

Using *Thema* and ONIX together: common questions

1. I don't use ONIX and I only sell paperbacks. Can I use *Thema*?

Yes. *Thema* works independently of ONIX and can be added via an Excel spreadsheet, entered manually into a third-party interface, added to marketing copy, featured in your catalogue *etc*, like any other subject scheme. It is also independent of your book format – it can be used for physical or digital books, for audiobooks and for some non-book products produced by publishers. And it's not solely for online: you don't need an online presence to make use of *Thema*.

2. I do use ONIX – but only version 2.1. Can I still use *Thema*?

Yes. *Thema* can be sent or received in version 2.1 or version 3.0 of ONIX. The examples in this document are all ONIX 3.0, but the same things can be accomplished with ONIX 2.1.

3. I want to start adding *Thema* to my metadata. Where should I start?

If you are a publisher, distributor, data aggregator, bookseller, online platform or anyone else starting out with *Thema* then EDITEUR has a variety of different documents and tools to help you get started. Have a look at the *Thema* page on the EDITEUR website, <http://www.editeur.org/151/Thema/> and especially at the *Basic instructions for use of version 1.3*. You'll also find the code lists themselves, in various formats (PDF, HTML, Excel and so on) and in various languages, and other useful documents too.

One of the best ways to search for codes is to use the interactive multilingual browser which can be found here: <https://ns.editeur.org/thema/>. If you're going to be using *Thema*, the browser is very useful. It's easy to navigate by clicking on the subject headings, and there is a flexible search function.

You should also consider signing up to the *Thema* implementors mailing list here where you can ask questions and receive updates on *Thema*. You can sign up via <http://www.editeur.org/153/Maintenance-and-Support/#mailingList>.

4. I have a new book about Mexican street food. How do I find the right subject category in *Thema*?

You should check the list of *Thema* subject headings by using the multilingual browser (or one of the documents mentioned above) and you will see that there is a *Thema* subject category for **WBNB – Street Food**. This will be the main subject category you will use. If you read the scope note that applies to its parent category **WBN** you will see it says, "Use with: PLACE Qualifier 1* and also values from 5PB* INTEREST Qualifiers as appropriate". This note also applies to the **WBNB** code. Qualifiers in *Thema* add detail and nuance to a subject category, and greatly increase the descriptive power of the scheme. For the book on Mexican Street Food you would need to send a place qualifier as well as a subject category. Searching for Mexico in the *Thema* qualifiers will give you **1KLCM**. The combination of **WBNB** and **1KLCM** will give you 'Mexican Street Food', as the significance of the place qualifier is that it is about food from Mexico.

5. I've published a technical title about plumbing, but I cannot find a heading called 'Plumbing'. What do I do?

Thema is made up of codes, headings and notes. It's important when assigning categories that you look at the notes as well as the headings. These often give further guidance about use of the codes. Some codes have 'class here' notes. These give a selection of other common subjects that could be classed in this section. The best way to find these is to use the search function on the interactive browser – <https://ns.editeur.org/thema>, as it searches the text of both headings and notes, as well as having some hidden 'synonym' searches. If you typed in the word 'plumbing', it will take you to the code **TNT – Building skills and trades** because this has a note that says "Class here: bricklaying, plastering, masonry, glazing, carpentry, joinery, plumbing, roofing, construction and contracting skills".

6. I plan to publish a new romance novel that is also a thriller. What *Thema* category do I use, and how do I send this in ONIX?

If you check the list of *Thema* subject headings you will see that *Thema* has no single category for 'romantic thriller'. *Thema* does not have a category for every possible subject but works by allowing you to create meaning by *combining codes* when no single category exists for a particular subject. You would need to decide if this is a romance novel with a thrilling plot, or primarily a thriller with recognisable romantic genre features. You would be using the same two codes in either case, but this choice will determine which one you decide is the 'main' subject. In this case the fact that the book is a romantic thriller is conveyed using the two *Thema* subject categories, **FRM – Romantic Suspense** and **FH – Thriller**, and you would then send it in your ONIX file like this (this illustrates the first option):

```
<!-- ***** ONIX 3.0 ***** -->
<Subject>
  <MainSubject/>
  <SubjectSchemeIdentifier>93</SubjectSchemeIdentifier> <!-- 93 = Thema subject -->
  <SubjectSchemeVersion>1.4</SubjectSchemeVersion> <!-- version 1.4 1 -->
  <SubjectCode>FRM</SubjectCode> <!-- Romantic suspense -->
</Subject>
<Subject>
  <SubjectSchemeIdentifier>93</SubjectSchemeIdentifier>
  <SubjectSchemeVersion>1.4</SubjectSchemeVersion>
  <SubjectCode>FH</SubjectCode> <!-- Thriller / suspense -->
</Subject>
```

The combination of two categories, **FRM** and **FH**, convey the notion of a primarily romance genre novel that is also thriller. This allows a data receiver to display the title in both sections or to map to an in-house category called 'Romantic Thrillers'. It also allows for more detailed faceted search by creating options for refining searches, or complex advanced searches within a romance section.

7. I found a qualifier that fits my title, can I just use this one code?

No. In *Thema* the qualifiers (they start with a number from 1 to 6) can not meant to be used on their own, they are meant to add further meaning to a subject category (these start with a letter from A to Y) and so qualifiers are always sent along with at least one subject category. Qualifiers need a subject code to qualify.

¹ The subject scheme version is left out of the other ONIX examples for reasons of brevity but should always be included in your ONIX files

8. So how many *Thema* categories can I or should I include in my ONIX?

ONIX has no fixed limitation on the number of *Thema* categories you can send. It is determined by good practice and the correct use of *Thema* categories and qualifiers – there's no single right answer, and the detail will depend on the book. Most organisations which receive book metadata in ONIX (or in other formats) don't want too many categories from any subject scheme – they want the most relevant, so that they can show the right titles to the right customer. Remember you are classifying the book as a whole, not itemising every topic that is mentioned. The subject categories you use are not the same thing as 'keywords' or other descriptive textual information about a title.

