The ISBD survey (2014): a report

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Abstract:

At the 78th IFLA General Conference in Helsinki (2012), the ISBD Review Group decided to conduct a survey on the use of the ISBD and expectations for its future. Divided in four sections, Use of the ISBD, Translations, Problems and Expectations, Other comments, the survey, distributed in the first quarter of 2014, has been completed by 81 institutions. The paper illustrates the responses coming from 42 institutions corresponding to the survey's profile. The results give an international overview of national cataloguing directions.

Keywords: ISBD, survey, cataloguing, ISBD namespaces.

The survey

At the 78th IFLA General Conference in Helsinki, Finland (2012), the ISBD Review Group decided to conduct a survey on the use of the ISBD and expectations for its future. A task group was established, consisting of Agnese Galeffi, Irena Kavčič and Dorothy McGarry. In the summer of 2013 John Hostage joined the group. In the original plan the survey should have been ready in August 2013 for approval by the ISBD Review Group during the WLIC, and then distributed in the first quarter of 2014, after approval by the Cataloguing Section's Standing Committee. The original intent in 2012 was to allow the responders to express their views on the ISBD consolidated edition three years after its publication and to learn about problems that might have arisen in its use. The answers would be useful to the ISBD RG to plan further directions in the ISBD revision process. The survey gives also indications to develop future ISBD strategy by the Review Group.

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The survey was articulated in 30 questions (some closed-ended, some open-ended), divided into four sections: Use of the ISBD, Translations, Problems and Expectations, Other comments.

The recipients we had in mind were the institutions involved in creating, managing, and applying cataloguing rules, policies, and procedures at the national level - that is, national cataloguing committees, national libraries, and national, regional, or multinational rule-making bodies. The survey was published on the IFLA website and its link sent to mailing lists[1] inviting further distribution.

Data provenance

After the deadline of April 10th 2014, the task group counted 81 answers (see Figure 1). Probably the words "other interested groups" following "national cataloguing committees, national libraries, national, regional, or multinational rule-making bodies" in the preface of the survey generated some misunderstanding since many responses came from other types of institutions such as university, special and even public libraries.
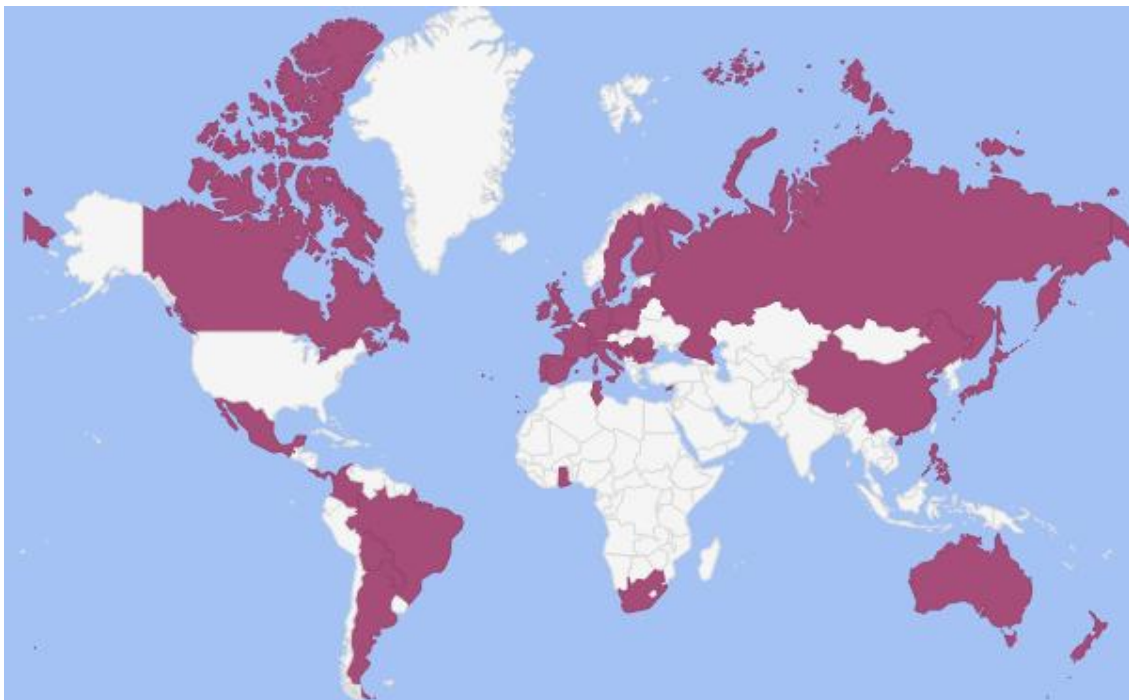

Figure 1

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[1] Mailing lists: IFLA National Libraries Section, Conference of Directors of National Libraries (CDNL), IFLA Bibliography Section Standing Committee, IFLA Regional Section Asia and Oceania, IFLA Africa Section Chair/Treasurer Victoria Okojie, IFLA Latin America and the Caribbean Section, IFLA Cataloguing Section.

