

The updating of ISBD and its transformation

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Received: 20 January 2022; Accepted: 28 February 2022; First Published: 15 May 2022

ABSTRACT

This article describes the difficult work of revising the ISBD standard. It reviews the previous work and the conceptual and structural problems found in the process of updating the ISBD standard. After the recognition of the difficulties in debates, two points of view were distinguished among the members of the group that ended with the split of the ISBD Editorial Group into two subgroups. The article also gives an account of the changes carried out in the updating of the content of ISBD, to end with the discussion topics of the second working group that will change the structure of ISBD as we know it today.

KEYWORDS

ISBD; International Standard Bibliographic Description; IFLA LRM; IFLA Library Reference Model; manuscripts; celestial cartographic resources.

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Introduction

The International Standard Bibliographic Description (ISBD) is a standard that was created and is maintained by the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), intended to serve as the principal standard to promote universal bibliographic control; that is, to make universally and promptly available, in a form that is internationally acceptable, basic bibliographic data.

A long time has passed since 2011, when the ISBD Consolidated Edition was published, more time than what is stipulated for the revision of IFLA standards every five years. At that time, when it was close to being published, some last minute requests were received from user communities that could not be taken into account at that time and were left for the next review, believing it would be in five years.

The work to prepare the next revision did not start immediately, as the ISBD Review Group was busy with other parallel work that would adapt ISBD to the more developed technological environment and that would allow ISBD elements to be published as linked data. The representation of the ISBD in the W3C Resource Description Framework (RDF) standard enables its use as Linked Open Data (LOD) and enhances developments of Semantic Web bibliographic tools and services (IFLA 2021). In addition, the necessary guidelines were created to help the application in the libraries in the way that best suits their possibilities and resources (IFLA ISBD Linked Data Study Group 2016). All these works contribute to pursuing an IFLA's fundamental objective, which is to help in the evolution and adaptation of all types of libraries to technological developments.

The ISBD Consolidated edition, published in 2011, was compliant and aligned with the bibliographic model FRBR (IFLA Study Group on the Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records 1998). However, the IFLA FRBR Review Group was working on consolidating the family of models into the Library reference model LRM (IFLA 2017). For this reason, a Task Group for the Analysis of the Alignment and Impact of IFLA LRM to ISBD was established in December 2016. This group had to develop a mapping between both standards and make a final report to the Committee on Standards on the applicability of LRM in practice before its final approval, and also to prove the consistency among the IFLA standards ((IFLA ISBD Review Group 2017). This work was also considered necessary as preparation for the revision of ISBD.

The Task Group worked on a document with the title at that moment *Alignment of the ISBD element set with the IFLA LRM element set* based on the ISBD Consolidated edition (2011). Although approved by the FRBR Review Group and the Committee on Standards, this document received a set of comments during the World Library and Information Congress (WLIC) 2017 that made it appropriate to make some final adjustments in the *Introduction* to solve the concerns expressed about using the term alignment, to be finally intended mapping. The document, finally with some amendments, was approved and published as a *Mapping* in its final version in 2017 and amended in 2018 (IFLA ISBD Review Group. Task Group for the Analysis of the Alignment and Impact of IFLA LRM on ISBD 2017a). The first aim of this conceptual mapping was to keep consistency between two major IFLA standards, and the second aim was to help the ISBD Review Group in the work of the revision of the ISBD taking into account the LRM model, and also to help the readers by better understanding the semantic relationships between the ISBD data elements and



the attributes and relationships defined in the IFLA LRM model. This document was fundamental to address some concerns expressed by professionals on the alignment or correspondence of ISBD with LRM.

The mapping helped to conclude the applicability of LRM requested by IFLA, as was reported (IFLA ISBD Review Group. Task Group for the Analysis of the Alignment and Impact of IFLA LRM on ISBD 2017b, 5): "LRM is applicable and that ISBD is a valid and needed extension of LRM". In addition, the report presented different possibilities and some recommendations to be taken in the revision of ISBD, besides the elucidation of the debates carried out on the different understandings of the Manifestation concept in both standards due to the Scope note of the LRM Manifestation Statement attribute: "The manifestation statement attribute is a statement that is usually transcribed from a source or sources present in exemplars of a manifestation. Transcription conventions are codified by each implementation." (IFLA 2017, 49). The selected wording in the English scope note that defines the way in which the entity should be described was controversial in other languages. English is IFLA's official working language, but the meaning must be clear so that it would be understandable without any doubt in all languages. Clarifying this, it was possible to agree that the concept was the same with some necessary adjustments, because "until ISBD is extended to include non-published resources, singleton manifestations are outside the scope of ISBD and of this alignment." (IFLA ISBD Review Group. Task Group for the Analysis of the Alignment and Impact of IFLA LRM on ISBD 2017b, 3).