Sometimes you have a book that only needs one subject category to describe it perfectly, and if this is the case, you only need send one code. Adding more categories simply adds irrelevance. But *Thema* is based on the idea that meaning can emerge from the *combination* of codes. For another title you might need three or four categories to create the right meaning. Choose the right and most accurate category or categories, but don't add unnecessary codes or treat *Thema* as a list of keywords. Adding marginal, irrelevant or incorrect categories in an attempt to get your book featured in as many sections of the bookstore as possible risks losing sight of the book's subject altogether, as well as irritating data recipients and book buyers when your books appears in the wrong part of the bookstore. Your aim is to give precise and accurate categorisation information to allow data receivers to correctly display your titles and for the right potential customers to find your titles easily.

The right category isn't necessarily one of the very specific categories. It could be a more 'generic' or broader category. It's important to look at the categories in the context of the code hierarchy. As an example, a book that's simply titled *Europe: A History* only needs one subject category **NHD – European History**. This subject category is exactly the right one, and the general category used on its own implies the book covers the whole sweep of European history. You could add a place qualifier **1D**, to indicate this is about Europe, and not one specific country, and to allow for easy cross-referencing with other books that cover Europe as a whole. Arguably 1D is unnecessary, but there may be some value in a 'belt and braces' approach. However, for this European history book, you should *not* add the more detailed subcategories of NHD, such as **NHDA – European history: the Romans** or **NHDL – European history: Renaissance**, even if these topics are covered in the book, as the general category is enough. The Romans or the Renaissance could be added as keywords and would also probably appear in the table of contents or the book description. You would use the more specific categories only if this was a book that focused solely on the more specific topic (*eg* a book titled *Europe: A history of the Roman Empire*). Also, in the case of a more focused title, you would use appropriate time period 3* and place 1* qualifiers with the subject category.

9. I need to send both BISAC codes and *Thema* codes in my ONIX. Should I create a separate ONIX file for each?

No. You can send many different codes from several different subject schemes in the same ONIX file but in separate subject composites. You need to make sure each subject code you send is associated with the right code from the ONIX code list 27 <https://ns.editeur.org/onix/en/27> which tells you what scheme each subject code is drawn from. Using codes from list 27, you distinguish between *Thema* subject codes (code 93 in list 27) and qualifiers (94–99) and BISAC subject codes (10). The data receivers can select just the values from code scheme that they want (and may ignore the others). As well as indicating which scheme you are using, you should always state which version of the scheme you are using (e.g. '1.3') where applicable, as recipients may validate the codes against an authority list and need to know which version to use. Remember to state both scheme and version number in each composite (not just for the first or 'main' entry).

10. Can I mix fiction and non-fiction categories in *Thema*?

Yes, certainly in the case of fiction titles, and in some circumstances also for non-fiction titles. The basic principle here is to ask yourself, 'if someone in a bookshop was to shelve this title in the section suggested by the subsidiary category I added, would the book look very out of place there?'

Adult fiction

For adult fiction, you can add an appropriate non-fiction category. The important thing to remember here is that the fiction categories must always be clearly indicated as the 'main' or primary subject code, so that it is clear that the title is a work of fiction. Non-fiction categories should only be added if they correspond to a major theme of the story. Non-fiction categories should not be added to a fiction category simply because it is one of many minor plot points in the story, nor should they be used as if they were an alternate list of keywords. They should only be used to indicate the underlying core subject matter, setting or milieu of the story. As an example, a novel that has baseball as its setting and main theme would use **FG – Sports Fiction** plus **SFC – Baseball**.

If you had a contemporary novel (**FBA**) where a major theme of the story was social conditions you might add **FXS – Narrative theme: Social issues** as one of its *Thema* categories. If that theme was the dominant subject of the novel you could also add a non-fiction code to indicate precisely what that social issue was. So, if this novel was a fictionalised version of what it is like to grow up in real poverty maybe you could add **JBFC – Poverty & precarity**. Again, bear in mind if someone put this in a section of books dealing with poverty or precarity, would this title be relevant there. You would not add this category because one of the characters was poor or it was an incidental theme. If that is the case, then you should look at using keywords and a good description.

You should, however, avoid using the more technical non-fiction categories with adult fiction categories. For example, it is not recommended to use an **M* Medicine and nursing** category with **FRQ – Romance: medical** as titles using the **M*** codes are highly specialised and not aimed at the general audience and a medical romance would be totally out of place in a medical section of a bookshop or library – as would a medical textbook be in the romance section.

Children's / teenage fiction

The same principle applies within the children's / teenage fiction section (**YF***), where using non-fiction categories with fiction can highlight the main themes of a story. The **YX*** and **YN*** codes are especially useful with the **YF*** codes.

As an example, for a novel aimed at adolescents where the main theme of the story is about being bullied at school you would use **YFS – Children's / Teenage fiction: School stories** as the main subject with **YXQF – Children's / Teenage personal and social topics: bullying and harassment** to create the full subject categorisation. A story about a teenager trying to understand what it means to be a girl in a contemporary world could have the codes **YFB – Children's / Teenage fiction: General fiction** plus the categories **YXC – Children's / Teenage personal and social topics: gender identity** and **YNMF – Children's / Teenage general interest: Girls and women**.

Non-fiction

Using a fiction category with a non-fiction title is a much less common occurrence, and you should be very cautious – but it can be useful in certain cases. A book on the history of science fiction in the 1950s, for example, would have as its main subject category **DSK– Literary studies: fiction, novelists and prose writers** plus a time period qualifier of **3MPQM – c 1950 to c 1959**. But you could also use the fiction category **FL –**

Science Fiction to make it clear what kind of fiction was being explored, and this would pass the shelving test. A film or movie history of ‘Westerns’ would take **ATFA – Film history, theory and criticism** and **ATFN – Film: styles and genres** as its *Thema* categories plus **ATMB – Film, television, radio genres: Action, adventure, crime and thrillers**, but adding **FJW – Adventure fiction: Westerns** could add further clarity.

Again, in these cases the non-fiction category should always be the ‘main’ subject, and you would only use a fiction category if it was clearly the major theme or subject of the book. Using a fiction category with a non-fiction category could mean the title being added to the relevant fiction section and so again always think: would this title pass the shelving test?

