

UK THEMA NATIONAL GROUP – Minutes**Location:** PLS, 1st Floor, Barnard's Inn, 86 Fetter Lane, London EC4A 1EN**Date and time:** Wednesday 14th September 2016, 2pm**Minutes taken by:** Sophia Sophocleous**Present**

Alaina-Marie Bassett, BIC
 Graham Bell, EDItEUR
 Chris Bond, Waterstones (delegate)
 Katya Dolgodvorova, PRH (delegate)
 Nabiha Evans, Amazon (dialling in)
 Azar Hussain, Faber & Faber (AHU)
 Sophia Sophocleous, BIC
 Howard Willows, Nielsen (Chair)

Apologies

Kat Coveyduck, Virtuales
 Richard Davies, Elsevier
 Andrew Henty, Virtuales UK (AHE)
 Euan Hirst, Blackwell's
 Karina Luke, BIC
 Alan Trewartha, HarperCollins Publishers
 Gabrielle Wallington, Waterstones
 Alfred Willmann, Penguin Random House (PRH)

1. Introductions and apologies

HW welcomed the Group to the meeting and read out the apologies. It was noted that some members of this Group have now missed two or more consecutive meetings.

➤ **ACTION:** AMB to approach members of this Group who do not regularly attend meetings.

2. Competition Law – Conduct Reminder

The Group were reminded about BIC's Competition Law Policy – for more information regarding this policy, click here: <http://www.bic.org.uk/149/BIC-Competition-Law-Policy/>

3. Review minutes and follow up on actions from the last meeting

The minutes from the previous meeting were approved without corrections. The following actions from that meeting were discussed as follows:

- Thema logo

HW informed the Group that the prospect of a *Thema* logo had been discussed in previous meetings of this Group but that as this is something for the International Steering Committee (ISC) to decide on he will raise it in their next meeting at the Frankfurt Book Fair in October 2016. GB noted that he has not received any requests for the typeface information for a Greek Theta – θ – for use in presentations, etc.

- Migrating to Thema BIC Breakfast

HW confirmed that this second *Thema* BIC Breakfast will go ahead on Tuesday 27th September 2016 and will be sponsored by Virtuales Publishing Solutions.

- BIC Bites

AMB confirmed that a very minor revision of the *Thema* BIC Bite has now been completed. The updated version is available on the BIC website here:

http://www.bic.org.uk/files/pdfs/BIC%20BITES/BIC%20Bites%20Introduction%20to%20Thema_FINAL.pdf

- Thema Mission Statement

HW confirmed that the Mission Statement has now been incorporated into the *Thema* page on BIC's website here: <http://www.bic.org.uk/86/THEMA/> and the EDItEUR website here: <http://www.editeur.org/151/thema>

- Shakespeare subject classification code

HW noted that after in-depth discussion, the ISC rejected this Group's proposal to include 'Shakespeare' as a subject in *Thema* V1.2; it was rejected on the grounds that *Thema* would always be used in conjunction with other metadata elements that can more easily and appropriately identify Shakespeare and his relationship with the work, i.e. as Contributor or Name as Subject; it may also be used in Keywords and may appear in the Title or Subtitle.

HW accepted that there are three 'Shakespeare' subject categories in the BIC Scheme (for Shakespeare plays, Shakespeare criticism, and Shakespeare for schools) and the absence of these is seen by some as a loss when moving over to *Thema*. Consequently some members of this Group propose that it should be included as a subject in *Thema* V1.2.

HW and GB noted that if the request was to be re-submitted then a different and stronger case must be presented, as the previous request was rejected (for the reasons stated above, and also because of concerns about opening up the floodgates for requests of a similar nature – 'where does it end?'). Two possible approaches were:

- 1) To emphasise the unique position of Shakespeare and his cultural importance worldwide, not only in the UK; that more books are published about Shakespeare than any other writer, etc.
- 2) To add 'Shakespeare' as a UK National Extension instead, if a suitable context / location could be found. GB agreed that this would be easier as although this would still need to be ratified by the ISC, it is unlikely that it will be turned down and will also be a quicker process (taking 3 months as opposed to waiting for the *Thema* V1.3 revision). However, it does not fall neatly into any of the areas that are subject to national extensions (primarily the place, time, and educational purpose qualifiers, plus – at least in theory – the language, interest and artistic style qualifiers).

