

# Executive Director's Report

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*Report to members– Frankfurt Book Fair 2015*

## 1 Overview and highlights

The first half of my second year as Executive director has gone smoothly for the most part, but with some specific and stressful challenges. Over the period since the London Fair:

- We have welcomed three new EDItEUR members (including our first member in Ireland, and the financial position of EDItEUR is stable. Prospects for further new members remains good. However, mergers and acquisitions activity among members and prospective members may make membership recruitment more difficult in future years;
- EDItEUR's International ISBN Agency management agreement has been extended for a further three years, and EDItEUR is recruiting a new administrator in order to increase our resources;
- The International Supply Chain Seminar has been re-launched as an independent event, with the generous help of sponsors and with the support of the Buchmesse;
- The schedule of industry events, training and presentations has been maintained;
- Key ONIX for Books activities have included preparations for an update of ONIX 3.0, and further ONIX 2.1 to 3.0 transition seminars and webcasts.
- There have been a small number of queries about support that was removed as part of the sunset of ONIX 2.1, but overall, sunset has caused fewer issues than expected, both for EDItEUR and across the industry. Twilight support for codelists that are unique to 2.1 has continued, but is planned to come to an end in three months;
- Online metadata training material prepared by Alex Ingram has been licensed to IPG (UK), and is now available for licensing to other (non-UK) organisations;
- Key *Thema* activity has included receipt of new translations (more are expected within a couple of months), the first post-1.1 additions of new national Extensions, improvements to the online *Thema* browser, and early preparations for version 1.2. Momentum has been maintained, and Amazon has begun to point to *Thema* as an important standard for the near-future;
- ICEDIS activities have continued, with the focus of work by Tim Devenport being the addition of data elements to ONIX-PC to support description of Open Access journals. Adoption of ONIX-PC grows very slowly;
- Work on the FORWARD project – which aims to build a diligent search infrastructure for orphan audiovisual works – has continued, acting as a subcontractor to Cineca;
- The BISG schema.org working group has progressed satisfactorily.

## 2 Membership

Since the London Book Fair, EDItEUR has signed up three new members (the ISSN International Centre, Deanta – an Ireland-based publishing services group – and well-established publishing systems vendor BookSonix). There have sadly also been a couple of

members which have not been able to renew, and a small number of very late payers, but the membership is remarkably loyal – particularly so when compared to other similar membership organisations.

Our new International membership tier so far has only one member – Hachette Livre – and I will be encouraging those large organisations that make use of EDItEUR standards across multiple businesses and multiple countries to consider this option for 2016. And my hope that a small number of our largest members do take this option means that I am not proposing any increase in the membership fees for 2016.

### 3 Board news

As agreed at the last meeting of the Board during the London Book Fair, newly-elected deputy chair Jesús Peraita – the representative from the Spanish Publishers Association FGEE – has now taken on the role of Chair of the Board, following the departure of Len Vlahos from BISG (who kindly filled the role of chair for a few months).

At the forthcoming meeting, the Board must elect a new deputy chair, who in the normal course of events would be appointed chair in 2017. Tom West will remain as treasurer until the end of his term in 2016.

Over recent years, our standards have become used much more in the Asia-Pacific region, and I am actively seeking Board representation from that part of the world. This would be a significant broadening of the Board membership, and would help illustrate EDItEUR's role as an organisation that represents and works for the benefit of the global publishing business.

## 4 Standards development

### 4.1 ONIX for Books

Laurent Dervieu of Electre chaired the ONIX International Steering Committee at the London Fair in April, and will chair the Frankfurt meeting immediately before the meeting of the members. The main topic of the London meeting was certainly the reaction to sunset, and the upcoming 3.0.3 update of the standard will be the major concern of the Frankfurt meeting.

The sunset of ONIX 2.1 has continued to raise fewer issues than were expected – good communication and advance preparation by EDItEUR has meant few issues raised have required more than dispatch of existing documents or XML tools. The load on the EDItEUR website has decreased as expected (though there are still tens of thousands of attempts to download the old 2.1 XML files each month).

The 3.0.3 update discussion centres around a list of around 20 potential additions to the standard (all optional, so there are no compatibility issues). The steering committee has been asked to consider which should be added, based on the balance between the value they deliver in terms of increased discoverability, valuable trading information *etc*, and the difficulty of implementation and the likelihood of wide use. This update is scheduled for publication in January 2016.

The ONIX International Steering Committee comprises representatives of the various ONIX national groups around the world. EDItEUR members also have a direct voice in the development direction of the standard (and with *Thema* and our other standard too), and should raise suggestions or new business requirements direct with EDItEUR. And full (albeit draft) minutes of the steering committee's discussion are always made available in the EDItEUR website within a month of the committee's meetings.