If you cannot clearly indicate the difference between main and secondary subject categories, don’t use this technique.

11. Should I describe the intended audience in *Thema* or in ONIX?

Thema has some notions of both audience and ‘treatment’ in the codes. The **Y*** section, for example, are codes specifically for books intended to be read by children / teenagers. (*Thema* avoids ‘Young Adults’ as a term for teenagers, as this term means very different things in different markets and in different languages).

The Interest Qualifiers **5*** also allows for a subject code to be qualified with guidance for a certain readership, for example there is provision for expression of **5A*** – **Interest Age / Level** with codes to allow an indication of a starting interest age / level. This is covered in more detail below.

More subtly, there are codes that make a distinction between ‘popular’ treatments and more ‘academic’ approaches. For example, there are **PG*** codes for books about astronomy, but a separate code **WNX** for popular astronomy (as a hobby). There are even some differences between ‘science’ and ‘technology’ (compare **PNNP – Polymer chemistry** and **TDCP – Plastics and polymers**, and even **TGMP – Engineering applications of polymers and composites**). Another example of this is **PSVJ – Zoology: birds (ornithology)** compared with **WNCB – Wildlife: birds and birdwatching: general interest**.

However, the primary purpose of *Thema* is as a *subject* scheme, and the key intended audience for a book should always be described in the ONIX <Audience> composite.

12. So how should I send detailed audience information about my titles?

ONIX allows you to express more specific detail about the intended readership, using the repeatable <Audience> composite. The simplest way of flagging the intended audience of a product is by sending one of the codes from the ONIX audience code list 28 <https://ns.editeur.org/onix/en/28> in the <Audience> composite. It’s a good idea to always include one of these codes for every product in your ONIX file or use these codes on your spreadsheet (if you are sending data in that format). These codes give the basic indication of the intended readership and will allow for simple distinctions between potential audiences.

So, for example, to send an indication that a title is suitable for a General / trade adult readership in your ONIX file, it would look like this:

```
<Audience>
  <AudienceCodeType>01</AudienceCodeType>      <!-- ONIX audience code -->
  <AudienceCodeValue>01</AudienceCodeValue>     <!-- General/trade (adult) -->
</Audience>
```

Along with the basic ONIX audience code you can also send values from other recognised audience schemes, ([see ONIX code list 29](#)), depending on the requirements of your data recipients and market.

13. Some of my titles have material that is aimed at a relatively mature and aware teenage audience. How do I indicate this?

You can use code **5X – Contains explicit material**. This carries the note *‘Use for: titles featuring scenes or vocabulary, that could cause offense or upset an unaware reader, usually of a sexual or violent or discriminatory nature, and therefore only suitable for a relatively mature teen or an adult audience and where it is considered important that any potential reader is made aware that the content may not be suitable for all.’*. This specifies that the title is for an aware audience and may contain material that would not suit everyone. It could be used with books for older teenagers (say 15 or 17-year olds) for example, and not just adult books. This qualifier clearly should be supplemented with information in your metadata giving more detail, including a good description of the content. As an example, a horror novel aimed at older teenagers with fairly graphic scenes of violence and abuse would need to flag that it contains some scenes that are suitable only for an aware teenage audience. The *Thema* codes would be sent like this in ONIX:

```
<Subject>
  <MainSubject/>
  <SubjectSchemeIdentifier>93</SubjectSchemeIdentifier>      <!-- Thema subject -->
  <SubjectCode>YFD</SubjectCode>                            <!-- Children's / Teenage fiction: -->
</Subject>                                                <!-- Horror and ghost stories, chillers -->
<Subject>
  <SubjectSchemeIdentifier>93</SubjectSchemeIdentifier>      <!-- Thema subject -->
  <SubjectCode>YXQ</SubjectCode>                            <!-- Children's / Teenage personal & -->
</Subject>                                                <!-- social topics: bullying, violence, abuse & peer pressure -->
<Subject>
  <SubjectSchemeIdentifier>98</SubjectSchemeIdentifier><!-- Thema interest age -->
                                                    / special interest qualifier -->
  <SubjectCode>5AS</SubjectCode>                            <!-- Interest age: from c 15 years-->
</Subject>
<Subject>
  <SubjectSchemeIdentifier>98</SubjectSchemeIdentifier><!-- Thema interest age -->
                                                    / special interest qualifier -->
  <SubjectCode>5X</SubjectCode>                            <!-- Contains explicit material -->
</Subject>
```

14. Some of my titles have material that could cause offence even to certain adult readers. How do I indicate this?

If you have a title that has content that might offend certain *adult* readers, you should inform data receivers (indeed many retailers now require this information) that the title is suitable for an aware adult audience only. As well as adding the **5X** qualifier in *Thema*, you should send more detailed information in your ONIX file, using the ONIX Adult Audience Ratings (AKA ‘content warnings’). The [ONIX code list 203](#) does allow you to give an indication of the content’s suitability for general adult readers, by using code 01 – Any Adult audience, or you could give a specific warning of explicit sexual content or extreme violence. A 00 content warning code also allows you to say the title has not yet been rated.

Any book that merits an audience rating cannot also be suitable for children or teenagers. The audience ratings should only be given to titles where the audience is clearly ‘adult’ and the content might be considered ‘extreme’. If you publish books that merit one of these warnings, you want to make sure they reach only the right audience.

For particular types of book, this rating information is vital for resellers who would want to ensure these titles are only shown to a suitably informed audience. These kinds of ratings – and the **5X** *Thema* code above – are also important for things such as automated lending in libraries. As an example, a title that was suitable for adults but contained scenes of extreme violence should have the Adult audience rating added like this in ONIX:

```
<Audience>
  <AudienceCodeType>01</AudienceCodeType>      <!-- ONIX audience code -->
  <AudienceCodeValue>01</AudienceCodeValue>     <!-- General/trade -->
</Audience>
<Audience>
  <AudienceCodeType>22</AudienceCodeType>       <!-- ONIX Adult audience rating -->
  <AudienceCodeValue>04</AudienceCodeValue>     <!-- Content warning (violence) -->
</Audience>
```

15. I publish books for primary schools and children of primary school age. How do I indicate this in *Thema*?

The **4*** – **Educational Purpose** Qualifier section of *Thema* allows you to give information about what educational level a title is aimed at. For example, **4CD** – **For primary education** (or its equivalent) indicates the title is for use in primary education. By using an Educational Qualifier, you are flagging up that the intended audience is educational as well as suggesting the age range. There are also other, more detailed ‘national extension’ categories in *Thema* for some national education systems (see the **4Z*** codes). If you are publishing titles for use in schools, then you would normally be using a *Thema* category starting with **YP*** as at least the main subject as all the **YP*** categories indicate that it is educational material.