This same Task Group was also charged with the task of investigating the possible scenarios of revision of ISBD. A four-year work plan in two stages was established for the revision of ISBD that was approved by the Committee on Standards (IFLA ISBD Review Group 2018b). This work plan presented two scenarios to fulfil the objectives of revising the content of the standard to satisfy the community's needs, and to align with the overarching conceptual model LRM and the new principles included in the updated Statement of International Cataloguing Principles. The two scenarios organized the revision of ISBD step by step, first to align with the model focusing on the Manifestation entity, mainly on the attribute *Manifestation statement*; then to focus on the gap of the ISBD elements excluded for not being considered to belong to the entity or attribute mentioned, but that were considered mandatory or mandatory if available in ISBD. After finishing this process, the revision could be considered finished and it could be published. The second stage to engage in a larger revision, encompassing all the IFLA LRM components, and re-examining ISBD as a full implementation of the LRM could be taken into account. The structure of the future standard would depend on that decision.

Background and reasons for the delay in the updating work

in 2018, the ISBD Editorial Group (IEG) was finally established with the aim of initiating the review and update. Due to the different approaches of the members of the group, the IEG was reformed in its composition in May 2019 (IFLA ISBD Review Group 2018a). There were problems encountered in working at the same time on the double objectives of:

- Aligning the ISBD with LRM to keep a consistency between IFLA standards by providing the overarching conceptual model with an ISBD implementation.



- Ensuring that the ISBD continues to fulfil the needs of its user communities as expressed by the proposals submitted to the ISBD RG.

In 2019 the presentation at the 85th IFLA General Conference in Athens, Greece recognized that from the beginning of the group, there were different opinions and positions of its members on how this review should be undertaken, the format and structure, the priority issues, etc.; there was not agreement on what objective should prevail and influence the other, the updating of the content or the structure to adapt to LRM. This presentation also accounted for all the main decisions made by the IEG on the structure and other fundamental issues in ISBD, such as the following ones:

- Areas and component statements were also included. Full ISBD areas are aligned as more specific (<) than the LRM Manifestation statement.
- ISBD syntax encoding schemes are needed for statements including many elements. The reason is the added meaning that the ISBD's order of elements and punctuation provide to the information given that justify its declaration in RDF. Encoding patterns are not the transcribed statements themselves, but rather the meta information about the format. ISBD, as rules to which these schemes belong, is a work. It was decided that encoding schemes that will be subtyped by areas and so on as necessary could be included as a subtype class of RES.
- To preserve the nature of ISBD (Universal Bibliographic Control) when different options are possible, the one(s) where bibliographic control is not assured should not be used or recommended, but should be discarded (deprecated).
- ISBD as an implementation of LRM, but keeping the ISBD granularity; that is, ISBD as an extension of LRM. Therefore, it was decided to start from ISBD granularity (rather than adopting some opinions that advocated for ISBD being more general).
- After a request to the BCM Review Group for clarification of the wording used in the LRM definition of the attribute Manifestation statement, it was concluded by the BCM Group that there were no relevant differences in the concepts of that attribute in the two standards.
- Instead, the concept of Manifestation in both standards is different in that:
 - The LRM concept of Manifestation includes "... multiple items from different manifestations are physically combined or joined (books or pamphlets bound together, audio tapes spliced together, etc.) the result is a new singleton manifestation."
 - ISBD in its current version considers "manifestation" as a published resource, while LRM encompasses any manifestation, published or not" Therefore the concept of manifestation should be adapted to the LRM Manifestation, with unpublished resources added" (Escolano 2019, 2–3)

The report inferred that it was not necessary to replicate the LRM structure and presentation, but to explain how to use it at a practical level, adapting the terminology and language to the context and type of the content standard, that is applying Ranganathan's Principle of local variation (Ranganathan 1964, 65–70).

At the end of the IFLA WLIC 2019, and during the day long meeting of the IEG and ISBD Review Group, it was decided these two objectives were to be proceeded to 'subsequently' or in



parallel by sub-groups. To advance the two objectives simultaneously, it was decided to work in two parallel tracks with clear terms of references and deliverables each, with work carried out by two separate Task Forces (IFLA ISBD Review Group 2019):

- **ISBD Content Update Task Force**, to produce an Update of the content of ISBD Consolidated Edition 2011 to provide for the urgent needs of communities of users.
- **ISBD for Manifestation Task Force**, to work out an alignment of the ISBD with LRM on the manifestation level and produce a document to reflect on the future ISBD.