The answering countries are (between brackets the number of institutions that have completed the survey):[2]

Argentina (6)	Australia (1)	Bolivia (1)	Bosnia and Herzegovina (1)	Brazil (1)
Bulgaria (7)	Canada (2)	China (1)	Colombia (1)	Costa Rica (5)
Croatia (1)	Cyprus (1)	Czech Republic (1)	Denmark (3)	Finland (1)
France (2)	Germany (2)	Ghana (1)	Ireland (1)	Italy (7)
Japan (2)	Latvia (1)	Lithuania (1)	Luxembourg (1)	Mexico (1)
Netherlands (1)	New Zealand (1)	Panama (1)	Paraguay (1)	Philippines (1)
Poland (1)	Portugal (1)	Québec (1)	Romania (1)	Russia (1)
Serbia (1)	Slovenia (1)	South Africa (2)	Spain (9)	Sweden (2)
Switzerland (1)	Tunisia (1)	United Kingdom (1)	Vatican City (1)	

It is interesting to note that the countries that have sent the largest number of answers (Spain, Italy, Bulgaria, Argentina, and Costa Rica) are all nations that have not changed to RDA or planned a transition to it. It is surprising that we have not received any answer from USA.

Taking into consideration the type of institutions (see Figure 2),

- thirty-eight national libraries (Australia, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria Canada, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Panama, Paraguay, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Québec, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, and Vatican City);
- seven national, regional, or international rule-making bodies (Bulgaria, Denmark, France, Germany, and Spain);[3]
- two national cataloguing committees (Bulgaria and Japan);
- thirty-four various institutions (public, research, university, special libraries, cataloguing agencies).

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[2] Please note that Canada and Québec are counted separately for the purposes of this survey. Library and Archives Canada (LAC), in Ottawa, is the national library of Canada, It has always used AACR, AACR2, and since 2013, RDA. LAC catalogues resources using English language. Resources in French are catalogued using French language. Québec, as a French-only speaking province, has its national library and archive Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec (BAnQ), an institution completely separated from LAC. BAnQ has moved in January 2015 to RDA, except for rare books (still using DCRM(B)).
[3] Three institutions from Spain.

Type of institutions

- National libraries 46%
- Other 43%
- Regional, National and international rule-making bodies 9%
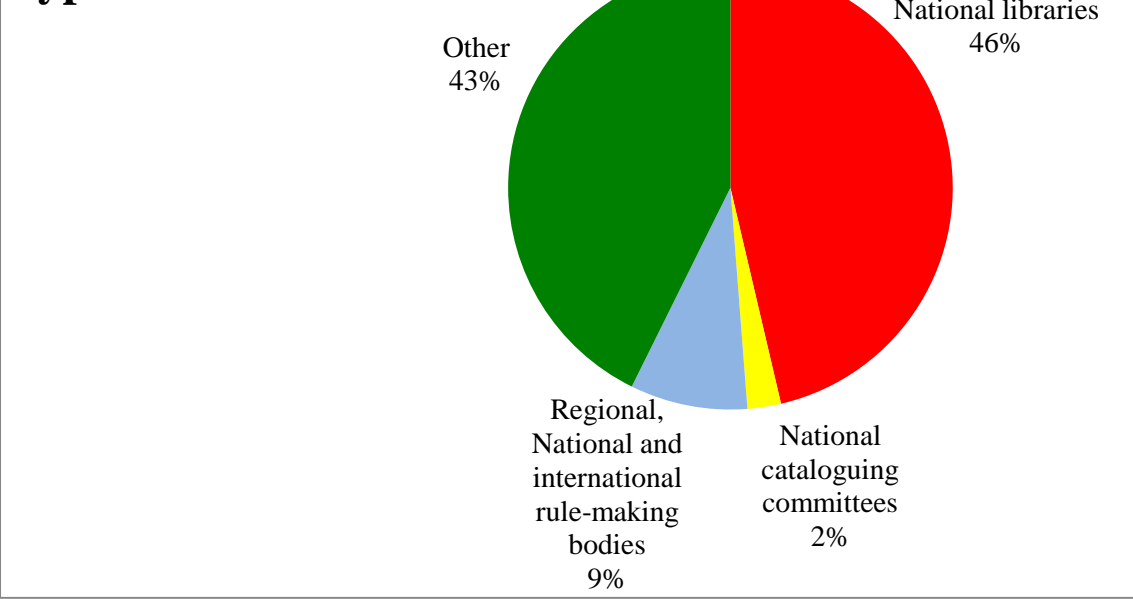- National cataloguing committees 2%

Figure 2

Despite this large number of unexpected responses generating some difficulties in the data analysis, at the same time, it testifies to the desire to speak about cataloguing praxis and its horizons. Responses and charts from the "raw" data are included in the ISBD survey Report.[4]

The results

To investigate the results better, in this paper we have taken into consideration just the institutions corresponding to the survey's profile, that is "national cataloguing committees, national libraries, national, regional, or multinational rule-making bodies", eliminating all the institutions that, despite completing the survey, cannot be considered as decision-makers in cataloguing. In this way, we can give a true overview of national cataloguing directions. Unfortunately in some cases, it is very difficult to ascertain if certain institutions are rule-making bodies or not. Please, remember that the survey closed in April 2014.

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[4] ISBD Survey Report < http://www.ifla.org/publications/node/9560>.