The Group agreed that BIC should liaise with AW (a strong proponent of this addition) to write a paragraph outlining the new argument.

- **ACTION:** AMB to liaise with AW regarding his writing a paragraph outlining the argument for including 'Shakespeare' as a subject in *Thema* V1.3 or as a national extension in any future release. This can then be circulated to this Group for review

before it is presented to the ISC (preferably at Frankfurt Book Fair 2016). NB: this paragraph must present new arguments due to the original proposal being rejected by the ISC previously.

Post-Meeting Update: an initial proposal has been submitted by AW and is appended to these minutes. Comments on this are welcome.

- Geographical Qualifiers in Thema

The proposed UK Geographical National Extensions will be discussed under Item 4 of these minutes.

4. Update on Thema Activity

- Thema V.1.2

GB informed the Group that *Thema* 1.2 is now available in full in Danish, English, German, Polish, Spanish and Swedish. These are available in full on the online browser at <http://editeur.dyndns.org/thema>, and most are available as downloadable files (Excel, or readable PDF and HTML) from the main EDItEUR website: <http://www.editeur.org/151/thema>. This is with the exception of Spanish which, at the request of the translator (the Spanish publishers association, FGEE), is only available via the interactive browser. Other languages are also available on the browser and as downloads, though because the translations have not yet been fully updated to V1.2, some terms revert back to English (Arabic, French, Hungarian, Italian, Lithuanian, Norwegian). Partial translations in Japanese and Russian are available only via the browser.

GB noted that some organisations scrape *Thema* V1.2 from the browser ('screen scraping' around 75,000 web pages) rather than downloading the data files. As translations are constantly being improved and added, screen scrapes quickly become outdated. In response to this, GB noted that the full *Thema* database is now available on request to EDItEUR members as an SQLite data file, and there are regular updates.

HW noted that Greece's Books in Print database is moving from *Thema* V1.1 to V1.2. GB added that although a full Greek translation had been completed and is in use, it has not yet been made publicly available by OSDEL, the translators. Turkish and Portuguese translations are available for V1.1, but have not been 'promoted' to the V1.2 online browser pending translation of the user interface. GB noted that Mexico and Brazil are interested in using *Thema* but is not aware of any further developments in Russia, after initial interest. China's translation is with the Ministry for approval and Japan has translated half of it. GB noted that Arabic translations are up-to-date with *Thema* V1.1. The USA remains supportive but slow on the uptake because of the strength of BISAC in that market.

Post-Meeting Update: EDItEUR is in receipt of the full Chinese translation and is testing it for presentation in the browser; approval for publication is expected during October. Lithuanian has been fully updated for V1.2.

- Geographical National Extensions in *Thema*

GB reminded the Group that National Extension codes can be added outside of the *Thema* review period and circulated copies of the current geographical values for UK and a strawman list of proposals for a range of new UK national extensions. GB noted that this list includes national parks and other prominent tourist destinations as well as the 25 most populous cities (that are not already in *Thema* or BIC). HW noted that the USA has extended their list to include areas as small as Brooklyn and Harlem. GB noted that the USA use a structured approach of including each state, each state's capital and then further cities within the state. He added that such a rigorous hierarchal approach does not work as well in the UK because there are historical counties and administrative areas that do not neatly nest within each other. GB added that German codes include historic regions that no longer exist, and historic regions in the UK such as Wessex could be added.

The Group went on to discuss 'literary' regions such as Thomas Hardy's Wessex and James Herriot's Yorkshire, though this was ultimately ruled out. AHU suggested adding the city of Cambridge, as although it has a relatively small population, there are many books about it, or set there. GB agreed and urged the Group to provide more suggestions. GB noted that *Thema* encourages the use of multiple codes, so a book may have both historical and geographic qualifiers.

- **ACTION:** GB to circulate the strawman document, which outlines the proposals for UK geographical National Extensions in *Thema*, to this Group, ASAP. (NB this document was circulated as a hard copy during the meeting).
- **ACTION:** ALL to provide feedback on the proposed geographical National Extensions and supply comments and suggestions to GB and HW by **Monday 17th October 2016**. (These locations may include tourist destinations, historical locations and settings for fiction, but not fictitious places).
- **ACTION:** AMB to send the members of this Group a reminder to provide any feedback/suggestions, if they have not already done so, by Monday 17th October 2016.