The **5A*** – **Interest Age / Level** qualifiers allow an indication of a starting interest age / level. These will allow you to qualify the **Y*** – **Children’s, Teenage and Educational** subject categories (only the **YP*** categories are limited to educational material), to give meaning to the core subjects which do not themselves contain information about the age group. If, for example, you are sending **YFH** – **Children’s / Teenage fiction: Fantasy**, the addition of **5AG** – **Interest age: from c 6 years** or **5AS** – **Interest age: from c 15 years** to your data will provide essential clarification about the type of book and where it should be categorised.

Having said this, there is no detailed age banding or any upper age limits in *Thema*. Any detailed banding should be sent in ONIX using <AudienceRange> or using the same principles as ONIX via a spreadsheet.

16. As a secondary level educational publisher, I need to give clear indication of what age and class level each of my titles is meant for?

Both *Thema* and ONIX allow you to send information about educational levels, years or grades. ONIX has some specific code lists (for the USA, Canada, China and Brazil) for school grades, and allows you to point to a nationally-maintained coding scheme when this exists (for example, for the US Common Core curriculum). If you are using a **YP*** code from *Thema* you would always complement it with a *Thema* Educational Purpose Qualifier **4*** plus ideally some audience information in your ONIX data. At the very least, you should send an ONIX audience code from [list 28](#), such as **04** – **Primary and Secondary / Elementary and High school**. These tend to be about saying it is for *this* class / year level, or for use *from* this grade to that grade. *Thema* allows for more detail by allowing for combinations of qualifiers about class level (**4CD** – **For primary education**), purpose (it’s a textbook – **4TC** – or it is for an exam – **4TN**), specific national curricula (**4Z-DE-** – **For German educational curricula**), or specific qualifications (**4GB** – **For International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma**). The use of national extensions means certain countries have created detailed code hierarchies to reflect the complexities of their own educational systems, but data receivers who don’t need this complexity can ignore this level of detail and just use the root code (the part that precedes the country code).

For children’s books and anything aimed at the educational market, it is important to send an <AudienceRange>. <AudienceRange> allows you to send exact or from / to ranges for interest age, reading age or school grades. See ONIX [code list 30](#) – it includes things like US school grade range (code 11), Chinese school grade range (code 29), but also allows you to specify Interest ages in months (for very young children) or years, and separately specify Reading ages in years.

For example, to complement **4Z-US- – For US educational curricula**, you may wish to say it is suitable for US school grades 9 and 10. In ONIX it would be sent like this:

```
<AudienceRange>
  <AudienceRangeQualifier>11</AudienceRangeQualifier> <!-- US grade range -->
  <AudienceRangePrecision>03</AudienceRangePrecision> <!-- from -->
  <AudienceRangeValue>9</AudienceRangeValue> <!-- 9th grade -->
  <AudienceRangePrecision>04</AudienceRangePrecision> <!-- to -->
  <AudienceRangeValue>10</AudienceRangeValue> <!-- 10th grade -->
</AudienceRange>
```

It is important to distinguish between reading age (what a child *can* read, according to their ability), interest age (what a child *wants to* read) and school age / grade (the educational stage). These are not always the same and can be delivered separately in ONIX using repeats of the <AudienceRange> composite with different values of <AudienceRangeQualifier>.

17. But I just want to say ‘from age 7’ or ‘from 9 to 99’. Can’t I do that?

This is not considered good practice. It is not at all useful for parent purchasers in bookshops or online, or for librarians and educators who need much more precise information when it comes to age banding. These people – who are your customers and will potentially purchase your books – want precise and generally quite narrow age bands. They don’t find overly-broad age ranges helpful, especially for younger readers. A range that is perhaps three years wide, or even open ended, would be fine for 15 years or older, but is much too broad if applied to books aimed at 5 -year-olds – 3–6 years is just too broad to be useful, where 3–4 or maybe 3–5 gives the potential purchaser more useful information. Use narrow ranges for the very young, but the ranges can be wider for older children and teenagers. In ONIX you could send just a starting age, but it is much better to send properly assessed age banding with a from / to range.

In *Thema*, there is no notion of upper age or age banding. The interest age qualifiers in *Thema* must be added to any **Y*** codes to give them definition, but detailed audience information and age ranges should always be sent in ONIX. The age qualifiers in *Thema* are what creates the difference between, for example, fiction aimed at 7-year-olds and fiction for 14-year-olds, both of which would feature a **YF*** category. Having open-ended interest age qualifiers in *Thema* may be useful for books aimed at older teenagers, as **5A** has qualifiers up to and including **5AU – Interest age: from c 17 years**, but it is best practice to send more precise audience age information in your ONIX.

18. I have several titles that are suitable for people with reading difficulties. Can I indicate this in *Thema*?

There are *Thema* codes that allow publishers to flag titles that are suitable for readers who have difficulties with or may feel otherwise excluded from reading. Highlighting these books brings them to the attention of their target audience – the readers themselves – as well as parents, librarians and educators. These codes are important to increase the ease of discovering books that are specifically suitable for this type of reader. Librarians and educators often have trouble sourcing these titles for both school pupils and adults with reading

difficulties. These are important codes in *Thema*, but should only be used on titles that have been correctly assessed as being suitable for the particular group.

5AX – For adult emergent readers. This allows publishers to indicate titles that are suitable for adults who have difficulty reading, who are learning to read or are ‘newly literate’ having recently learned to read either in their native tongue or a new language.

