaining importance: the National Library of Finland just became a Registration Agency for ISNI (International Standard Name Identifier).

**UK:** HW reported that every ONIX feed in testing for Nielsen is an ONIX 3.0 feed now – although of course, established 2.1 feeds are still coming in. This is a very positive sign. Nielsen was trialing ONIX 3.0 feeds to Amazon, and it seems not to be requiring embargo dates. KU added that under the
current BIC Product Data Accreditation Scheme, 76% of accredited publishers are using ONIX 3.0. She also noted that BIC has delivered some ONIX online training (via EDItEUR) and more is planned over the coming year – she received great feedback on the training.

GB remarked that problems on the embargo dates appear to be on non-English countries and suggested that this could mean a translation issue that can be solved by clarification.

FC reported he has worked on ONIX and BIC Realtime messages for BIC and EDItEUR across both trade and the usually MARC-oriented library markets – but work has slowed down because of the pandemic.

India: VA talked about generally low usage of ONIX by Indian publishers, though there was an ongoing discussion with publishers and booksellers on the benefits. He thinks that this may improve when they meet next to discuss about the benefits, usability and how publishers are using ONIX around the globe. What little Indian ONIX exists is a mix of ONIX 2.1 and 3.0, and comes mostly from international publishing companies based in India. Domestic Indian publishing companies are mostly providing Nielsen with CSV files, and he hoped that in future, provision of ONIX training may help these publishers progress.

SA said apart from ONIX they are starting to introduce the Thema subject categories and preparing some presentations to help publishers understand and adopt the scheme. The wide range of languages used across Indian publishing may mean the multi-lingual nature of Thema is an advantage.

Denmark: MB reminded the committee that the Danish trade has two parallel supply chains – one for physical books, one for e-books, and only one is ONIX based. Most large publishers have got ONIX feeds for digital product, and the digital supply chain functions well with ONIX 3.0. The publishers association is pushing to enhance quality and broader usage of different parts of ONIX, with metadata demand driven by the streaming services like Mofibo / Storytel and the digital lending services from the Danish National Library. The association has defined a Danish subset of ONIX that data recipients are committing to exploiting on their website. Amazon does not exist in Denmark yet so there is no pressure to make a transition to ONIX for physical products.

4. **Report on current ONIX development work (GB)** – GB presented his activity report (see separate document)

GB talked first about the growing range of Application Notes – explanatory documents, less formally written than EDItEUR’s specifications or guidelines, explaining small parts of ONIX with clear guidance and examples. Over the summer some videos in the style of recorded webinar versions of Applications Note have been added. GB would like to hear from anyone who has specific suggestions for other topics to be covered by Application Notes. As an example, he suggested Collections would be good to update.

He reported that EDItEUR had fielded an increasing number of technical queries over recent months, probably due to the quickened migration to ONIX 3.0. These came both via the onix@groups.io mailing list and as direct enquiries. GB noted he knows of only one software solution provider who cannot do ONIX 3.0, but it is working on it and hopes to be ready by deadline. However, time is short and some of its customers may not meet the deadline.

Over the last six months, there were two revisions of the codelists, issues 49 and 50, plus proposals for issue 51. The ratified codes are available on the interactive browser.
Development of Schemas – as well as creating the modified schema for Germany (mentioned above), GB has added into the standard (or ‘classic’) XSD schema a few simple ‘uniqueness constraints’ which were previously in the ‘strict’ XSD only – they cannot be put into the DTD, though FC pointed out that they could be added to the RNG schema using embedded Schematron. One constraint added recently enforces uniqueness of the contributor sequence number, and so far, only two people are known to have noticed when ONIX files failed validation due to duplicated sequence numbers (most validated ONIX has been silently passing this requirement).

GB reported that training has seen a marked increase over the last three months, after the introduction of online courses, and a lot more online training is booked for the period up to the end of year. Online training is proving to be popular and effective with trainees, with the benefit for non-UK trainees that there are no costs for travel and venues.

5. Proposals for Codelists issue 51 – circulated in advance to national groups (see separate document).

GB talked through the proposals in issue 51, most of which were accepted by the group. He highlighted:

List 71, code 17 – a sales restriction ‘Through Inventoryless POD’. It may be odd to treat POD as Sales restriction but in this case the publisher is allowing the retailer to either manufacture POD copies or allowing a retail to manufacture POD copies when the ordinary standard copy is not in stock. This sort of programme is available for more than one retailer, which makes it easier to implement it as a sales restriction.

List 150 – GB asked for views on ‘cards’, as the proposal put forward requires use of List 175 (Product form detail) to differentiate different types of card. HW said the UK group felt differentiating cards (educational flash cards, playing cards, divination, recipe cards, greeting cards and other similar ‘cards’) using List 150 was preferable, but after discussion, the proposed use of List 175 was suitable for most groups. GB also mentioned the need for an additional code for spinners, so they could be specified empty or filled. Current practice appears to be that the existing code is used for the spinners themselves (empty point-of-sale or display items) so the new code should be for filled spinners.

List 163 code 35 – CIP date (the date by which Cataloguing in Publication data is required by the publisher for inclusion in the product) was requested by the Library of Congress, to aid them in prioritising cataloguing work submitted to them.

In List 165 – the proposed new code had been withdrawn by French group, but may return in the future.

List 196 – GB noted work to improve compatibility between ONIX list 196 and other methods of embedding accessibility information inside the E-pub itself.

With minor changes of wording, the group ratified Issue 51.

6. Proposals for ONIX release 3.0.8 – proposals from the working group were previously circulated to national groups (see separate document)

GB reported that over the last few months a small working group of EDItEUR members expert in POD, digital audio and e-book production worked to create a proposal for a new Block 8, to carry details intended for digital service providers and other intermediaries – specifically for digital conversion work, packaging work done by intermediaries between publisher and retail distributor – and for POD manufacturers.
GB asked the group to provisionally agree this proposal as the new structure for new Block 8 – the XML structure had proved to be sound, though work on codelists was still required – see details in separate document. The XML structure has cover / body / insert sections – three parts of a standard book (though obviously not all books have covers or inserts) – each with a file manifest and specification information for both the supplied files and for the product to be created from those supplied files.

The proposal for 3.0.8 also includes a handful of very minor additions on other parts of ONIX, for example, greater use of the dedicated <TelephoneNumber> field. The group agreed the proposal, and the draft specification will be made available pending final ratification of the 3.0.8 release at a later meeting.

7. Any other business – MB called for any other business, and there was none.

8. Next meeting – MBR closed the meeting with confirmation that the next meeting would likely be at the time of the London Book Fair in March 2021, though this was highly dependent on the pandemic.

Suzanne Rozario / Graham Bell
EDItEUR
17th October 2020