

Mutual influence among IFLA standards. The ICP case

Elena Escolano Rodríguez

Área de Biblioteca Central, Ministerio de Economía, Industria y Competitividad, Madrid, Spain.

E-mail address: elena.escolano@mineco.es

Agnese Galeffi

Library System, Sapienza University, Rome, Italy.

E-mail address: agnese.galeffi@uniroma1.it

Dorothy McGarry

Emerita, UCLA, Los Angeles, United States.

E-mail address: dmcgarry@library.ucla.edu



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Abstract:

The Statement of International Cataloguing Principles has been undergoing a quite continuous revision process since 2013 and even after the publication of the final version in 2016. In fact, the Cataloguing Section's Standing Committee has agreed on a new edition of the Statement after the approval of the IFLA Library Reference Model in 2017 in order to smooth some differences, especially in the definitions. The current ICP revision incorporates IFLA LRM concepts, but not adopting completely its definitions. Probably it is not possible or desirable to have exactly the same definitions - word by word - in every standard when these lay in different theoretical levels. The most important point is not to have contradictions among concepts, rather among wordings. Furthermore, how to deal with different standards bearing shared concepts and having revisions scheduled in different years? Could it be useful to determine some kind of hierarchy among IFLA standards related to their level of abstraction?

Keywords: Statement of International Cataloguing Principles, IFLA LRM, standards, harmonization.

Words matter

IFLA standards are defined as “internationally reviewed, published and regularly updated documents” reflecting “current consensus on rules, principles, guidelines, best practice or models for a particular activity or service” (IFLA Standards Procedures Manual, 2014, p. 6).

In the IFLA Standards Procedures Manual, the word “standard” is an umbrella that includes different types of documents, such as conceptual models, rules for resource description, digital format codes, guidelines and best practices. All the IFLA standards should be submitted to a systematic review process every 5 years, that could lead to minor changes, or to a complete revision, or to withdrawal, if considered to be relevant no longer. Besides a wide range of subjects, the variety of standards entails different linguistic and wording styles.

As far as creating standards, the Cataloguing Section is the most prolific unit. Among the 55 documents listed as current IFLA standards¹, 15 come from the Cataloguing Section or from one of the Review Groups or Working Groups connected to it. For instance, the *International Standard for Bibliographic Description* is the most successful and enduring one with a quite continuous updating and revision process from its First Standard Edition in 1974 to today. These revisions were motivated by the appearance of new media, by the acknowledgement of inconsistencies, or by the request for updating and improvements.

Both from a conceptual and a procedural point of view, it is quite different in the case of a revision guided by the appearance of another standard that mixes up the scenario bringing new concepts or new definitions for existing ones.

FRBR and IFLA LRM can be considered two milestones among IFLA cataloguing standards. Broadly speaking, both have brought important changes in cataloguing practice and led to profound discussions.

Historia magister vitae

After the publication of the FRBR Final Report in 1998, it was requested that the *International Standard for Bibliographic Description* align its terminology with the conceptual model. In 2004 under the column News and Events in International Cataloguing & Bibliographic Control a report was published about an ISBD/FRBR mapping:

“Among IFLA's most important achievements in the area of bibliographic control has been the articulation of widely implemented practices set out in the series of the International Standard Bibliographic Descriptions (ISBDs) and of the respected model developed on the basis of the ISBDs, GARE, and GSARE in the Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records (FRBR). It is critically important to the credibility of IFLA's work in these areas that the ISBDs and FRBR are inter-related and mutually supportive in order to assure users of consistency between them. As a result, the ISBD Review Group has been assessing the feasibility of aligning the terminology used in the texts of the ISBDs with that used in FRBR. However, the group has encountered difficulties in trying to achieve that alignment, owing in large part to the fact that the terms used in FRBR were defined in the context of an entity-relationship model conceived at a higher level of abstraction than the specifications for the ISBDs. While the entities defined in the FRBR model are clearly related to the elements forming an ISBD description, they are not necessarily congruent in all respects and the relationships are too complex to be conveyed through a simple substitution of terminology.”²

Therefore, it was decided to map the ISBD elements to FRBR entities and attributes and Tom Delsey was appointed for this task. The “harmonious relationship” between the two standards is obtained thanks to a mapping, that is a document that takes a picture of a state of art without forcing any document to modifications.