5AZ – For people with learning / communication difficulties This allows you to flag works where the content is specifically adapted for, or written for, or aimed at people, regardless of age, with special or additional needs, who may have difficulty in accessing or reading the content of most books. This could include content specifically adapted for people with, for example, dyslexia and other learning disabilities, cognitive impairments or disorders, dementia or Alzheimer’s, visual impairments, etc..

5AR – For reluctant readers (children / teenagers) This qualifier allows a publisher to flag titles suitable for younger readers who find it difficult to read or are unwilling readers. These are usually books with a higher interest age and a lower reading age.

If you have a title that is suitable for reluctant readers (**5AR** in *Thema*) you should also be sending the ‘high-low’ mix of a higher interest age range and a lower reading age range. These age ranges should be sent in your metadata and in ONIX you would send it like this:

```
<!-- Higher interest age -->
<AudienceRange>
  <AudienceRangeQualifier>17</AudienceRangeQualifier> <!-- Interest age -->
  <AudienceRangePrecision>03</AudienceRangePrecision> <!-- from -->
  <AudienceRangeValue>12</AudienceRangeValue> <!-- 12 years old -->
  <AudienceRangePrecision>04</AudienceRangePrecision> <!-- to -->
  <AudienceRangeValue>14</AudienceRangeValue> <!-- 14 years old -->
</AudienceRange>
<!-- Lower reading age -->
<AudienceRange>
  <AudienceRangeQualifier>18</AudienceRangeQualifier> <!-- Reading age -->
  <AudienceRangePrecision>03</AudienceRangePrecision> <!-- from -->
  <AudienceRangeValue>10</AudienceRangeValue> <!-- 10 years old -->
  <AudienceRangePrecision>04</AudienceRangePrecision> <!-- to -->
  <AudienceRangeValue>11</AudienceRangeValue> <!-- 11 years old -->
</AudienceRange>
```

19. I publish a wide range of lifestyle books aimed at young people in their twenties. Can I flag these up using *Thema* or ONIX?

It depends whether your books are just *marketed* at this audience, or if this age group is the *subject* of the books.

If it’s a title being marketed mainly at this age group, then an ONIX audience code type 01 – General / trade (see question 12) should be included in your ONIX. You should also make use of the text field <AudienceDescription> to describe the intended audience in more detail. This allows you to give detail of the target market by using common terms and an age group. As an example:

```
<AudienceDescription textformat="05"><p>Particularly suitable for young or new adults from about 18 to 30 years old</p></AudienceDescription>
```

Also, you should make use of the options available in the <CollateralDetail> block in ONIX 3.0, ensuring your collateral appeals to this market. For example, a good promotional headline text, or other marketing text that makes clear the intended audience for this title is an important addition to the information you send. As an example:

```
<TextContent>
  <TextType>10</TextType>                                <!-- Promotional headline -->
  <ContentAudience>00</ContentAudience>                <!-- Unrestricted -->
  <Text>Inspirational journey to sample Europe's foodie hotspots</Text>
</TextContent>
<TextContent>
  <TextType>02</TextType>                                <!-- Short description -->
  <ContentAudience>00</ContentAudience>
  <Text>An inspiring, fast-paced account of a young woman's food, wine and selfie-
  fuelled trip to meet the innovators shaping Europe's newest street food
  trends.</Text>
</TextContent>
```

Using these fields gives data receivers relevant information so that they can appeal to your target customers, while not restricting themselves to *only* this market.

However, if the main *subject* of these books is this age group, then *Thema* has a set of qualifiers **5L*** – **Relating to the stages of life**. These qualifiers allow an indication that a key feature of a particular title is that the subject specifically relates to or is about a certain time of life. As an example, **5LKE – Relating to early adulthood** could be used with **WBD – Budget Cookery** for a book about cooking for students, or with **JBFD – Housing and homelessness** for a book that looks at the issues that young people face in finding their own homes.

Remember, **5L*** codes are not about *audience* – only about the *subject*, even if there is an overlap between the two notions as the subject will appeal to people who are in the subject generation.

If you have a book (aimed at adults) on cooking for toddlers, you would use **WBQ – Cookery for / with children** with **5LB – Relating to infancy**. If, however, you were publishing a first cookbook for children, you would use **YNPC – Children's / Teenage general interest: Cooking and food** with the most appropriate **5A*** interest / age qualifier. For a book about yoga specifically for seniors, **VFMG1 – Yoga for exercise** would be used with the qualifier **5LKS – Relating to late adulthood / old age**.

In the case of fiction codes, the **5L*** qualifiers are *not* the most appropriate, as they may be confused with potential audience instead of subject and should be used when the major theme or at least one of the major themes of the work is that generation. For example, a novel dealing with the lives and loves of a group of twenty-somethings (sometimes called 'new adults') and issues, topics or themes relating to this generation then using the qualifier **5LKE – Relating to early adulthood** with the relevant **F*** category would be appropriate.

20. I want to indicate which of my titles are suitable for Black History month

The key here is **5P*** – **Relating to specific groups and cultures or social and cultural interests**. These codes allow you to say a product has themes specifically relating to a particular group, and which therefore may be of special interest to that particular target audience. Of course, these qualifiers should only be used for books with a real and particular interest for, or which relate directly to the specific audience. For example, **5PBD –**

Relating to peoples of African descent could be used for a general work with wider appeal outside a specific county or **5PB-US-C – Relating to African American people**, could be used as a qualifier to indicate a work is about or of interest to African Americans, and would be a useful flag for Black History month, particularly in the US and Canada. If the title was more UK-based, then you could add the qualifier **5PB-GB-B – Relating to Black British people**. As another example, **5PB-US-C** could be used in combination with a Romance code **FR*** to indicate an African American romance, a popular genre in North America.

Adding these **5P*** qualifiers allows retailers and other data receivers to curate lists or create promotions around Black History month or to increase the discoverability of these titles to those who would be interested in buying them.

