Themea International Steering Committee Minutes

Wednesday 11th March 2020, 10:30–12:30,
Virtual meeting

Attendees

Luc Audrain (LA) - Hachette Livre
Graham Bell (GB) - EDItEUR
Maria Börman (MB) - Bokinfo
Virginie Bouilhac -VB (Kobo)
Susan Breeuwsma (SB) – CB Netherlands
Francesca Cacciapaglia (FC) - Informazioni Editoriali
Fride Fosseng (FF) -Bokbasen
Juana Maria Ruiz Martinez (JM) -Amazon EU - observer
Inari Haapaniemi (IH) -Kirjavälitys
Brain O’Leary (BOL) - BISG
Naoki Onodera (JPIO)
Jesús Peraita (JP) -FGEE / DILVE - chair
Chister Perslöv (CP) - Bokinfo
Simonetta Pillon (SP) - Informazioni Editoriali
Vincent Poulvélaire (VP) -Dilicom
Marie Bilde Rasmussen (MBR) -Pruneau
Tom Richardson( TR) - BookNet Canada

Johanna Roden (JR) - Bokinfo
Suzanne Rozario (SR) - EDItEUR
Sophie Salmon (SS) - CLIL
Chris Saynor (CS) EDItEUR
Bibi Setayesh (BS) -MVB
Tobias Streitferdt (TS) - Holtzbrinck Buchverlage
Abhijit Tiwari (AT) – Nielsen India
Howard Willows (HW) - Nielsen
Jon Windus (JW) – Nielsen

Key Decisions taken:

1. Welcome and introductions [Chair]
   FC opened the meeting, welcomed everyone on the call and announced that she would be stepping down as chair as she was going on maternity leave. There will be an interim chair who will take over the role for at least the next two TISC meetings. FC asked GB to take over control of the meeting because of connection problems. It was proposed that Tobias Streitferdt take over as interim chair. This was agreed unanimously. TS took over chairing meeting (because of ongoing connectivity issues for FC).

2. Minutes of last meeting held 19th October 2019, and matters arising [Chair]
   The minutes of the meeting held at the Frankfurt Book Fair 2019 were presented. There were no comments, and the minutes were approved.

3. Updates from Thema national groups

   France: VP reported no update on use in France. They would be updating the mapping from CLIL codes to Thema after the publication of version 1.4.

   Italy: FC reported that they have been working to improve documents and that the switch to version 1.4 should be fairly straightforward. SP said that as nearly all the records now have Thema categories, it is now part of the standard offer to third parties. There is no one taking yet, but they are working with Amazon, who prefer Thema. They are combining Thema with encouraging greater
use of ONIX 3.0 in Italy. GB reminded the group that Amazon had already said that Thema is the preferred category scheme outside North America. He also reminded the group of the announcement that Amazon would no longer be accepting ONIX 2.1 files for physical books after December 2020. They will only be accepting ONIX 3.0.

Amazon EU: JM said Amazon Europe was fully committed to Thema. The browse tree team create the necessary mappings from Thema to their own categories. Once the new version has been published, they will review their existing mappings.

Spain: JP reported that last year he had said 2019 would be the ‘year of Thema’ in Spain and over the year a lot of users have switched to using Thema. There is a combination of ‘mapped’ and natively assigned Thema codes in the Spanish metadata supply chain and this has been accepted well. Now about 40% of titles have natively assigned Thema categories. The Spanish ISBN agency will be requiring natively assigned Thema codes on new submissions from next month. JP also thanked the members of the version 1.4 working group for their extraordinary work, having been part of this group he realised how detailed and important the work was. Seeing this process helps realise how strong Thema is.

Germany: TS the German language group has representatives from Germany, Switzerland and Austria and they have proposed about 150 new place qualifiers for version 1.4 for the three countries. This was a very big project in 2019. The goal for 2020 is to have a fully updated German translation ready for Frankfurt 2020. They also intend to create German implementation documents to go with v1.4 to help users. They are going to try and produce guidelines for the German market, and they will be happy to share this with other groups. They are also going to add more hidden search terms or ‘synonyms’ for the German language and this will include variations in the German language for Swiss German or for Austrian usage, or for regional dialects. TS also asked if there could be clearer guidelines for suggesting new national extensions particularly for place qualifiers to help national groups prior to submission of new codes.

Norway: FF said it was business as usual. Bokbasen is working very closely with retailers who are using Thema on their own websites. They have a version of the headings for retailers that will be added to the publicly available spreadsheet of the Norwegian translation. They are working on the wordings of the translation for the next version and also looking at a version in the second written version of Norwegian, so that there will be a Bokmal and a Nynorsk version. These would be different versions on the browser. It is an obligation to have both.

Sweden: JR reported it was business as usual. The Swedish national group was happy with the proposals for version 1.4. they are working closely with Swedish publishers.