Provenance

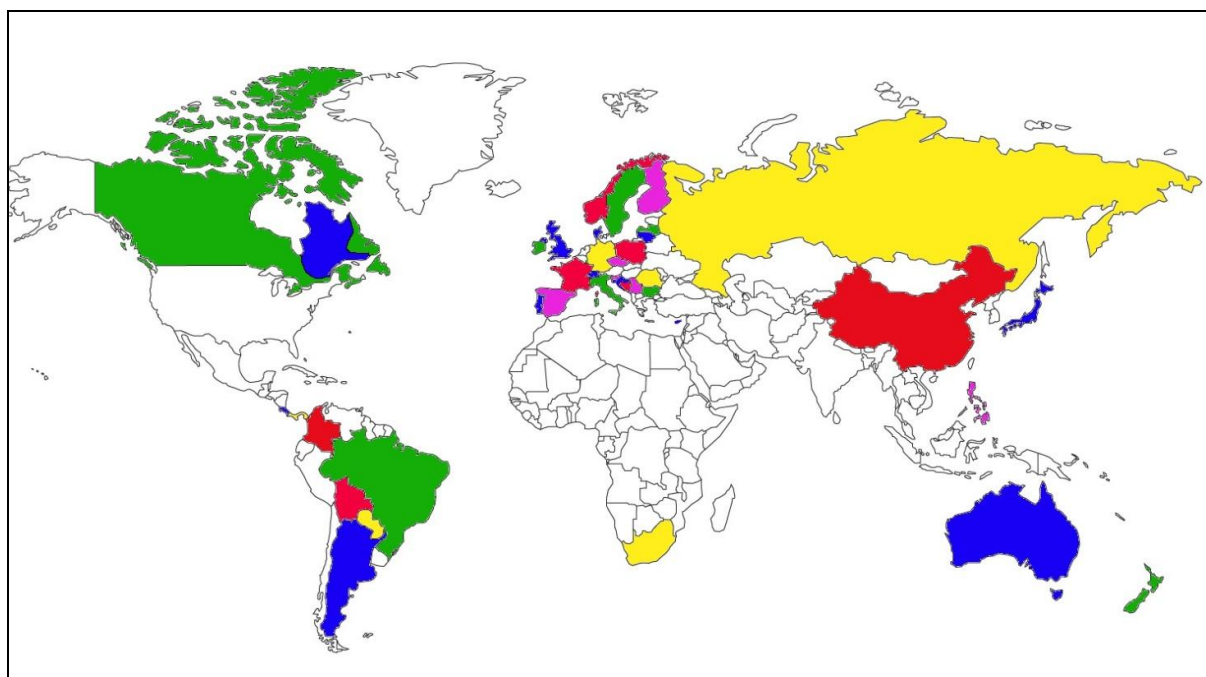The refined results show this geographical map (see Figure 3)

Figure 3

The forty-two national cataloguing committees, national libraries, national, regional, or multinational rule-making bodies answering the ISBD survey are from:

Argentina	Australia	Bolivia	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Brazil
Bulgaria	Canada	China	Colombia	Costa Rica
Croatia	Cyprus	Czech Republic	Denmark	Finland
France	Germany	Ireland	Italy	Japan
Latvia	Lithuania	Luxembourg	New Zealand	Panama
Paraguay	Philippines	Poland	Portugal	Québec
Romania	Russia	Serbia	Slovenia	South Africa
Spain	Sweden	Switzerland	United Kingdom	Vatican City

Despite all the efforts of the task group, the geographical provenance of the answers shows that a large part of the world has not been "engaged" by the survey. Africa and Asia are under-represented.

Cataloguing standards and rules in use

About the use of cataloguing standards, codes, and rules, the results say that

- 3 countries use one or more ISBDs
- 2 countries use the ISBD preliminary consolidated edition
- 6 countries use the ISBD consolidated edition
- 6 countries use their national code

- 8 countries use AACR2
- 4 countries use RDA
- 2 countries use one or more ISBDs + their national code
- 1 country uses one or more ISBDs + AACR2
- 3 countries use the ISBD preliminary consolidated edition + AACR2
- 1 country uses the ISBD consolidated edition + its national code
- 1 country uses the ISBD consolidated edition + its national code + AACR2
- 1 country uses AACR2 + its national code
- 1 country uses AACR2 + RDA
- 1 country uses its national code + RDA.

One question asked if the national code in use is based on ISBDs, the ISBD preliminary consolidated edition, or the ISBD consolidated edition. The survey has verified that all the national codes are based on ISBD, mostly (11) on ISBDs, the remaining on the ISBD preliminary consolidated edition.

Twenty-seven countries declare that they have used the same rules for ten years or more. Among these countries there are the users of AACR2, ISBDs, and national codes.[5] Four countries declare they have used the same rules for five to ten years, five for one to five years, and four that they have changed their rules in the last year (see Figure 4).
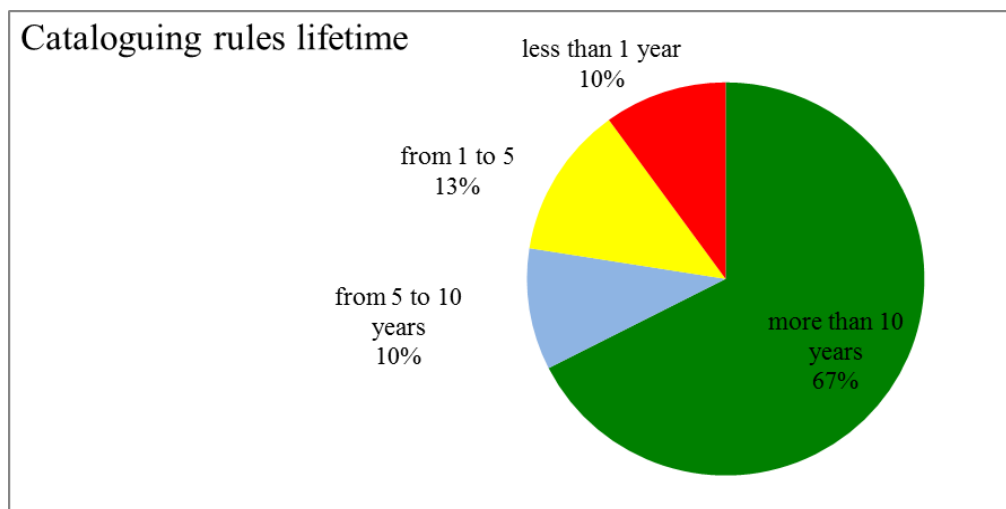

Figure 4

Among the twenty-seven countries using the same rules for ten years or more, almost half, are planning to move toward RDA. Some countries have also recently adopted the ISBD consolidated edition or RDA.