21. Can I use the *Thema* qualifiers to promote my titles for Mother’s Day and Father’s Day promotions?

Thema has a series of qualifiers under **5H – Holidays, events and seasonal interest**. These include the two you want, **5HCJ – Mother’s Day** and **5HCL – Father’s Day**. As with all subject and qualifier codes, this is about subject matter. If a title is genuinely about Father’s Day or Mother’s Day, then you would add the qualifier. The qualifier codes are not marketing codes that mean ‘might be suitable as a gift at whatever occasion is coming up on the calendar’ but should be seen as permanent characteristics of the title. They imply specific targeting, and that the book would be much less suitable for gifting at other times of the year. If you are running a promotion of titles that might be included in a bookshop promotion for general gifting, then you would send this to your retail partners separately. Retailers are the ones who should choose what they wish to promote – but it is useful for them to be able to search for those titles that *specifically* feature Mother’s or Father’s Day, and having the relevant qualifier associated with these titles will allow them to be found more easily. However, adding these qualifiers to ‘any title Dad might like to read’, or which ‘happens to feature a Mother as a character’, means any title that is *genuinely* about Mother’s Day or Father’s Day will simply become much harder to find.

22. I publish teenage and adult language learning material for the European market, and I need to indicate what language competency levels each title is designed for?

Along with the *Thema* codes **CJ* – Language teaching and learning** or **YPCK* – Educational: modern (non-native or second) languages**, you can specify CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Language Learning) levels in your ONIX file, which are essential bits of information for knowing what competency level a title is aimed at teaching when you expect it to be used to teach, or to be read by, non-native language learners.

```
<Audience>
  <AudienceCodeType>23</AudienceCodeType>           <!-- CEFR from List 29 -->
  <AudienceCodeValue>C2</AudienceCodeValue>          <!-- Suitable for C2 level -->
</Audience>
```

This can also be complemented with a specification of the targeted audience language, using `<AudienceCodeType> 27 – Intended audience language`. This would allow you to say, for example, a particular title is for learning English to C2 level but is only suitable for Greek-speaking learners.

```
<Audience>
  <AudienceCodeType>27</AudienceCodeType>           <!-- Intended audience language -->
  <AudienceCodeValue>gre</AudienceCodeValue>.       <!-- Modern Greek -->
</Audience>
```

23. Speaking of languages, I see *Thema* has Language Qualifiers. Should I use these to describe the language my book is written in ?

No.

Thema does have the Language Qualifiers **2***, but these are to allow you to say that a book is *about* a language. For example, a history of the French language written in Spanish could have these *Thema* codes: **CBX – Language: History and general works** plus the language qualifier **2ADF – French**. You would *not* send the *Thema* code **2ADS – Spanish**. However, in your ONIX message you should include:

```
<Language>
  <LanguageRole>01</LanguageRole>           <!-- Language of text -->
  <LanguageCode>esp</LanguageCode>         <!-- Spanish -->
</Language>
```

As another example, an audio method for learning Brazilian Portuguese aimed at French speakers – you would use these *Thema* codes: **CJBT – Language: Self Study** plus the language qualifier **2ADPB – Brazilian Portuguese**. In your ONIX you would send this:

```
<Language>
  <LanguageRole>01</LanguageRole>           <!-- Language of text -->
  <LanguageCode>fre</LanguageCode>         <!-- French -->
</Language>
```

24. My bookshops divide drama and poetry by the language they were originally written in. Can the *Thema* language qualifiers be used for this?

Once again, no. The language qualifier in *Thema* is only to indicate when the subject of the book is that language. If the book was a history of French language drama (*ie* the book is about plays written in French, not an actual playscript in French) then you would use a *Thema* language qualifier **2ADF – French**. Similarly, you would use language qualifiers for a book about teaching Chinese, or a Portuguese phrasebook, or a bilingual German / Spanish dictionary, or the linguistic features of Xhosa, or a history of American English usage, and so on.

As regards the language a book is written *in* – or translated from or read aloud or performed in – ONIX is where this information would be sent and found. In the ONIX <Language> composite, you can send the language the book is in, and the language from which the book was translated. For example, a version of Molière’s play *The Misanthrope* in English would have this in its ONIX:

```
<Language>
  <LanguageRole>01</LanguageRole>           <!-- Language of text -->
  <LanguageCode>eng</LanguageCode>         <!-- English -->
</Language>
<Language>
  <LanguageRole>02</LanguageRole>           <!-- Original language of a translation -->
  <LanguageCode>fre</LanguageCode>         <!-- French-->
</Language>
```

and would also have this to indicate the *Thema* subject codes

```
<Subject>
  <MainSubject/>
  <SubjectSchemeIdentifier>93</SubjectSchemeIdentifier> <!-- Thema subject -->
  <SubjectCode>DDA</SubjectCode>           <!-- Classic and pre-20th century plays -->
</Subject>
<Subject>
  <SubjectSchemeIdentifier>93</SubjectSchemeIdentifier> <!-- Thema subject -->
  <SubjectCode>DDL</SubjectCode>           <!-- Comedic plays -->
</Subject>
```

In the same way, you cannot use the place qualifiers in *Thema* to indicate, for example, a novel published in Peru or France. This information is found using other information in ONIX – perhaps the original language and also where the contributor is from (see question 29).

25. Do I need to send keywords in ONIX, as well as my *Thema* codes?

Yes. Subject classification schemes such as *Thema* should not be used *instead* of a list of keywords: the keywords are an important supplementary tool for discoverability. Controlled vocabularies like *Thema* can never be entirely comprehensive, and cannot generally contain people’s real names, fictional character names, detailed location names and many other search terms.

