



International Federation of  
Library Associations and Institutions

**ISBD Review Group**  
<https://www.ifla.org/isbd-rg>

**Working meeting on ISBD revision**  
**Thursday 30 August, National Library of Malaysia**

Attendees: Gordon Dunsire, Elena Escolano (online), Massimo Gentili-Tedeschi, Dorothy McGarry (online), Susan Morris, Rehab Ouf, Mélanie Roche, observers from Malaysia and other countries.

**1. Welcome and introductions**

Massimo Gentili-Tedeschi welcomed attendees, and thanked our host the National Library of Malaysia for its very warm welcome.

**2. Approval of the agenda**

The agenda was approved without change.

**3. Context of ISBD (Massimo Gentili-Tedeschi)**

Massimo Gentili-Tedeschi presented the work of the Review Group ever since its creation in the early 1960s, exploring the past and current context of the ISBD. The audience was particularly interested to learn that even as early as 1969, the ISBD had been conceived not only for card catalogues but with the aim to exchange bibliographic data on computers.

**4. Approval of the Terms of Reference for the ISBD Editorial Group**

The Terms of Reference were circulated to the RG members on Tuesday, August 28. They were approved with minor editorial changes:

- Dorothy McGarry suggested grammatical improvements;
- Items 4 and 5 of the tasks list were switched so as to be more logical.

Mélanie Roche was accepted as chair.

It was agreed that the timeline needn't be more detailed for a broad-scale document such as Terms of Reference, but of course the group will need to come up with a refined timeline to organise the work.

It was reminded that the specialist content groups will start working in 2020. By then, the IEG will need to identify and establish liaisons with them: it is essential to anticipate those that are needed in advance so that they are ready when we contact them to work on content.

**Actions:**

- M. Gentili-Tedeschi to send the IEG Terms of Reference to the Committee on Standards, asap;
- M. Roche to produce a draft timesheet, asap, to be commented on, refined and updated by the IEG members as work goes by.

**5. Methodology of the ISBD Editorial Group**

The group will communicate via email in-between in-person meetings. One meeting will take place in Autumn 2018, and already has funding from IFLA. Another one will be needed in early 2019, for which funding still needs to be found. If savings can be made out of IFLA funding, the IEG may plan for a third meeting in 2019 as needs arise.

The proposed length is for three-day meetings: two-day meetings are much too short to do substantial work, especially in the beginning of the project; four-day meetings, on the contrary, are too long for many members who can't be out of the office over such long periods of time (in addition to being much more expensive).

The group will need a workspace to centralise documents and work collaboratively online. The IEG will try out Basecamp, as encouraged by IFLA, provided that this is compatible with the closed system of some libraries. Otherwise, more informal solutions such as PBWorks or Google Docs will be considered.

For online meetings, Zoom or Skype will be considered.

Concerning the proposed structure and layout of the revised text, it was agreed that in principle the best way for the group to engage in such a radical revision is to start from scratch, so as to review with a fresh eye.

The current text of the ISBD is based on the ICP principle “representation”, but the future version should also explicitly refer to others, and especially to the principles of “accessibility”, “interoperability” and “openness” as those were introduced quite recently in the ICP.

While revising the text, the group should use common language so as to speak to the audience of the text (cataloguers). This was the direction taken by the ICP when revised in 2018, as well as by RDA with the 3R project. This is also a way to facilitate future translations of the text.

**Actions:** Massimo Gentili-Tedeschi will ask IFLA for a Basecamp space and for the possibility to use Zoom for the IEG.

## 6. Actions to be completed before the Autumn meeting

Before the Autumn meeting, the IEG should centralise all relevant material on the collaborative platform provided by IFLA or otherwise. This includes:

- Logistics and project management documents;
- Reference texts and documents;
- Revision requests sent to the group since 2011. Those were already collected by Elena Escolano on the ISBD Review Group PBWorks wiki space, but it is preferable to double check that everything is indeed there.