The difference between a harmonious relationship and a harmonization lies in this: while the first does not require changes, the second is based on a one-directional or bi-directional process of convergence.

¹ <https://www.ifla.org/node/8750>

² ISBD/FRBR mapping (2004). International Cataloguing & Bibliographic Control, vol. 33/2, p. 22 and

The double revision: the Statement of International Cataloguing Principles from 2016 to 2018

The first *Statement of International Cataloguing Principles*, published in 2009, has been developed during five IFLA Meetings of Experts on an International Cataloguing Code (IME-ICC) from 2003 to 2007.³ Despite it being rooted in the Statement of Principles adopted by the International Conference on Cataloguing Principles held in Paris in 1961, the most evident novelty factor is the definition of principles in paragraph 2.⁴ Considering the term of five years to start the review of an IFLA standard, the Cataloguing Section's Standing Committee from 2011 to 2013 discussed the possible need for a revision and the terms of reference.⁵ The revision took 2 years, 2014 and 2015, going through both an internal and a worldwide review.⁶ In 2016, after approval by the Cataloguing Section's Standing Committee and the Committee of Standards, and endorsement by the IFLA Professional Committee, the new edition was published. One issue arising during the final phase of this revision concerned the relationship with the ongoing FRBR consolidation work. Did the Task Group wait for the new conceptual model since a provisional version was already available and circulating among the SC members? Since it was not possible to ascertain when the consolidation process would be over and considering that the ICP revision was started in 2013, it was decided to publish the Statement. The ICP Revision Task Group decided, in accordance with the SC, not to delay its task and to publish the revised ICP text.

This led to the presence of some "uncertainties in the 2016 text". For instance, the paragraph 3.1 lists the entities taken into account in the Statement, that is Work, Expression, Manifestation, Item, Person, Family, Corporate Body, Thema and Nomen. According to IFLA LRM, not only the Res entity is missing, but also Thema should not be present, while Nomen has changed its meaning and definition. The TG has decided to explain the evolving status adding a footnote explaining that "Since the consolidation process involving FRBR, FRAD and FR SAD is currently underway, here are listed all the entities described in the aforementioned conceptual models. This brings some inconsistencies about Group 3 entities and about Nomen in relation to names and access points".

For this reason, during the WLIC 2017 in Wrocław, the Cataloguing Section's Standing Committee agreed to a further review since the consolidation process started in 2010 arrived at its end with the publication of the IFLA Library Reference Model in August.⁷ The struggle for consistency – especially concerning terminology and definitions – among the different standards produced by the Section is significant. The Task Group, composed of Elena Escolano Rodríguez, Agnese Galeffi, and Dorothy McGarry, started this second review immediately, one year after the approval of the previous version.

The LRM-focused revision

This LRM-focused revision has affected mainly three sections of the Statement: 3. *Entities, Attributes, and Relationships*, 5. *Access Points*, and 8. *Glossary*. If updating the list of entities in §3.1 has been easy, the most challenging parts and discussions have arisen about how much the LRM concepts should permeate the text.

Section 5. may be considered a good example: the Access Points section continuously refers to *access points* and *names* without mentioning the Nomen entity that has the longer entry

³ Reports and background papers from IME-ICC are available on <https://www.ifla.org/node/576>

⁴ In 2009 the ICP principles were Convenience of the user, Common usage, Representation, Accuracy, Sufficiency and necessity, Significance, Economy, Consistency and standardization, and Integration.

⁵ See the Meeting Reports <https://www.ifla.org/cataloguing/reports>.

⁶ All received comments are listed on https://www.ifla.org/files/assets/cataloguing/icp/icp-comments_20160726.pdf.

⁷ See §1.1 *Background* <<https://www.ifla.org/files/assets/cataloguing/frbr-lrm/ifla-lrm-august-2017.pdf>>.

and many references in the Glossary. The reason behind that is the Task Group has preferred to keep in the text the concepts that cataloguers are more familiar with, not finding it useful to the scope of the Statement to add the new entity. For the same reason, the Nomen definition in the Glossary has been created drawing more from the IFLA LRM § 5.4 Nomens in a Library Context than from the Table 4.2 Entities.