The reorganization into two Task Forces would allow both tracks of the Revision to proceed in parallel and will ensure that the original revision timeframe could be met, or with a minor delay. It would also permit greater focus on the tasks.

Obviously, the other way around of the previous mapping should be made; that is, from LRM entities to ISBD, which could lead to a very different result.

ISBD content update

The ISBD Content Update Task Force was formed with specialists on the subjects proposed for revision, including representatives from the Rare Books and Special Collections Section (RBSCS) of IFLA. Members represented six countries from four continents. Also, many specialists have been consulted and have contributed during all the process. They are from many different countries and institutions and are mentioned with thanks in the Introduction of the update.

This revision or updating of the content of the standard had to answer the urgent needs expressed by the ISBD communities of users. It is for this reason that the fundamental International Cataloguing Principle guiding the content update is: 2.5. Sufficiency and necessity – "Those data elements that are required to: facilitate access for all types of users, including those with specific needs; fulfil the objectives and functions of the catalogue; and describe or identify entities, should be included" (IFLA Cataloguing Section and IFLA Meeting of Experts on an International Cataloguing Code 2016). The needs for information of specialized libraries and users are covered by this principle.

The work plan was: to update ISBD content according to comments and proposals received from ISBD communities of users and: to expand coverage to include other resources, especially unpublished resources, to meet the requests from this community but also to align with the LRM Manifestation entity.

The results to be delivered: a draft of the complete revision of ISBD Consolidated Edition, published in 2011, and a document indicating the modifications that had been carried out. However, the Working Group decided to reflect the modifications in the text itself in red, facilitating identification by the user.

In the forementioned Work Plan for the revision of the ISBD 2018-2022, the first step of the Revision of ISBD is to provide an update of the content and extend the coverage of the ISBD to include a larger range of resources. Therefore, the main types of resources revised have been:

- Unpublished resources
- Celestial cartographic resources
- Component parts



To achieve this, it was necessary to clarify some existing ambiguities, introduce some elements due to the inclusion of new types of resources, review some stipulations and definitions, and also adapt the mandatory level of some elements.

Unpublished resources

Until now, ISBD has been the standard for the description of published resources. There were no specific rules for manuscripts, despite cataloguers of manuscripts applying ISBD as a general standard. Cataloguers of this type of resource were forced to adapt their descriptions to more general rules and, frequently, to make their own decisions, which could be inconsistent with others with the consequent impacts on interoperability. The categorization provided by ISBD with the content form and media type didn't allow for the searching capabilities of the system to find and select this type of resource in an integrated catalogue. The necessary elements to record the way in which the content is fixed in a carrier and the method used to carry out the production were missing. The inclusion of unpublished resources in ISBD was requested when the Consolidated edition of 2011 was very much advanced and prepared for publication, so it was not possible to include them at that time. However, a study group was established in 2010 with this target and the group concluded it was feasible to include unpublished resources in ISBD.

The updating of the standard now includes the typology of unpublished resources that covers all types of manuscripts created by any means, even electronic, existing in a library collection. This point should be clear as it was accepted under the condition that the ISBD not collide with the archival standards that should be used for archival collections. As it is the different granularity needed by different types of libraries. This is the reason why it was said in the Introduction of the update and was agreed on during the ISBD Review Group meeting in San Juan, Puerto Rico (IFLA ISBD Review Group 2011).

The ISBD as an international standard provides internationally agreed on stipulations for are general stipulations and specific ones in the ISBD, to make the descriptions compatible.

Including unpublished resources has resulted in the need to add specific stipulations for this type of resource under the general ones.

Within the category of unpublished resources, a more specific or specialized case is that of musical resources. Its problems derive from the fact that it is written for the moment and is distributed directly, for example, by composers, electronically or not. This type of resource has required even more granular specifications.

The adaptation has required adding and/or revising stipulations in all areas, except in Area 6. The extension of Area 2 to cover the typology of unpublished resources was required. It has also required creating new elements in the following areas:

- Area 0 Production process. This element is intended to organize, facilitating the searching and retrieval in a catalogue either by the way in which the content is fixed on a support or by the method used to carry out the production of the resource.
- Area 3 Unpublished statement. This element is to record any statement in the resource from which this circumstance can be deduced.

