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ICABS - A new approach to international co-operation

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Abstract:
During the World Library and Information Congress in Berlin a new alliance between IFLA and national libraries was established to continue and expand the coordination work formerly done by the IFLA UBCIM and UDT Core Programme Offices. The following paper gives a short overview about ICABS, its organization and its work as the umbrella for multifaceted activities in the area of bibliographical standards.

Birth of ICABS

On 7. August 2003 during the World Library and Information Congress in Berlin a new alliance between IFLA and national libraries was established to continue and expand the coordination work formerly done by the IFLA UBCIM and UDT Core Programme Offices.

The IFLA Universal Bibliographic Control and International MARC (UBCIM) Core Activity was established thirty years ago and came to an end in 2003. UBCIM was originally hosted by the British Library (1973-1989) and later Die Deutsche Bibliothek from 1990 to the beginning of 2003. In early 2003 the Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal took over the responsibility for UNIMARC. ICBC (International Cataloguing and Bibliographic Control), is now a quarterly journal of IFLA, formerly of UBCIM.

Another component of ICABS is a major part of the program of the former Universal Dataflow and Telecommunications Core Activity (UDT). UDT supported analysis and promotion of technologies and standards as they apply to interoperability and the digital environment in the areas of networked resource discovery, information retrieval, digitization, and metadata. It worked with IFLA Sections and programmes across the Federation, but especially supported the professional activities of the Information Technology Section. It was hosted at the National Library of Canada (NLC) from its beginning in the late 1980s until it was closed in 2001. UDT also developed and then maintained IFLA's primary communications tool, IFLANET, hosted for many years at NLC. IFLANET was moved to Institut de l'Information Scientifique et Technique (INIST) in France in 2001 and is not part of the ICABS activity.

And finally, the Conference of Directors of National Libraries (CDNL), which has provided the main support and funding (in kind and through donations) for these Core Activities over many years, also recently established a committee to monitor digital library developments – the CDNL Committee on Digital Issues (CDI). The Committee's work on bibliographic standards and digital preservation is being folded into the ICABS mission, while the Committee's work on deposit agreements will be continued separately by the National Library of Australia.

Objectives and goals of ICABS

The objectives of ICABS are:
> ➢ to coordinate activities aimed at the development of standards and practices for bibliographic and resource control
> ➢ to support the international exchange of bibliographic resources by supporting, promoting, developing, and testing the maintenance of metadata and format standards
> ➢ to ensure the promotion of new conventions
> ➢ to act as a clearinghouse for information on all IFLA endeavours in these fields
> ➢ to organize and participate in seminars and workshops
> ➢ to enhance communication within the community.

The ICABS objectives will be realized through the following goals agreed to during the IFLA Berlin Conference.
> ➢ Maintain, promote, and harmonize existing standards and concepts related to bibliographic and resource control
> ➢ Develop strategies for bibliographic and resource control and ensure the promotion of new and recommended conventions
> ➢ Advance understanding of issues related to long-term archiving of electronic resources

The goals are primarily linked to IFLA professional priority "Promoting standards, guidelines and best practices". Some may also be linked to
"Promoting resource sharing", "Providing unrestricted access to information", "Representing libraries in the technological marketplace", and "Developing library professionals."

ICABS partners

The National Library of Australia, the Library of Congress, The British Library, the Koninklijke Bibliotheek, and Die Deutsche Bibliothek have agreed to participate in this joint alliance together with the Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, IFLA and CDNL. They are

partnering to assure ongoing coordination, communication and support for key activities in the areas of bibliographic and resource control for all types of resources and related format and protocol standards. Each of the partners in this alliance has agreed to be the lead support agency for one or more of the actions thus realizing the objectives.

Working fields of the ICABS partners

The British Library supports the work of the IFLA Division IV FRBR Review Group in developing and maintaining the conceptual model and related guidelines for the Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records (FRBR) and promotes the use of this model. The British Library is also the responsible partner to support the IFLA Division IV Working Group on Functional Requirements of Authority Numbering and Records (FRANAR) and to promote the use of this model for authority control.

The German national library (called Die Deutsche Bibliothek) has taken over the responsibility to support the work of the IFLA Cataloguing Section's ISBD Review Group in developing and maintaining the International Standards for Bibliographic Description. DDB encourages the harmonization of national practices to follow these standards and to Promote the results of the ISBD revisions. In addition DDB together with the Library of Congress are partners to support and promote the idea of the Virtual International Authority File (VIAF) in cooperation with the Sections of IFLA's Division IV: Bibliographic Control and the partners in the current VIAF Proof of Concept project. They also want to explore other VIAF models and promote the testing of prototypes. OCLC is another partner in the VIAF Proof of concept project, without being member of the ICABS alliance.
During the first 3-year term DDB chairs the ICABS Advisory Board and provides the secretary for the group during this period.

Another ICABS partner is the Koninklijke Bibliothek, the Dutch national library. KB explores the requirements and conditions for long-term archiving of electronic resources. Moreover the library explores and promotes strategies, methods and standards for migration and emulation.

Besides the joint responsibility for the VIAF cooperative mentioned above Library of Congress is responsible to promote the development and use of MARC21 and its XML derivatives. LoC promotes the application and use of Z39.50 and cooperates with its implementors to continue the development of Z39.50 International, Next Generation and its XML-based Search/Retrieve Web Services in order to evolve next generation implementations.
Furthermore LoC closely cooperates with the IFLA IT and Cataloguing Sections and their working groups to explore metadata requirements. The Library collects and communicates information on existing metadata schemes and application profiles and monitors the work on persistent identifiers.

The National Library of Australia most of all is responsible to support the exploration and promotion of methods to archive web-based publications collected by web-harvesting. It aims to work out a survey of existing standards, guidelines, and codes for preservation of digital materials in co-operation with the Preservation and Conservation Section of IFLA.

Last but not least, the National Library of Portugal took over the responsibility for UNIMARC, and IFLA is now responsible for the quarterly journal "International Cataloguing and Bibliographic Control – ICBC" – both formerly under the auspices of UBCIM that ended in early 2003.

ICABS coordination

ICABS coordinate and communicate their work and activities to enhance cooperation and to avoid overlapping or duplicating work between the alliance partners and:
- IFLA Headquarters, Governing Board, Professional Committee, Divisions, & Sections
- CDNL and the regional groups of CDNL
- UNESCO and other funding bodies
- ISO, ICA, and other national and international standard making bodies in the area of bibliographic control

One member of each of the participating libraries (plus two members nominated by IFLA) constitute the ICABS Advisory Board, chaired by one of the participating institutions on a rotating basis. Die Deutsche Bibliothek has agreed to chair the board for the first 3-year-term and thus provides a secretary for the group. The secretary handles various arrangements and communications, for example, creating and maintaining a Web page for the programme and maintaining a Web view that promotes the results of the programme with a link to and from IFLANET.

The ICABS Advisory Board will review and evaluate the actions of this alliance after the first 3 years.

For more information please visit IFLANET at http://www.ifla.org/VI/7/icabs.htm

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