As a matter of fact, the most challenging section to be revised has been the Glossary. The Task Group has discussed on several occasions about how to deal with IFLA LRM concepts, without talking about completely new IFLA LRM ones such as Collective Agent, Place, Res, or Time-span.⁸ Many definitions have been expanded in order to accommodate new shades of meaning. In many cases it has been decided to juxtapose the original text with the new one. Table 1 shows the ICP2018 Agent definition in comparison with the 2016 and the IFLA LRM wordings. It may be considered a good example of the work the Task Group did, using both the Definitions and the Scope notes, merging together the sentences and inverting their order. The first part of the Scope notes has been skipped since it has been considered less useful in the context of the Statement, because of the language related to the entity-relationship modelling framework of the conceptual model.

ICP 2016	ICP 2018	IFLA LRM
<p>Agent: An entity (person, family or corporate body) that has a responsibility relationship relating to works, expressions, manifestations, or items</p>	<p>Agent: An entity (person or collective agent) that has or having had <u>the potential of intentional relationships with instances of entities of bibliographic interest (works, expressions, manifestations, items), whether that specific agent has ever done so or not. Human beings are directly or indirectly the motive force behind all such actions taken by all agents. An entity capable of deliberate actions, of being granted rights, and of being held accountable for its actions.</u></p>	<p>Agent. Definition: <u>An entity capable of deliberate actions, of being granted rights, and of being held accountable for its actions.</u> Scope notes: The entity agent is a superclass strictly equivalent to the union of the entities person and collective agent. It is defined to reduce redundancy in the model by providing a single entity to serve as the domain or range of certain relationships that apply to all specific types of agents. Being an agent requires having, or having had, <u>the potential of intentional relationships with instances of entities of bibliographic interest (works, expressions, manifestations, items), whether that specific agent has ever done so or not. Human beings are directly or indirectly the motive force behind all such actions taken by all agents.</u> Automaton (such as, weather recording devices, software translation programs, etc.), sometimes referred to as technological agents, are in this model viewed as tools used and set up by an actual agent.</p>

These decisions have been taken considering the ease of the ICP intended audience: our first goal was to provide guidance both ethical and practical. The principles (Convenience of the user, Common usage, Representation, Accuracy, Sufficiency and necessity, Significance,

⁸ The Nomen entity may be considered a separate case since it already existed in the Statement but as a FRSAD entity connected to Thema. “Nomen: any sign or sequence of signs (alphanumeric characters, symbols, sound, etc.) that a thema is known by, referred to, or addressed as”, Functional Requirements for Subject Authority Data (FRSAD): Final Report, p. 15.

Economy, Consistency and standardisation, Integration, Interoperability, Openness, Accessibility, Rationality) should be considered the moral directions to be followed in writing the cataloguing standards/rules or in creating and in making available the data. The objectives may be considered the practical directions that indicate where all the efforts should point, without detailing the specific procedures to be accomplished that are the topics of standards, cataloguing codes, descriptive guidelines, etc.

The Task Group in its internal debates has stressed the importance of keeping the Statement at a theoretical level different from a conceptual reference model like IFLA LRM. “Conceptual” means “relating to or based on mental concepts”. It is evident that a statement of cataloguing principles takes steps from a practical activity but aims to define the “why” more than the “how”. So, in the authors’ opinion, it seems more important that the definitions in IFLA standards converge to the same direction more than being exactly the same, word for word.

An issue to be discussed through a wide range of IFLA people is the existence of some kind of hierarchy among the standards related to their levels of abstraction. It seems crucial especially in cataloguing, considering, as said at the beginning, the number of “standards” produced by the Section. Maybe it could be interesting to draft the boundaries of a mutual influence not just among the documents issued by one IFLA Section but also identifying areas of potential “conceptual overlapping” among different Sections. As Gordon Dunsire said during the Cataloguing Section’s Standing Committee meeting in Cape Town “We ought to start an activity to explain our standards as a whole”.⁹ This is necessary to accomplish with the rationale of Shiyali Ramamrita Ranganathan’s *Principle of local variation* - from conceptual international level to practice - and the *Principle of unity of idea* that legitimates the interpretation of cataloguing terms in different contexts.

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⁹ https://www.ifla.org/files/assets/cataloguing/reports/minutes_2015.pdf.