It has also required the revision of the definitions in the glossary and the addition of two definitions: Published resource and Unpublished resource.



Cartographic resources

The revision of celestial cartographic resources had been requested by specialists for the development of the current astronomical science. The studies of the stars' movements and their influence on phenomena is done by comparison with past research. "The objective of having new and old data to compare is essential in astronomy and other sciences. However, this data must be computerized and made available in corresponding databases. In this regard, while the availability of electronic data is enhanced by database accessibility via the Internet, printed information is nearly invisible in many cases, mainly due to two reasons: resources are unregistered as they have not yet been catalogued; or, they are indeed registered but their cataloguing level does not allow potential users to find them" (Escolano et al. 2017, 40).

Astronomical resources have been preserved in libraries around the world, and it is necessary that our descriptions of these resources contain those descriptive elements for easy and quick identification, location, and recovery by specialists.

The revision of cartographic resources has focused on completing the stipulations for the description of celestial cartography, clarifying some existing ambiguities and distinguishing elements already existing in the ISBD Consolidated Edition 2011. Previously, some of these elements were dealt with in notes and have now been moved into Area 3 and considered as elements. In addition, some more notes have been added for a more in-depth description of this kind of resource. These changes have resulted in the reorganization of Area 3 for more consistency and in the enlargement of Area 7.

The elements of Area 3 have been revised, adding new elements to clarify and distinguish them from others, or as has been said, because the stipulations were previously in the notes Area and were not recognized as elements, such as brightness, magnitude and celestial hemisphere. Other elements were mixed, e.g. Epoch must be differentiated as an element with respect to the Equinox. Other elements revised and added are Perspective, Projection and Wavelength.

All these elements are important for the scientific community and its comparative work to predetermine future movements of the stars. Moreover, the added elements are not mandatory if the information does not exist in the resource and cannot be easily identified by cataloguers without any specific knowledge about Astronomy or Cartography.

ISBD granularity

The ISBD is a flexible standard that allows for different levels of granularity in description, especially dealing with multipart works. However, it was missing the stipulations for the more granular description of a continuing resources article. Users searching the guiding stipulations for this kind of description in ISBD Consolidated Edition 2011, were referred to a separate publication *Guidelines for the Application of the ISBDs to the Description of Component Parts*, published in 2003 (IFLA Working Group on the International Standard Bibliographic Description for Analytic Entries 1978-83 and IFLA Ad Hoc Working Group on Guidelines for the Description of Component Parts 1985-87 1988).

Now stipulations for the description of component parts have been developed and integrated with the other stipulations in the structure of the ISBD. This kind of description is a current practice



carried out in many types of libraries, mainly specialized, allowing different levels of description to coexist in a consistent way in the same integrated catalogue.

Chapter A has been the most affected since no more elements have been necessary in other areas because they are the same as those of the type of resource.

Obviously, in section A.2.1 of Object of the bibliographic description, it was required to add the corresponding stipulation for the component part.

The added stipulations in A.2.8 and A.3.4 specify the necessary structure for this kind of description of component parts, not only to describe the part itself, but also to identify the source or hosting resource in which the part is contained and to provide details about the exact location of the part within the source resource, with the linking element connecting the two descriptions.

The stipulations of section A.4.1 deal with the selection and order of preference of the sources of information for the description that it will be the same defined for each type of resource.

It was necessary also to add definitions in the Glossary.

The aim of these additions has been to achieve consistency in the provisions and to enlarge the flexibility of ISBD.

The updating was finished and approved by the ISBD Review Group in March 2021 and sent for approval of the Committee of Standards (received on November 29th) and the Professional Committee. It was published in the ISBD Review Group web page (IFLA ISBD Review Group 2021) as a Draft waiting for the final approval of the Professional Committee (December 22, 2021).

Transformation or transition of ISBD

This updating of the ISBD mentioned before is not fully adapted to IFLA LRM. The updating of ISBD is focused on content stipulations that describe the resource, that is the main class and domain of the mapping started from ISBD to LRM, as it is recognized in the mapping:

"All ISBD properties are defined on the class resource, which although it reflects the four IFLA LRM Work/Expression/Manifestation/Item (WEMI) entities, remains disjoint from them. However, the IFLA LRM properties (attributes and relationships) that are relevant in mapping from ISBD are defined with the appropriate WEMI entity as their domain. As a result, this conceptual mapping cannot be a formal or operational alignment from ISBD elements to LRM elements. Instead, the mappings are intended to support understanding of the data for different purposes" (IFLA ISBD Review Group. Task Group for the Analysis of the Alignment and Impact of IFLA LRM on ISBD 2017b, 5).