Finland: IH the Finnish translation was published in December 2019 and once v1.4 has been ratified, they will work on updating the translation. Nearly all the titles available in their database now have Thema codes so this should help adoption by retailers. There is more usage for online retailers for eBooks and audio of Thema, but some booksellers are using it but there is still more work to do on physical books.

Denmark: MBR there is still far more adoption for eBooks than physical books. There is need for more training, especially around the use of codes in combination.

Canada: TR reported little movement on retailer adoption. He hopes the move to ONIX 3.0 will allow for more raising of awareness of Thema in the Canadian market.

USA: BOL reported that the BISAC to Thema mapping will be updated once v1.4 is published.
Japan: NO reported that a lot of work has been done on the translation of Thema in Japanese. There are some very different concepts in Japan, culturally and linguistically but working on the translation and with the working group, most of the specific needs of the Japanese market have been addressed. There has been a lot of work done on mapping from the pre-existing Japanese schemes to Thema, which has allowed them to contribute to the working group.

India: AT reported that Thema had been introduced into India last year, especially with the new national qualifiers for the Test Preparation market. Nielsen India has been introducing stakeholders in India, publishers, booksellers or online retailers and it has been well received and publishers are starting to use it. They are inviting key stakeholders to form a national interest group for India.

UK: HW reported that the situation was similar to that reported at Frankfurt. There is a need to raise awareness of Thema amongst UK booksellers and they are working with the Booksellers Association to do this. He also endorsed what had already been said about the working group and its members. Also reported that the new BIC data Accreditation scheme makes Thema mandatory and that goes live this month. At Nielsen Thema is now included in all data. Once v1.4 validated, HW will work on updating mappings.

Netherlands: SB reported that about 45% of books (about 90,000 titles) now had Thema codes. The biggest online retailer (BOL) is still the main user, but Amazon has just launched in the Netherlands and this may increase awareness. They will implement v1.4 soon after the publication. There is a lot of interest in using Thema for audiobooks and podcasts.

Kobo: VB said Kobo are still exploring and experimenting how to start implementing Thema. No estimated date yet, but VB has been part of the v1.4 WG and this is been very useful to help understand better how they could use it.

CS – mentioned two updates on behalf of people who were unable to attend:
- Czechia: VK sent apologies, they have joined the Czech Booksellers and Publishers Association and are pushing standards (Thema and ONIX) and are working with a group of Academic publishers as well.
- Flemish, Belgium: Apology from SP, reported that more of the larger publishers have started adding Thema codes to their data, alongside old NUR codes. They have started working with Educational Publishers for a proposal for Educational Qualifiers for the Flanders region of Belgium.


CS – thanked the members of the working group, Lisbeth Håkansson Petré of Bokinfo Sweden, Howard Willows of Nielsen UK, Martin Lüning of MVB Germany, Jesus Peraita of DILVE, Spain, Naoki Onodera of JPOI Japan, Virginie Bouilhac of Rakuten Kobo and Isabel Gouveia, formerly of Amazon for all their hard work and the time they put in to the v1.4 proposals. He reported that there were about 1400 proposals, mostly modifications but also new categories. There are about 140 new proposed core subject codes. Most of the updates to version 1.4 are modifications, and these revisions come from questions that have been asked about the use of particular Thema categories or where to classify a particular title, or from remarks or feedback about comprehension of words in English, especially from groups that have translated Thema. All the proposed modifications are intended to help users of Thema by improving the explanations and guidance associated with a category.

CS – asked the group to consider a few particular categories to get feedback on the wording.
He presented the new categories under the code 5PM - Relating to people with visible or hidden disabilities, impairments, or conditions and asked for feedback about the wording in English and the choice of subcategories. VP asked about people who had speech impediments or could not talk at all. CS replied he had looked at this area in regard to books publications and this seem to be something often included either with those with hearing impairments or with persons with learning difficulties. For the moment it was probably best not to add a specific code and wait to see what is needed and add this to a future version.

CS next asked the group to consider the wording to the existing category 5AZ - For people with learning/communication difficulties as this is about content that is specifically adapted or created for people who may have difficulty accessing certain content and whether the heading should mention – Persons with print disabilities. This was not supposed to be the same code as list 196 in ONIX which deals with accessibility in digital products but specifically about content that is purposefully written for people with special needs. Several people thought that a change in wording might be confusing and it was best to remain with the actual wording.

CS also presented new categories in the 5PB section. 5PBA -Relating to indigenous peoples, 5PB -Relating to peoples of African descent, 5PBH -Relating to peoples of Middle Eastern descent or Asian descent. These three have been added because of various questions and requests for codes in different areas. CS explained it was felt that these qualifier codes would be more flexible as they can be used with any subject code and with other qualifiers, like Places. TS asked about other groupings, such as people of Middle Eastern descent or Asian descent. CS said that the addition of 5PBD was based on demand for new codes linked to publications in different areas of African heritage, culture, diaspora or areas called black studies, black theology etc. It was felt this could be used for these areas and that if there are other groups that have a lot of publications then these could be considered for future additions.