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[5] Some institutions stating they use the ISBD consolidated edition declare that they have used the same rules for ten years or more. It looks like a contradiction since the consolidated edition was published in 2011. Obviously these institutions refer to "ISBD" as a standard, not to a specific edition.

Cataloguing standards and rules. The future

The ISBD survey is a good chance for the answering institutions to illustrate their cataloguing strategies for the future. Since the emergence of RDA and the availability of the ISBD consolidated edition, many countries have planned to adopt new descriptive procedures or are planning a transitional phase (see Figure 5).
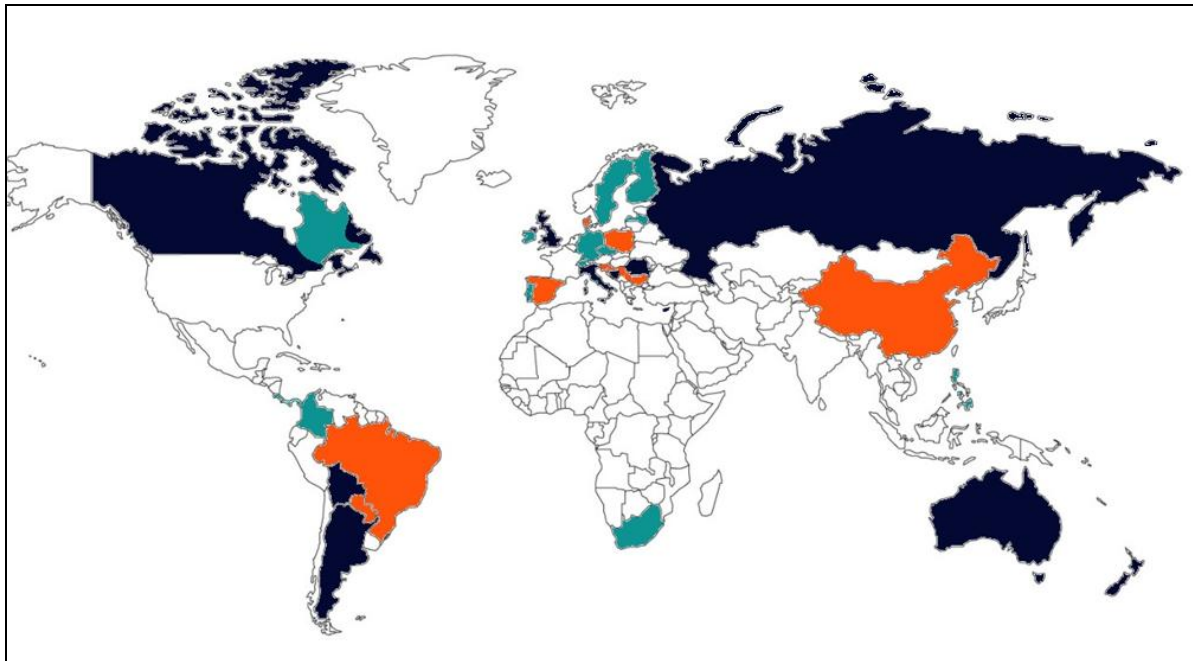

Figure 5

In orange are the countries that are uncertain about their future choices about cataloguing rules (Brazil, Bulgaria, China, Croatia, Denmark, Paraguay, Poland, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain).

In azure are the countries that have planned a change to RDA (Colombia, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Latvia, Luxembourg, Panama, Philippines, Portugal, Québec, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, Vatican City).

In dark blue are the countries that are willing to maintain their current situation (Argentina, Australia, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Cyprus, Italy, New Zealand, Romania, Russia, United Kingdom) and a map (see Figure 6) showing their cataloguing positions (national codes are represented by the national flag).
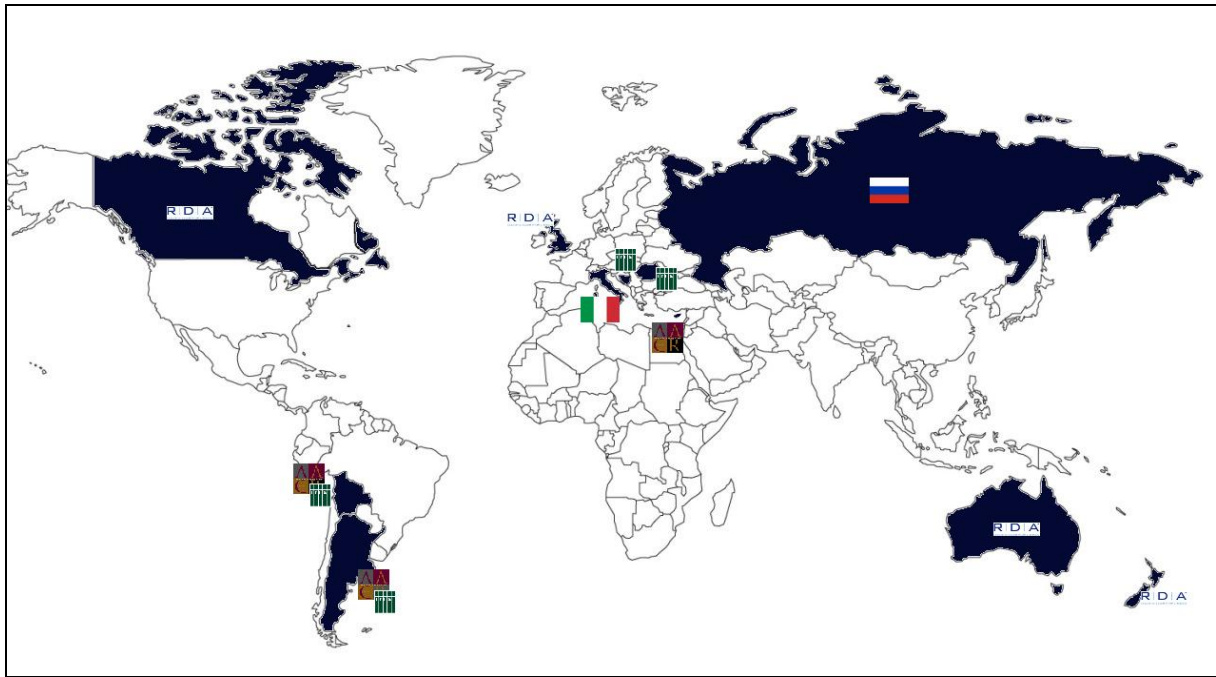
Figure 6