ONIX allows you to send keywords in the <Subject> composite as a semi-colon separated list. Here is what a possible *Thema* codes and keywords for a modern version of Homer’s *Odyssey* could be:

```
<Subject>
  <MainSubject/>
  <SubjectSchemeIdentifier>93</SubjectSchemeIdentifier>           <!-- Thema subject -->
  <SubjectCode>DBSG</SubjectCode>                                <!-- Ancient Greek and Roman literature
-->
</Subject>
<Subject>
  <SubjectSchemeIdentifier>93</SubjectSchemeIdentifier>           <!-- Thema subject -->
  <SubjectCode>FNM</SubjectCode>                                <!-- Myths and Legends -->
</Subject>
<Subject>
  <SubjectSchemeIdentifier>94</SubjectSchemeIdentifier> <!-- Thema place qualifier -->
  <SubjectCode>1DXG-GR-SF</SubjectCode>                        <!-- Ionian Islands -->
</Subject>
<Subject>
  <SubjectSchemeIdentifier>20</SubjectSchemeIdentifier>           <!-- Keywords -->
  <SubjectHeadingText>Odysseus; Telemachus; Penelope; Athena; Zeus;
    Poseidon; homecoming; wandering; voyage; loyalty; Ithaca;
    Peloponnese; Ulysses</SubjectHeadingText>
</Subject>
```

26. My titles have a lot of named characters who are well known and could feature in searches. Can I highlight this information in *Thema* or ONIX?

Thema doesn’t have codes for this, but in ONIX you can send a list of the characters that appear in a book, by treating them as a specialised type of keyword. This is especially useful in fiction, comic books, or children’s works where many named characters might appear in several different books, across a series or in different story arcs. Key character names and other keywords are listed in another instance of the <Subject> composite.

Ordinary keywords are listed in the <Subject> composite, with subject scheme identifier code **20 – Keywords**, as in Q.25 above. But code **B4 – Key character names** can be used for a specialised list of character names. If we use the *Odyssey* as an example again, a separate list of key characters could be sent like this:

```
<Subject>
  <SubjectSchemeIdentifier>B4</SubjectSchemeIdentifier>           <!-- Characters -->
  <SubjectHeadingText>Telemachus; Penelope; Athena; Zeus; Poseidon; Nestor;
    Menelaus; Helen; Proteus; Calypso; Hermes; Lotus-Eaters; Cyclops;
    Polyphemus; Circe; Sirens; Scylla; Charybdis; Helios;
    Philoetius</SubjectHeadingText>
```

```
</Subject>
```

In an ideal world, there would not be an overlap between the ‘ordinary’ keywords and the character names, but at present, the recommendation is to repeat the character names in both lists.

Note that Odysseus himself is missing from the list of characters. In ONIX 3.0, he could be listed in `<NameAsSubject>`. This is reserved for the most important one or two characters. `<NameAsSubject>` was previously limited to non-fiction, for example to identify the subject of a biography (see Question 27) but has been extended to fiction too.

27. My title is a historical biography. Is there anything I can add beyond *Thema* codes to make it clear who the book is about?

When a product is about, or substantially about, a real person or organisation, then this information should be sent using the `<NameAsSubject>` composite in ONIX. For example, you can use the Biography subject codes **DNB*** from *Thema*, along with other subject codes and qualifiers to enhance the detail, and in the ONIX file, send the name of the actual person (or persons). The `<NameAsSubject>` composite in ONIX also has the added advantage of allowing you to send a unique identifier along with the name, for example an ISNI, to help create links with other references to that same person.

```
<NameAsSubject>
  <NameIdentifier>
    <NameIDType>16</NameIDType>                                <!-- ISNI -->
    <IDValue>0000000121446237</IDValue>
  </NameIdentifier>
  <PersonNameInverted>Elizabeth I, Queen, of England</PersonNameInverted>
</NameAsSubject>
```

From ONIX version 3.0.4, this `<NameAsSubject>` composite can also be used to send names of *fictional* characters. In contrast to the use of keywords for character names above, `<NameAsSubject>` should be reserved for only the most important one or two character names:

```
<NameAsSubject>
  <NameIdentifier>
    <NameIDType>16</NameIDType>                                <!-- ISNI -->
    <IDValue>0000000418953969</IDValue>
  </NameIdentifier>
  <PersonName>Sherlock Holmes</PersonName>
</NameAsSubject>
```

28. My books feature characters that are linked to a well-known branded children’s toy. Can I express this in *Thema*?

In *Thema* there are categories such as **YNVD3 – Children’s / Teenage general interest: Building bricks, blocks and construction toys** or **YNVD1 – Children’s / Teenage general interest: Dolls, figures and similar toys**, either of which would typically be used along with another **Y*** category to indicate it was a story or a non-fiction / general interest title that is about or features these types of toys. For example, *Thema* allows for the grouping of similar children’s titles that feature colourful interlocking plastic bricks or a well-known branded doll. *Thema* doesn’t express the brand names themselves, but ONIX allows you to send this information.

In ONIX you could use keywords, but a better option may be to include a Master Brand. If the brand name is an integral part of the title, then you can send it in the <Title> composite, and if not, you could send it as part of the <Collection> composite. Here's a partial example for a title associated with a toy brand and film:

```
<Collection>
  <CollectionType>10</CollectionType>
  <TitleDetail>
    <TitleType>01</TitleType>                                <!-- Distinctive title -->
    <TitleElement>
      <TitleElementLevel>05</TitleElementLevel>             <!-- Master Brand -->
      <NoPrefix/>
      <TitleWithoutPrefix textcase="02">LEGO@</TitleWithoutPrefix>
    </TitleElement>
    <TitleElement>
      <TitleElementLevel>02</TitleElementLevel>             <!-- Collection -->
      <NoPrefix/>
      <TitleWithoutPrefix textcase="02">Superheroes II</TitleWithoutPrefix>
    </TitleElement>
  </TitleDetail>
</Collection>
```

29. What about location? Should I use *Thema* or ONIX to indicate a book is of local interest?

Thema has Place Qualifiers **1*** to specify where a story takes place or where the book is about. Using the most relevant place qualifier would allow a retailer or librarian to create a local interest section across a broad selection of subjects, or for a consumer to find a book about a particular travel destination in an online store. So, if the action of the novel takes place in Toronto, Canada, you could include the *Thema* place qualifier **1KBC-CA-OSM – Southwestern Ontario: Greater Toronto Area**. A Toronto based bookseller could find this title and add it to a local interest section. Also, as the stem of this code is **1KBC – Canada** the title could be featured in a section of Canadian interest.

Similarly, if the book was a tourist guide to the city of São Paulo, you would include the place qualifier **1KLSB-BR-DD – São Paulo**. A book about trekking in the Aconcagua and Southern Andes you would include both **1KLSA-AR-CAM – Aconcagua** and **1KLZTA – Andes mountains**. **1KLSA** lets us know this is part of Argentina.