CS – then presented the group new categories in the 5HC section – Holidays and celebrations. There are new categories here to cover various types of celebrations that are similar in different countries and where there are markets with a lot of associated publications. As an example, CS showed the new codes 5HBC – Days of commemoration and 5HCD – Independence Days, which could be used with a place qualifier to distinguish specific national events. He also pointed out new categories such as 5HC -International Women’s Day and 5HCD - World Book Day. CS also pointed out that the new categories in this as well as the new Norwegian place qualifiers, meant a limited number of Qualifier codes had effectively been “reparented”, meaning the code remains the same, but the new category is inserted between two existing categories in the hierarchy. As an example, 5HC-US-A - US Independence Day, was a sub-category of 5HC – Holidays and celebrations, but the new category code 5HCD – Independence Days is now its new parent. It has effectively moved down one level. JW asked if the new parent code meant that effectively if you looked for everything with the 5HCD – Independence days code, you would not find 5HC-US-A as it did not have the 5HCD stem. GB confirmed this would be the case and was the downside of reparenting. GB said it is effectively only used for qualifiers and very rarely, to allow for greater ease of finding categories for people assigning Thema codes. GB also reminded the group that the spreadsheet has a specific column for Parent codes. They are also specifically identified as changes in the spreadsheet.

CS – then moved to ask for feedback about a proposed new category YFZB – that was provisionally labelled Children’s / Teenage: Illustrated Fiction. This is a new requested category for books aimed at children transitioning form picture books to novels. It seems to have different names in different cultures. They are texts that are often half image and half text. They may be called “read aloud books” “ or “first readers” or “ Chapter books” in North America. CS said there was concern that this header could be misinterpreted and used for any title that had illustrations and would therefore not be a useful new category. SB asked if this would include books by authors like Jeff Kinney and when CS confirmed this, SB said there was a definite need in their market for a way of identifying these titles. Others agreed that the idea of the category was good, but the wording of the heading was not clear enough and that part of this was potential audience, which is described in ONIX as well as content which is described in Thema. It was felt that more thought was needed about wording and that the words “Illustrated Fiction” should be avoided. JW suggested a new heading of something like “heavily illustrated storybooks”. It was also commented that there are books in this category that are non-fiction, so maybe it should be included elsewhere in the hierarchy, perhaps as a Qualifier. It
was agreed that CS would review this code and only put it forward if better terminology or placement could be found.

The final category for review was YBC – Picture Books and YBCS – Picture Storybooks. This is linked to the discussion on YFZB and this was about making the notes clearer. CS explained that while in most places Thema voids using ‘format’ words in headings, the notion of ‘Picture book’ is now seen as a way of describing content as well as format, and that effectively ‘Picture book’ can be applied to any format, including eBooks or audio books. One comment suggested avoiding using the word ‘fiction’ in the note for YBCS and just use story as the division between fiction and non-fiction is not always clear in this area, as many non-fiction topics might be presented via a story. CS also pointed out the new column on the master spreadsheet with notes for translators, where extra explanations could be added to help explain certain terms in English for translators.

The final category that CS presented was WBXN12 - Tea Ceremony, which was a late request from the Japanese group, but CS said they had presented ample evidence of the number of books both in their own market and also in other markets and asked if there were any objections to adding this new category. There were none.

CS then asked TS to move a motion for approval of version 1.4 subject to the modifications of the codes YFZB as discussed. TS proposed the ratification of v 1.4 and this was approved unanimously.

CS then gave an outline of the timetable, v1.4 would be published by the end of April, once all the documentation had been updated and a final check through for errors. At the same time that the new version is published, all the groups that had a translated version would receive an updated translation template with all the existing translations and the updated v1.4 English headings and notes. After this CS would be working on new documentation for Thema on specific areas, like Law, Medicine, Children’s Education or Fiction. After that the next version will be v1.5 and if there are enough proposals this would be published after Frankfurt 2021. CS asked those present to think if there was a better way to collect suggestions for modifications or new categories. He asked if the Thema.io mailing list would be a good way to have more open discussions, to reduce the work that any future working group needed to consider. GB suggested that it might be a good idea to create a sub-group of Thema.io specifically for discussions within the wider membership of the TISC. He would be looking at this in the near future.

5. **Any Other Business** TS – said that time was running out and asked if there was any other urgent business which could not wait until Frankfurt. There was none.

6. **Next Meeting** TS said the next meeting would be held on Wednesday 14th October 2020 at the Frankfurt Book Fair – time and venue to be confirmed.