- *Thema* activity in the UK

HW informed the Group that 43 suppliers are sending *Thema* codes to Nielsen and that this includes most of the publishers represented on this Group.

5. *Thema* promotion in the UK

AMB asked the Group if there is anything that the BIC Training, Events and Communications Committee should be looking at. The Group had nothing to report.

HW informed the Group that BIC's Implementing *Thema* Training will be going ahead on Tuesday 4th October 2016, following the forthcoming *Thema* BIC Breakfast (see Item 3).

GB informed the Group that the International Supply Chain Seminar will be going ahead on Tuesday 18th October 2016 at Frankfurt, and will include presentations on *Thema*.

6. Reports on *Thema* progress from members

- NE – Amazon have taken a few steps forward to prepare for *Thema*, and ensure it can be fully integrated into the Amazon classification system. NE added that Amazon are trying to align Germany, France and the UK before aligning with the USA and are announcing things as they come. NE noted that she would be happy to discuss this information further with HW for presentation at the *Thema* BIC Breakfast. NE noted that the UK are currently leading with *Thema* and that the intention is to branch out to China and South America once it can be proved that it works in Europe first.
- AHU – reported that he is hoping to get a live feed with Goodreads soon but has not received much feedback to date.
- CB – noted nothing new from Waterstones with regards to *Thema*.
- KD – noted that Penguin Random House has converted their backlist from BIC Subject Classification to *Thema* V1.1.

GB noted that it has been two years since BIC stated that there is no intention to upgrade BIC 2.1 and that now may be the time to strengthen this statement by saying that there will be no update to the BIC Subject Categories Scheme and that *Thema* is effectively this Scheme's replacement. The Group agreed that this should be discussed by this Group and the BIC Metadata Sub-Committee.

- **ACTION:** HW to liaise with Amazon, Waterstones and Blackwell's regarding their progress with *Thema* with a view to presenting this information at the forthcoming *Thema* BIC Breakfast on Tuesday 27th September 2016.
- **ACTION:** AMB to liaise with KL and the BIC Metadata Sub-Committee to ascertain whether a statement from BIC is required to publically announce that there will be no further updates to the BIC Subject Categories Scheme and that *Thema* is effectively this Scheme's replacement.

7. A.O.B.

AHU asked whether it is possible to check which countries are using *Thema*. GB stated that the best way of checking this would be to have a look at the list of national *Thema* Groups as this will indicate active participation. HW's map may be more specific. GB added that looking at the languages available for *Thema* would also give some indication of whether the country is using it, as it takes considerable effort to translate and can be a sign of the level of commitment to *Thema* (obviously this does not apply to the English-speaking countries).

8. Date of next meeting

Wednesday 14th December 2016.

ADDENDUM

Proposal for addition of Shakespeare codes to *Thema*

By Alfred Willmann, Penguin Random House

If someone would have asked me pre the internet a simple question, “should Shakespeare have its own classification”? When I was a young bookseller at Hatchards in London, my answer would have been very simple, “yes please”!

Thema, like BIC is a classification system designed to help and aid booksellers, aggregators and now the internet to place books in such a way that a potential customer, reader or researcher can discover them.

The great news about *Thema* is that it is an international standard and not just a national one. It is a shame however that unlike in BIC subject categorisation a figure like Shakespeare cannot be classified by having specific coding provided.

A number of writers, composers, architects and philosophers and even garden designers made such an impact on our history (home and internationally) that I believe they justify classification.

So the argument should be, should someone like **Capability Brown** have his own classifiers within Garden design and landscaping? Should someone be able to nominate someone like **Andrea Palladio**, after all our architecture would not be the same without him.

Can I suggest that every country will have such historical ‘giants’, each national group could nominate a small number of figures. In my head it would make total sense if in Germany, for example, **Goethe** would be nominated, in France **Voltaire**, in Italy **Dante** and so on. It would be up to the national groups to allocate up to say 10 figures of national importance within the arts.

Why do I think that this is important? The reason is in the case of Shakespeare not every book title will have the name in the title, but it could be a book of interest and it is very likely that at least in any English language bookshop a section on Shakespeare is found, so it would be helping discoverability when browsing.

I would be grateful if this request could be considered and discussed at the forthcoming ISC meeting at Frankfurt Book Fair 2016.