In ONIX, there is also an option to add key place names as keywords. This could be useful for a book that is set in a fictional place: Middle Earth, Neverland, Camelot, Atlantis or the Emerald City for example. Maybe the plot features the Louvre Museum or the Tower of London, or the table of contents of your guidebook does not mention all the areas covered. It is sent in the same way as the key character names in question 26 but using the code B5 instead of B4.

```
<SubjectSchemeIdentifier>B5</SubjectSchemeIdentifier>        <!-- Key place names -->
```

You can also give information about where *contributors* are from in ONIX, using the <ContributorPlace> composite. Using ONIX [code list 151](#) to state the relationship between contributor and place, one can give details of country, region or specific towns and cities. Local authors are often a vital part of any local interest promotion. If the author was Canadian, born in Windsor, Ontario, you could send the information in your ONIX like this:

```
<ContributorPlace>
  <ContributorPlaceRelator>08</ContributorPlaceRelator>     <!-- Citizen of -->
  <CountryCode>CA</CountryCode>
</ContributorPlace>
<ContributorPlace>
```

```

<ContributorPlaceRelator>01</ContributorPlaceRelator>      <!-- Born in -->
<RegionCode>CA-ON</RegionCode>
<LocationName>Windsor</LocationName>
</ContributorPlace>

```

30. For libraries, is *Thema* going to replace Dewey or UDC?

Thema is not intended to replace library classification schemes, and indeed these can be sent alongside *Thema* codes and other subject schemes in an ONIX file. *Thema* is the subject category scheme for the global book trade and cannot take the same detailed approach as scheme that is intended for academic libraries. However *Thema* could be useful for smaller public libraries who tend to create sections more like those of a general bookshop, or to library suppliers when they receive the initial ONIX record from a publisher, to help them add the right library classification. As an example, here are the library classifications for a book of Australian agricultural statistics (20th century) sent in ONIX 3.0 alongside the *Thema* codes:

```

<Subject>
  <SubjectSchemeIdentifier>93</SubjectSchemeIdentifier>      <!-- Thema -->
  <SubjectCode>KNAC</SubjectCode>                          <!-- Agriculture, -->
</Subject>
  <!-- agribusiness and food production industries -->
<Subject>
  <SubjectSchemeIdentifier>93</SubjectSchemeIdentifier>      <!-- Thema -->
  <SubjectCode>KCH</SubjectCode>                          <!-- Econometrics -->
</Subject>
  <!-- and economic statistics -->
<Subject>
  <SubjectSchemeIdentifier>94</SubjectSchemeIdentifier>      <!-- Thema qualifier -->
  <SubjectCode>1MBFSubjectCode>                          <!-- Australia -->
</Subject>
<Subject>
  <SubjectSchemeIdentifier>96</SubjectSchemeIdentifier>      <!-- Thema qualifier -->
  <SubjectCode>3MP</SubjectCode>                          <!-- 20th Century -->
</Subject>
<Subject>
  <SubjectSchemeIdentifier>09</SubjectSchemeIdentifier>      <!-- UDC -->
  <SubjectSchemeVersion>11</SubjectSchemeVersion>
  <SubjectCode>63:31(94)"19"</SubjectCode>
</Subject>
<Subject>
  <SubjectSchemeIdentifier>01</SubjectSchemeIdentifier>      <!-- Dewey -->
  <SubjectSchemeVersion>23</SubjectSchemeVersion>
  <SubjectCode>338.10973</SubjectCode>
</Subject>
<Subject>
  <SubjectSchemeIdentifier>03</SubjectSchemeIdentifier>      <!-- LC class -->
  <SubjectCode>HD1751.A7</SubjectCode>
</Subject>
<Subject>
  <MainSubject/>
  <SubjectSchemeIdentifier>04</SubjectSchemeIdentifier>      <!-- LC Subject -->
  <SubjectCode>sh2007100879</SubjectCode>
  <SubjectHeadingText>Agriculture--Economic aspects--Australia</SubjectHeadingText>
</Subject>
<Subject>
  <SubjectSchemeIdentifier>04</SubjectSchemeIdentifier>      <!-- LC Subject -->
  <SubjectCode>sh85047239</SubjectCode>
  <SubjectHeadingText>Farm produce</SubjectHeadingText>
</Subject>

```

31. All this is great, but there's no code for my favourite sport of underwater hockey, or for keeping echidnas as pets, or for technical books about artificial limb design, and I'd like to see more granularity in the area of comic books. How does *Thema* add new codes for the future?

Well, there *is* a code for artificial limb design, **MQWP – Prosthetics** and you could combine that with **TTW – Assistive technology**.

However, the question of future development of the scheme is critical to *Thema's* success. EDItEUR develops and manages the scheme with help from an International Steering Committee. The committee comprises representatives from *Thema* user groups in many countries. These National Groups are effectively the stakeholders that use *Thema* as part of their business, and it's the national groups that have done the work to translate the scheme into many languages. When anyone has new business requirements or suggestions for new categories, those can be put to the national groups, or direct to EDItEUR. Suggestions are considered by a technical working group chartered by the International Steering Committee, and all changes to the scheme that are recommended by a working group have to be approved by the full International Steering Committee. It's a collaborative and inclusive model that aims to ensure *Thema* remains focused, commercially effective and internationally-relevant. Throughout, EDItEUR provides a level of technical management to ensure new codes are added in a planned and well-structured way.

Most or all national groups are facilitated by an EDItEUR member organisation but taking part in a national group does not itself require EDItEUR membership. However, it's membership fees that allow EDItEUR to manage and support the standard while at the same time making it free of charge for all to use.

If you have any other questions, then you could sign up to the *Thema* implementors mailing list where you can ask questions about, make suggestions for and receive updates on *Thema*. Join via <http://www.editeur.org/153/Maintenance-and-Support/#mailingList>.

Chris Saynor and Graham Bell, EDItEUR
Howard Willows (former chair Thema ISC)
23rd April 2020