## 4.2 Thema

Howard Willows of Nielsen Book has chaired every meeting of the *Thema* International Steering Committee so far (as well as several key meetings during the development phase prior to establishment of the committee).

*Thema* work over the past few months has been centred on promotion, and early preparation for an upcoming version 1.2. The timetable for development of the new version will be set at the Frankfurt meeting of the Steering Committee prior to the members meeting – and is most likely option is to aim for release around London Book Fair 2016. This update is being managed by Alex Ingram.

Adoption in Germany and Scandinavia during 2014 has been followed more slowly in other countries, but Bowker reports some 40K titles in its database have *Thema* codes and Nielsen supports *Thema* in its data sales. The new Greek books-in-print system uses *Thema*, and progress is being made elsewhere too. Amazon has encouraged the UK metadata certification scheme (BIC's Product Data Excellence Award) make adoption of *Thema* a requirement. There is private encouragement from other global e-book vendors. For such a young standard – launched at Frankfurt only two years ago – progress has been very encouraging.

The online *Thema* browser – an important resource for those adding *Thema* subject codes to their books – is now available in eight languages (plus partial or demo translations in Russian, Italian, Japanese). Further Turkish, Greek and Chinese translations are expected before the end of the year. The search facilities of the browser have been improved, particularly for languages other than English, and further upgrades are 'in the works'.

The first 'reverse mapping', from *Thema* to BIC, has been completed (by Howard Willows) and will be announced at the International Supply Chain Seminar prior to the Book Fair. This will enable *Thema* adopters to use *Thema* exclusively, yet still provide BIC codes automatically, where they are required for legacy purposes.

## 4.3 ICEDIS and ONIX for subscription products

The ICEDIS committee – EDItEUR's special interest group for the serials supply chain – will hold its meeting two days before the Fair as usual. This meeting will be the last co-chaired by Dan Heffernan of Advantage, who has served the committee for three years, and will seek to elect a new co-chair for the ICEDIS committee. A meeting of ICEDIS is also planned for the Charleston Conference next month – a key event for North American serials and library community.

ICEDIS work over the past period has been dominated by work to add information about open access to journal metadata. This has led to development of a new version 1.2 of ONIX-

PC, the primary XML message for communicating product catalogue and subscription pricing information. The new version, and its accompanying draft documentation and codelists (Issue 8) have been posted to the EDItEUR website this month. It covers licensing details (for the journal as a whole), repository arrangements and embargos (gold vs green OA), hybrid OA and APCs (article processing charges).

The focus of Tim Devenport's ICEDIS work will now move to encouraging pilot implementations of these extensions to ONIX-PC in time for the 2016 renewals season.

#### 4.4 ONIX-PL

There has been a very limited amount of work on ONIX-PL, EDItEUR's specialised XML licence expression format, over the past period. David Martin has kept documentation, sample licence expressions *etc* up to date. An update to the ONIX-PL dictionary (Issue 6) was released in June.

Reports over the past few months have revealed a significant gap of understanding about ONIX-PL, which arises from a confusion between the *policies* of a particular journal, and the *actual licenses* they conclude with their authors and subscribers. The former could potentially be described as a part of the journal metadata (for example in ONIX-PC) and the latter much more granular licence information at a per-article level could be encoded using ONIX-PL. However, ONIX-PL cannot describe policies, and the two are complementary.

#### 4.5 ONIX for RROs

An update of the dictionary for ONIX for RROs (issue 3e) was released in June.

#### 4.6 EDItX

A presentation on the use of EDItX Sales Reporting delivered at the London Book Fair has spiked a noticeable increase in interest in EDItX sales reporting. Another contributing factor may be the reduction in the rate of growth of the e-book market, causing publishers and retailers to focus once again on the *efficiency* of the supply chain rather than simply assuming growth will lead to profitability. Inventory reporting has also been raised as a common issue for e-books (obviously, this is not 'how many copies does the retailer hold', but reporting on which e-books are actively on sale, and which are blocked because either metadata or master files are missing or blocked on QA grounds).

A small update to the EDItX Sales Reporting message, an equivalent minor change in the EDItX Inventory Reporting message, and a significant improvement in the documentation for both is planned for the next six months.

## 5 Identifier Agencies and other standards activity

### 5.1 International ISBN Agency

A new three-year management contract was agreed with the Board of the International ISBN Agency, and the last few months have seen operations transitioning to the new arrangement.