**Action:** M. Gentili-Tedeschi will consult the ISBD RG list for any additional request that has not been centralised on the PBWorkspace, asap.

## 7. Autumn meeting of the ISBD Editorial Group

### 7.1. Time and place

Mélanie Roche will send a Doodle poll to the group to decide where and when they should meet in Autumn. The Bibliothèque nationale de France was proposed as host, but suggestions for more appropriate locations are welcome.

Elena Escolano warned Mélanie Roche that she will not be available in November, which will be taken into consideration when creating the Doodle poll.

If expenses need to be justified, Mélanie Roche will provide a formal invitation letter to those members who request it.

**Action:** M. Roche to send a Doodle poll in the very next few days, so that travel arrangements can be made promptly.

## 7.2. Goal of the meeting

The goal of the meeting is to brainstorm about the future structure of the ISBD, and to solve some essential, strategic questions that will shape the future of ISBD.

At the end of the Autumn meeting, the IEG is expected to provide recommendations to the ISBD RG as to what the future directions of the ISBD should be.

### 7.2.1. Resource / Manifestation

As a direct consequence of the alignment of ISBD on IFLA LRM, it should be considered whether the word “Resource” should be replaced by “Manifestation”. As Gordon Dunsire wrote in a 2013 article, ISBD “Resource” is equivalent to a single WEMI stack, but is not equivalent to any of the component entities.

Although a majority of the attendees agreed<sup>1</sup>, the issue will have to be discussed further during the Autumn meeting, until consensus is reached within the IEG, which was not fully represented in this meeting.

**Action:** G. Dunsire to circulate his article to the group, asap.

### 7.2.2. Punctuation

The use of the current punctuation set appears limited in comparison with modern standards. As a consequence, it sometimes introduces ambiguity, as it doesn’t account for empty or repeated areas, or uses the same symbol for different meanings (e.g. use of commas in Area 2). Apart from providing meaning, it is also used to indicate provenance (with the use of square brackets), but without sufficient clarity.

How can we provide unambiguous meaning through punctuation? Should the current set of punctuation symbols be re-examined, so as to enhance its efficiency? These questions are left open for now, and will also be addressed in Autumn.

### 7.2.3. Scope and usage

What is the scope of usage of the data produced by cataloguers who use the ISBD? This is a strategic question that will shape whether we use the future ISBD as a plain text file output or whether to use placeholders, e.g. to signal a missing area?

## 8. Communication

### 8.1. Within the ISBD Review Group

After each online or in-person meeting and review by the IEG members, the chair of the ISBD Editorial Group will send the minutes to the ISBD Review Group chair, who can then update the status of the working group in the ISBD RG work plan.

Two ISBD moments are to be planned for WLIC2019 in Athens, besides the two usual working sessions:

- One informational short paper in the IFLA Metadata Reports Session;
- One day-long business meeting on the last day of the conference.

**Action:** M. Gentili-Tedeschi to plan the day-long meeting, mid-September 2018.

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<sup>1</sup> An issue with the online connection prevented a full discussion on this issue.

## 8.2. External communication and outreach strategy

Unless a member of the IEG objects, in-person meetings will be open to observers. This will be a way to advertise the ongoing work, and to work in transparency as per IFLA directives. So as to guarantee efficient meetings, the observers won't be able to comment but can always approach the IEG members during breaks or at other times.

Social media such as Facebook or Twitter should be used by those members who are already active on them. These should be used to advertise meetings if we decide they are open to observers, and update the ISBD community on ongoing activities and exciting news.

Mélanie Roche was asked to write an article on the ongoing revision of the ISBD for the December issue of the *IFLA Metadata Newsletter*. As was announced during this IFLA conference, the Newsletter boasts 491 subscribers, with a increasing number of subscriptions during these last few months. This is therefore a good platform to reach out to our audience.

Respectfully submitted,

Mélanie Roche  
Chair of the ISBD Editorial Group.