ISBD as a display format

ISBD as a display format keeps its influence (see Figure 7): thirty-one countries use ISBD for record display in the catalogue or in the national bibliography (Argentina, Australia, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, China, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Panama, Paraguay, Poland, Portugal, Québec, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, Vatican City).
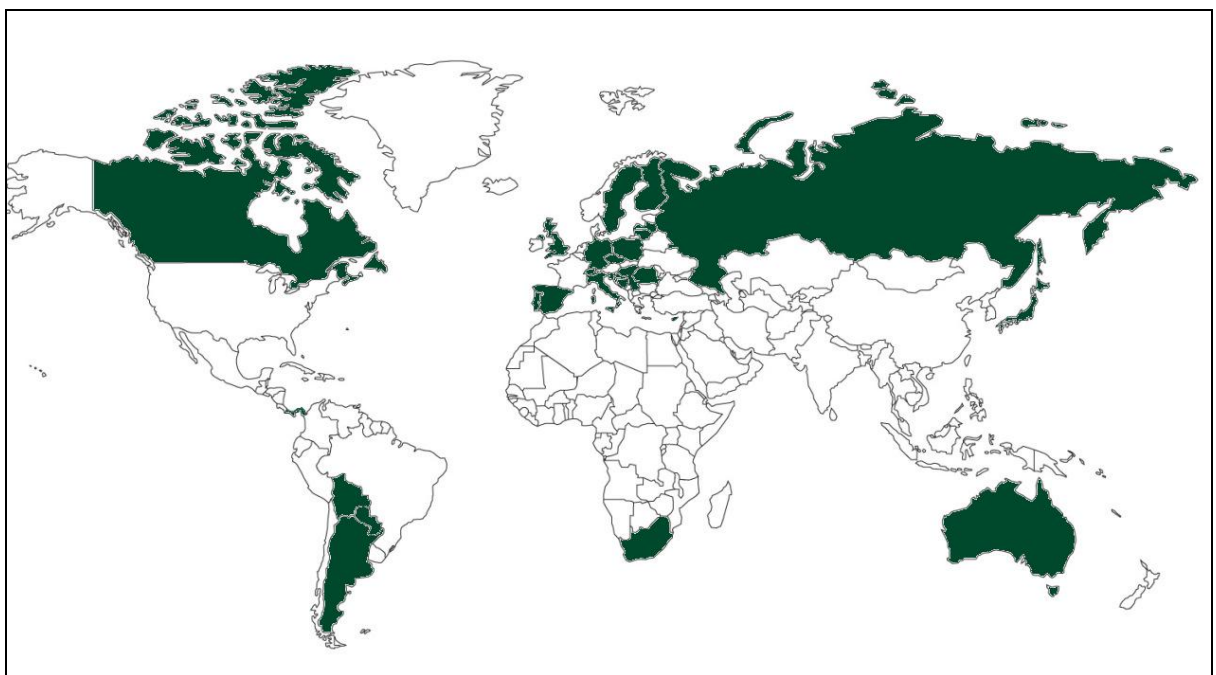

Figure 7

ISBD namespaces

The knowledge of ISBD namespaces seems to be not so high. It is quite surprising, taking into account the large number of papers and presentations relating this topic (see Figure 8).[6]
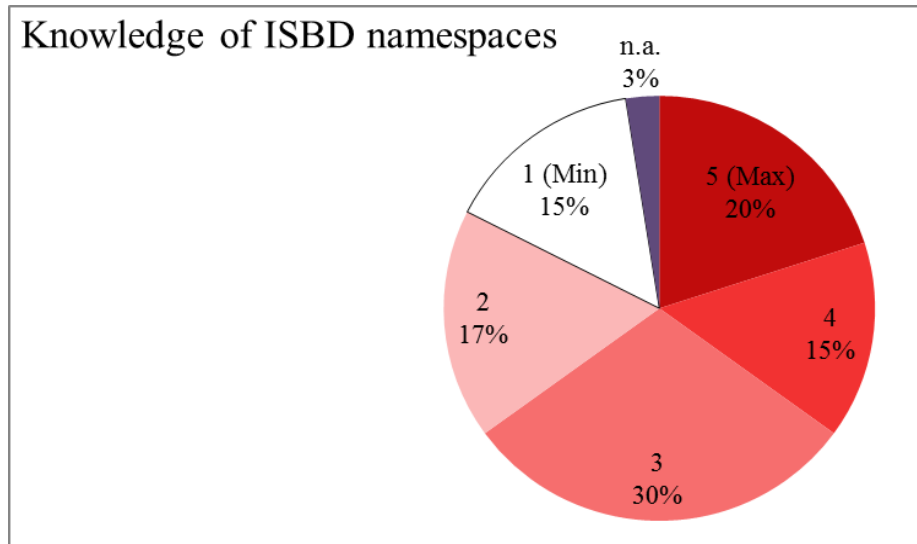