It was necessary to work in the other way alignment, from LRM to ISBD with the Manifestation domain.

Another Task Force was created, the ISBD for Manifestation Task Force, entrusted with working out an alignment of the ISBD element set to the LRM manifestation entity and envisioning the future direction of the ISBD. According to the terms of reference, its tasks are:

1. Complete an alignment of the ISBD to the LRM at the-Manifestation level, working out an element set for that alignment.



2. Analyse the gaps, i.e., the elements of the ISBD Consolidated edition that in the cited alignment have been excluded, but are mandatory, mandatory if the information is available, or optional.

The group must present as deliverable, a document ISBD for Manifestation, consisting of:

- the ISBD to LRM Manifestation Elements Set; and,
- a set of stipulations for describing a manifestation according to LRM.

The Task Force also will have to reflect on transforming the ISBD into a Full Implementation of the LRM, a working document that will constitute the basis of the future work encompassing all the LRM elements and other components, and which would entail rethinking the structure of the ISBD.

The fundamental international cataloguing principle for this work is Representation:

"2.3. Representation. A description should represent a resource as it appears. Controlled forms of names of persons, corporate bodies and families should be based on the way an entity describes itself. Controlled forms of work titles should be based on the form appearing on the first manifestation of the original expression. If this is not feasible, the form commonly used in reference sources should be used" (IFLA Cataloguing Section and IFLA Meeting of Experts on an International Cataloguing Code 2016).

This work of the Task Force is on course; therefore, nothing can be said for sure at this time.

The fundamental topics of the debate are coincident with those that were already pointed out in the presentation made at the 85th World Library and Information Congress (Escolano 2019), that led to organizing the Editorial Group into two Task Forces.

Among them, it should be highlighted that transcription is the primary topic, as it affects others. To better understand, it is necessary to remember the previous debate regarding the interpretation of the meaning that the word transcription had in the scope note of the LRM Manifestation Statement. It became clear that manifestation statements are normally transcribed or/and recorded. Transcription conventions are codified by each implementation.

The Task Force is trying to find a compromise between a very broad level with only a 'WYSI-WYG' (what you see is what you get) manifestation statement, that does not require standardization, or does to a minimal degree; and the most granular level of the element to which information has been added or is in some way normalized.

Transcribed manifestation statements are strings of text used for display. They are keyword indexed, and have high recall, so with this in mind, there doesn't seem to be any reason to break them down to finer granularity. In contrast, recorded elements, have fine granularity and high precision because they are controlled. However, doubts arise regarding the coverage of the user's needs with respect to the visualization of the data at the broadest level.

On the other hand, a "medium" level of granularity would require some normalization, but at the same time it does not stray too far from the representation principle. The idea is that recorded elements complement the broader transcribed statements.

Medium granularity aligns with the current ISBD "Areas" where transcription is relevant (1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8).

In a sense, the finer the granularity of the statement and the more normalized the transcription is, the further one moves away from the principle of "Representation."



Similarly, the issue of transcription applies to the added standard punctuation. It is considered that a very broad WYSIWYG transcribed statement, requires no inter-element punctuation, that is, added standard punctuation between statements, because there is just the one Manifestation statement super-element. However, statement granularity refinement adds the need for added standard punctuation to separate statements in a "gathering" or "concatenated" Manifestation statement. When guided by the ICP principle of Representation, punctuation within a Manifestation statement, "intra-element punctuation", would be transcribed as displayed on the manifestation, with a possible addition of punctuation for clarity. However, the more punctuation is added, the more you move away from the principle of representation. So, the Task Force is aiming for a simple approach concerning standard punctuation, with as little additions as possible, which of course also depends on what punctuation is already present in the Manifestation.

On these premises, the set of elements will be elaborated, although there is still no decision made on the names or labels that still are provisional (Wetterstrom 2021).

Conclusion

For the moment, the content of the standard has been revised and updated. It can be said that with some delay IFLA has responded to the requirements of its communities of users regarding their cataloguing needs.

However, the transformation process continues, not only to fully adapt to the conceptual model. This transformation of the standard could not be restricted to the structure and presentation format to which we are used.

Maybe we can obtain in a future the so much expected International Cataloguing Code, promised since 2003 when the five IFLA Meetings of Experts on an International Cataloguing Code (IME-ICC) were organized.



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