It has been a busy period for the staff of the agency, with the ISO/TC46 plenary meeting in Beijing in June and the Annual General Meeting – with attendees from the national ISBN

agencies – in Indonesia in September. Work on revision of the ISO standard and the associated user manual has continued, and of course the Executive Director of the International ISBN Agency Stella Griffiths is the current chair of ISO TC46/SC9 (the ISO subcommittee that covers ISBN, ISSN, ISTC, ISMN, ISRC, DOI).

## 5.2 International ISNI Agency

EDItEUR provides a limited secretariat service to the International ISNI Agency. The service agreement was renewed in July for a further 12 months.

There are now 9m ISNIs allocated, three registration agencies (two of which are also EDItEUR members) and 17 members (five of which are also EDItEUR members). The ISNI board has spend much of the past period agreeing revisions to the membership agreements and contracts, but it is now in position to promote its standard and attract new members.

## 5.3 International ISTC Agency

EDItEUR provides a limited secretariat service to the International ISTC Agency. There remains significant uncertainty about the future viability of the ISTC standard and of the Agency itself, but the current service agreement was renewed and will be reviewed on a six-monthly basis.

## 5.4 Linked Content Coalition

EDItEUR provides a limited secretariat service to the Linked Content Coalition (currently on a *pro bono* basis). Membership of the LCC has stabilised at 15 members, and it is critical that the LCC delivers some value to its members this year. If it does so, then membership growth, and maintenance of its standards (primarily the Common Rights Format, a highly generalised XML rights description that's used by *inter alia* the UK Copyright Hub) are relatively secure.

## 5.5 World Wide Web Consortium / Schema.org

Over the past period, the W3C Digital Publishing Interest Group has continued its activities. But the W3C appears to have scaled back its attempts to recruit publishers as W3C members, as its fee structure is considered unaffordable for publishers and others in the book and journals business. It remains important for EDItEUR to retain strong – if informal – links with the Consortium.

## 5.6 International Digital Publishers Forum

Graham Bell was elected to serve on the Board for the IDPF in January, and has maintained the strong links between EDItEUR and IDPF – there are key members in common, and a common global approach to standards. The major IDPF activities over the last few months have been the creation of the French Government-sponsored European Digital Reading Lab (EDRL) in Paris as the European HQ for IDPF and Radium, and the IDPF annual conference at BEA.

# 6 Other project activity

## 6.1 FORWARD

Subcontract work on FORWARD – the EU-funded ARROW-like project dealing with identification of rightsholders and orphan works in the film sector – has continued at a

speedier pace after clarification of requirements at a plenary in January. In August, EDItEUR delivered an XML schema and documentation for use within the project, and some project partners have already delivered data using the new schema.

## 6.2 International Supply Chain Seminar

With the encouragement of the Board and members, informal surveying of key EDItEUR supporters, and offers of venues at reasonable cost at members' offices in Frankfurt, initial planning was begun for an independent conference at a third-party venue, as replacement for the Supply Chain track at last year's CONTEC conference. However, a renewed approach in late May from Frankfurter Buchmesse – and a reassessment by the Fair of whether the EDItEUR event would be competitive – led to an offer of an affordable venue within the Book Fair. This was clearly a preferable option, and planning was re-set for an event within the Fair grounds.

A formal survey of EDItEUR members in June showed three key findings – that there was an appetite for an independent and focussed Supply Chain event, that a half-day event prior to opening of the Fair was best, and that most people *really* dislike panel sessions at conferences. Critically for potential attendees, a simpler half-day event makes it possible to arrive in Frankfurt 'on the day' from almost anywhere in Europe, and yet still deliver 80% of the content of a typical full-day event.

Organisation of the Seminar has been a huge challenge over the last three months, but has benefited from great goodwill from EDItEUR members and from the Buchmesse, and I am pleased with the results from (effectively) a standing start at the beginning of July (on the other hand, I am painfully aware that I write this a week before it takes place...). Since it is effectively a 'relaunch', the agenda appeals directly to the core EDItEUR community, rather than reaching out into adjacent areas – if the event is successful, that extension could follow next year. I feel the programme is a strong one: keynotes will be delivered by Jonathan Nowell of Nielsen – a long-term supporter of EDItEUR – and Andrew Weinstein of Scribd.

At the time of writing, I expect some 75 attendees. The seminar has four sponsors – my thanks go to Bowker, Klopotek, Onixsuite and Publishing Technology for their confidence and support – from the EDItEUR membership. I am also grateful to the International ISBN Agency for sponsoring a reception for the seminar attendees at the end of the day, to celebrate 50 years of standard book numbering – a milestone for the industry.

Graham Bell  
7 October 2015