Figure 8

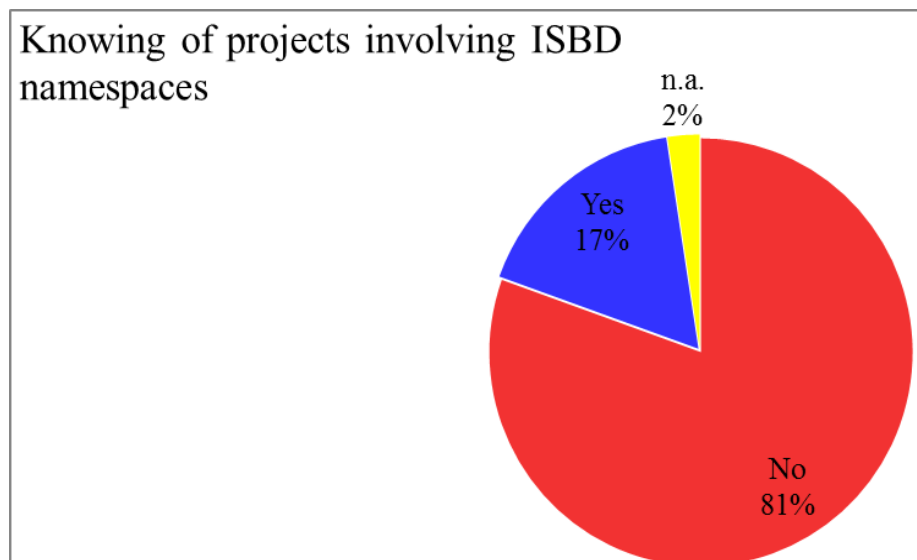A large majority of responders cannot remember a project involving ISBD namespaces (see Figure 9).

Figure 9

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[6] Presentations related to the ISBD/XML Study Group <http://www.ifla.org/node/5664>.

The cited projects are:
- Out of the Trenches (Canada)[7]
- Danish National Bibliography as linked open data (Denmark)[8]
- Mapping of Sudoc UNIMARC records to RDF (France)[9]
- Linked data Service using ISBD elements and Namespaces[10]
- Local projects dealing with ISBD Namespaces (Italy)
- Projects dealing with ISBD Namespaces - Facultad Politecnica (Paraguay)[11]
- The Linked Open Data British National Bibliography.[12]

As a consequence of the limited knowledge about ISBD Namespaces, just ten institutions (26%) intend to use ISBD namespaces (see Figure 10).
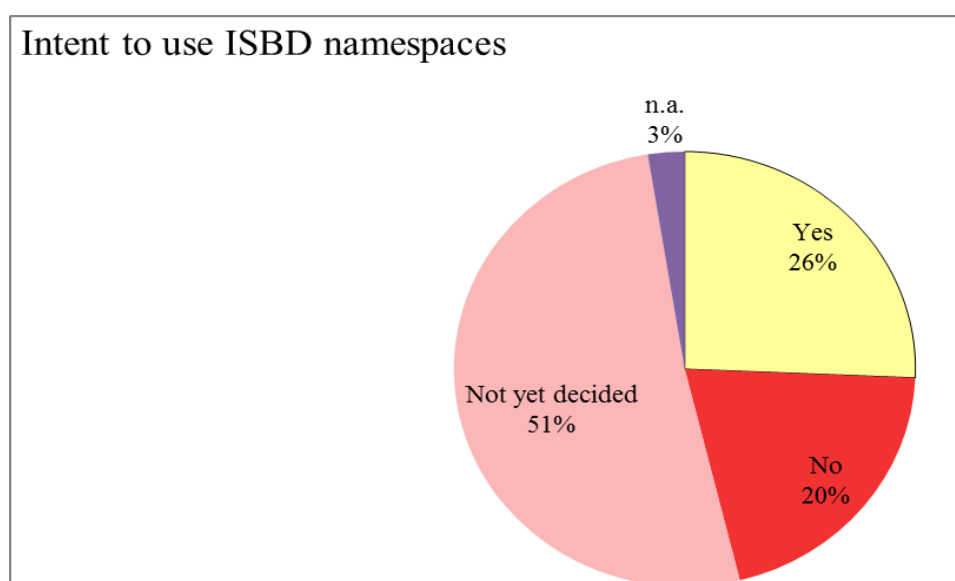

Figure 10

ISBD translations

The ISBD consolidated edition is currently available in nine languages (Bulgarian, Catalan, Spanish, French, Croatian, Italian, Lithuanian, Russian, Chinese),[13] in addition to the original English version.

Before taking in consideration the survey results for this section, it is important to remember that the availability of Mandarin Chinese (spoken by 14.4% of world population), Spanish (spoken by 6.15% of world population), English (spoken by 5.43% of world population), and

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[7] Out of the Trenches : A Linked Open Data Project <http://www.canadiana.ca/en/pcdhn-lod>.

[8] Danbib <http://www.dbc.dk/nationale-opgaver/danbib_generel_introduktion>.

[9] ABES <http://www.abes.fr/>.

[10] Der Linked Data Service der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek: Modellierung der Titeldaten <http://www.dnb.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/DNB/service/linkedDataModellierungTiteldaten.pdf> and Empfehlungen zur RDF-Repräsentation bibliografischer Daten. Gruppe Titeldaten der DINI-AG KIM <http://edoc.hu-berlin.de/series/dini-schriften/2013-14/PDF/14.pdf>.

[11] CIC - Centro de Información y Cultura <http://www.pol.una.py/?q=node/167>.

[12] Welcome to bnb.data.bl.uk <http://bnb.data.bl.uk/>.

[13] Translations of ISBD <http://www.ifla.org/publications/translations-of-isbd?og=628>.

Russian (spoken by 2.33% of world population) covers a large percentage (28.31%) of world native languages. [14] Adding the other available languages (Bulgarian, Catalan, French, Croatian, Italian, and Lithuanian) the total amount surpasses the 30%.

Few countries are currently working on a translation of ISBD (Poland, Serbia, and Slovenia, in orange in Figure 11). Two countries admit that they have no resources enough to carry out a translation, even if it is desired (Romania and Bosnia Herzegovina, in green in Figure 11).

France, Italy, Portugal, Serbia and Spain declare that they are currently translating ISBD Namespaces (in violet in the Figure 12).
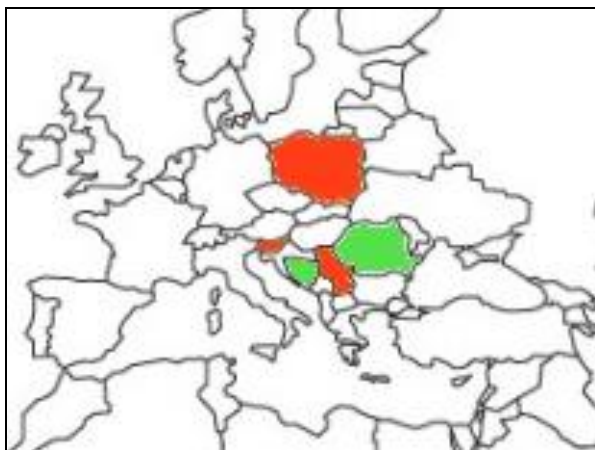

Figure 11

Figure 12

ISBD survey. Problems, Expectations and Comments

The two final sections of the ISBD survey allowed the responders to express their opinions and concerns about ISBD.

Questions 27-28 asked about problems in using and applying the ISBD consolidated edition. Five institutions have expressed the following problems:
1) Harmonization between *A.4.2.5 Resources without a common source of information* and *1.1.4.2 Resources with more than one preferred source of information*;
2) *Area 0*
   - Function
   - Implementation in UNIMARC format
   - ISBD gives no instruction as to whether different content types should be recorded or not – as to when another content type should be mentioned or may be omitted, etc. No provision is given to different media types and the same content form
   - Display of Area 0 elements (as text or icon) *vs.* use as a refining element, filter or facet;
3) *1.1.4.2.2*: Source of title proper for resources with more than one preferred source of information (e.g., tête-bêche or back-to-back resources);

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[14] Percentage based on List of languages by number of native speakers
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_languages_by_number_of_native_speakers>.

4) *1.3.4.6. Common title and dependent title*: rules regarding other title information statements relating to common title to be given in Area 6 or Area 7, limit cataloguer's ability to transcribe relevant information as it appears in the source of information, resulting in eventual identification problems. Some other cases (Parallel dependent titles, but only one common non-parallel title), are not treated;

5) *6. Series and multipart monographic resource area*: description of multipart monographic resources;

6) *6.6.2*: Numbering of the resource within a series consisting of common title and dependent title, both numbered;

7) How to record format information for electronic resources or material description elements for complex resources (e.g., audio serial issued on CD-ROM).

More numerous (14) are the answers, some of them very detailed, about expectations for the ISBD consolidated edition, its role and functions. The table shows the answers as they appear, except for minor misspelling corrections.

We will expect that the ISBDs suit the internet times
Que contenga nuevas actualizaciones para el manejo y descripción de la información
Functions: ISBD's punctuation and display provisions were incorporated into the current ILS AMICUS. The same display provisions are expected to be required in future systems. Roles: ISBD has the role of being the internationally recognized foundation of understanding the catalogue record. It provides the foundation data dictionary, definitions of descriptive elements, instructions on transcription. The combination of the display and punctuation constitutes a language-neutral 'data mark-up.' These important roles endure by tacit support from the international community for the maintenance of an international benchmark. Future expectations: to continue to explore compatibility with other cataloguing codes, e.g. RDA; to continue to invest in the ISBD namespace; to explore the opportunities for exposing data on the internet using the ISBD namespace.
Functions : we still use it for creating paragraph display in some products, prescribed punctuation and also for the information on mandatory data elements, the ordering of data elements and thus the punctuation for complex transcription (parallel data, multiple instances of an element). Role : ISBD has the role of basis for international understanding of the basic record. Gives the descriptive elements (data dictionary for description), instructions on their transcription (transcription rules are very important)
To provide stipulation for all types of library materials such as digital reproductions, ephemera, unpublished materials, component parts, manuscripts.
The ISBD should match with other description standards (RDA, ONIX...) as much as possible.

ISBD should evolve towards a real content standard, focusing on a set of elements. The definition of each element, its role for the identification of the resource described, its sources of information, transcription rules, etc., should be the main purpose of ISBD. ISBD should draw a firmer line between content elements and display conventions (order, punctuation). This would also help to bring to light the implicit relationship conveyed by the order of the elements (in area 1 or 4 for example).

ISBD should also provide an analysis of the bibliographic description in terms of FRBR Group 1 entities (WEMI) in order to have some international guidance for FRBRized cataloguing (what should be a Manifestation record? How to bring together elements from records for Work/Expression/Manifestation and Item in order to display or provide an ISBD description?) and to allow for both FRBRized and non-FRBRized cataloguing, depending on the choice made by each country or institution.

ISBD should include descriptive specific rules and examples for graphic material

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Clearly state the differences to the previous version. Fully support FRBRisation of the catalogue.

Considerar las nuevos formates o soportes, en especial los digitales.

Don't have any expectation for future use, we will use RDA instead.

The ISBD consolidated ed. needs language revisions. There are inconsistencies in terminology and redundancy.

Believe it is necessary to defend a position ISBD as the main basic international standard for bibliographic description of resources

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Stipulations for all types of library materials should be included (e.g. unpublished resources, digital reproductions etc.).

Include provisions regarding manuscripts.
Include relations of elements to FRBR entities. Organize notes according FRBR entities.
Some rules or provisions are inferred from examples rather than explicit provisions. It is felt throughout the text a general lack of cases or provisions.
Development of rules for integrating resources, maybe a comparison with Integrating resources cataloging manual would be desirable.
Lack of guidelines for analytical description.
More terms for the glossary (eg., title bar, TEI header...)
Normalized vocabulary lists would be helpful. (for instance, Specific Material Designation).
Avoiding the use of abbreviations

Our expectation is that the consolidated ISBD continues to form a foundation for other cataloguing codes.

Development of the namespace. ISBD should follow the technical change/progress. We still need a standard to display and to print our records in our bibliographies.

> An open, non-proprietary standard for specification of bibliographic classes and properties is required, but ISBD fall far short of meeting this need when judged by IFLA's own models. ISBD only covers description. We note that the FRBR/FRAD and RDA classes and properties are far more extensive and have also been published under open licences and will satisfy our needs much better.
>
> The use of punctuation and order to imply semantic value are not credible requirements for a contemporary metadata standard.

The last question, asking for general comments, gives more inputs. A selection of answers:

> Since ISBD does not cover access points or choice of access points, it uses descriptive cataloguing solutions in situations that are really about access-- translation notes vs. uniform titles, serial title change/merger/split notes vs. relationship access points. This makes the ISBD seem redundant when followed exactly in a context where bibliographic records also have access points. This is a problem for using the ISBD namespace for relationships.

> […] We think the rules divided into "description" and "access points" are not appropriate according to the FRBR. We think the problem is that the ISBD covers only "description".
>
> We hope the ISBD will be reviewed to reflect the above.

> I have been looking for a schematic representation of the different version of ISBD, how they hang together and what changes from the previous versions to the new consolidated version.

> We continue to include ISBD punctuation in our MARC records in conformance with international agreements. We also use ISBD punctuation in the pdf version of the weekly BNB. We use ISBD punctuation in bibliographies supplied to customers of our bibliographic data. However, the range of sources of cataloguing and the range of materials that we collect means that ISBD is not (and could probably never be) the display format for citations in our public catalogue.

Analysing the last questions, it is possible to identify some common trends:
- the role of ISBD as the international basis for description and as the foundation of cataloguing codes;
- further ISBD revision for
  - fixing some existing problems,
  - improving internal consistency,
  - providing instructions about description of new types of resources (manuscripts, graphic materials, ephemera, etc.);
- ISBD should maintain a dialogue with
  - conceptual models such as the FR family, even establishing more explicit relationships between its elements and FR attributes,
  - other content standards such as RDA, ONIX;
- importance of ISBD namespaces to expose data.

The more controversial issue seems to be the ISBD as "pure" content standard opposed to its function for record display (punctuation, areas sequence), still kept for good (Willer, Hostage and Howarth).

These trends echo what ISBD is today, in the words of Elena Escolano Rodriguez (p. 837),
"ISBD as a standard consists of:
- Content standard for description of resources
- Standard categorization vocabulary for content forms and media types
- Standard display for information in catalogs
- Ontology for publishing catalog information as Linked Data
- Mappings with other standards: Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records (FRBR), UNIMARC (UNIversal MARC), Resource Description and Access (RDA), Regole italiane di catalogazione (REICAT), and so on".

Conclusions

The survey, despite the fact that some geographical areas are not covered by responses, gives an outlook of use, problems and expectations about ISBD. This deficiency shows how much it is important to reach all the library communities, even in weaker countries.

This period is crucial for libraries and library institutions as well as for ISBD next directions. Taking into account the IFLA mandate[15] and the IFLA Committee on Standards purpose "to raise the visibility of IFLA's standards within and beyond the IFLA membership, and to manage the development, maintenance, storage and access for all IFLA standards documents",[16] the ISBD survey answers prove their importance.

Acknowledgments

The author thanks the task group members, Irena Kavčič, Dorothy McGarry, and John Hostage, for their fundamental contribution.

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[15] IFLA Statute: "2.2 To achieve its purpose, the Federation seeks: 2.2.1 to promote high standards of delivery of library and information services and professional practice […]. This is done through the enhancement of professional education, the development of professional standards, the dissemination of best practice and the advancement of relevant scientific and professional knowledge" <http://www.ifla.org/files/assets/hq/ifla-statutes-en.pdf>.

[16] About the IFLA Committee on Standards <http://www.ifla.org/about-the-committee-on-standards>.

Results of an International Survey on the Use of the ISBD. Report prepared for the ISBD Review Group by a task group consisting of Agnese Galeffi, Irena Kavčič, and Dorothy McGarry, with assistance from John Hostage. (2014) <http://www.ifla.org/files/assets/cataloguing/isbd/isbd-survey-2015-report_final.pdf>

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