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UK *THEMA* NATIONAL GROUP – Minutes
Location: PLS, 1st Floor, Barnard's Inn, 86 Fetter Lane, London EC4A 1EN
Date and time: Wednesday 31st May 2017, 2pm
Minutes taken by: Alaina-Marie Bassett

Present	Apologies
Alaina-Marie Bassett, BIC	Kat Coveyduck, Virtusales
Graham Bell, EDItEUR	Richard Davies, Elsevier
John Bell, HarperCollins Publishers	Fiona Green, Bloomsbury Publishing
Chris Bond, Waterstones (delegate)	Andrew Henty, Virtusales (AHE)
Isabel Gouveia, Amazon (dialled in)	Euan Hirst, Blackwell's
Azar Hussain, Faber & Faber (AHU)	Alan Trewartha, HarperCollins Publishers
Lada Kriz, Penguin Random House (delegate)	Alfred Willmann, Penguin Random House (PRH)
Karina Luke, BIC	
Laura Murray, Bloomsbury Publishing (delegate)	
Chris Saynor, EDItEUR	
Gabrielle Wallington, Waterstones	
Howard Willows, Nielsen (Chair)	

1. **Introductions and apologies**
   HW welcomed the Group and delivered the apologies. The Group introduced themselves for the purpose of the minutes. IG of Amazon was welcomed to the Group as a new member.

2. **Competition Law – Conduct Reminder**
   The Group were reminded about BIC's Competition Law Policy – for further 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 last meeting were approved and the following actions were discussed:

   - Attendance of the UK *Thema* National Group meetings
     ➢ **ACTION:** AMB to continue liaising with the members of this Group that have missed 2 or more consecutive meetings.

   - Information about *Thema* on the BIC website
     KL confirmed that the BIC website is now up-to-date regarding *Thema* – the only missing document identified had been the reverse mapping from *Thema* 1.1 to BIC 2.1 and this has since been added to the BIC website.

   - BIC Bite: Introduction to *Thema*
     KL noted that the *Thema* BIC Bite was reviewed by GB prior to London Book Fair 2017 (LBF17) to ascertain whether any amendments / clarification / additions are needed. She confirmed that none are required at this time.

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- BIC Subject Classification Scheme
  KL confirmed that an announcement stating that the BIC Subject Classification Scheme is now frozen and will not be updated going forwards has been added to the BIC website.

- Australian Working Group for *Thema*
  CS noted that the first meeting of this Working Group took place in April 2017.

- *Thema* v1.2 to BIC 2.1 mapping
  GB reported that this mapping has been updated and is available on the EDItEUR website.
  ➢ **ACTION**: KL to double-check that the mapping is showing on the EDItEUR website.

4. **Update on *Thema* Activity**
   - *Thema* v1.2 international development and translations
     LK reported that the Czech *Thema* interest group is now in the process of reviewing the first, draft Czech translation for *Thema* v1.2; he noted that some of the subjects had been translated too literally and needed correcting for this reason. GB also reported that the existence of a complete Korean translation of *Thema* v1.2 was revealed prior to LBF17. He noted that the Chinese translation, which was reported on previously, remains unpublished to date. CS noted that the French Canadian *Thema* translation is undergoing review currently as it requires further clarification. The Group was informed that there is no Latin American Spanish translation of *Thema* at present although several countries (including Mexico, Argentina, Ecuador, Brazil, etc.) have liaised to discuss this.

     CS reported that a new National Group is being set up in Finland. IG commented that, from her experiences of liaising with publishers across Europe, France appears to be reluctant to move to *Thema*. CS informed IG that France has its own longstanding national subject classification scheme (CLIL) which is deeply integrated in the French book industry and will therefore take time to migrate from. He reported that a meeting is taking place in France soon where both *Thema* and IG's presentation at the BIC Building a Better Business Seminar at LBF17 will be on the agenda for discussion.
     ➢ **ACTION**: CS to liaise further with IG regarding the French *Thema* National Group and France's national subject classification scheme.

     CS reported that, as well as their translations of *Thema* itself, National Groups are being encouraged to translate the Basic User Instructions for *Thema* also; the Danish *Thema* National Group has already translated this document. HW commented that the Basic User Instructions are in no way comprehensive and that it may be advantageous to include worked examples and sample records in the instructions going forwards. GB agreed. CS noted that this Group will therefore need to provide examples for the UK market, especially for products that currently cannot be well classified, going forwards.
     ➢ **ACTION**: ALL to consider useful examples for the UK market for inclusion in the Basic User Instructions; these may be particularly well-known titles, titles that illustrate a particular feature of *Thema*, or titles that are not able to be well classified under the BIC scheme.

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- Geographical qualifiers in *Thema*
  CS noted that an international Working Group will begin to identify any gaps / required geographical qualifiers for *Thema* in June 2017; its suggestions / findings will then be presented to the *Thema* International Steering Committee (ISC) at Frankfurt Book Fair 2017 (FBF17). CS noted that it would be great if members of UK *Thema* National Group could join the Geographical Qualifiers Working Group.
  ➢ **ACTION**: ALL to consider volunteering to sit on the geographical qualifiers working group; please liaise with CS to find out more.

  CS reported that EDItEUR has now begun to add synonyms into the *Thema* browser including UK and US spellings. He noted that synonyms are relatively easy to add into the browser and encouraged the Group to put forward their suggestions for additions. CS also noted that there is now a column for synonyms on the spreadsheet. GB noted that there isn't a separate American-English translation of *Thema*, instead users can simply search using an American spelling and the results provided will display the British spelling. He noted that the same solution could be considered for the Spanish translation when other South American countries join.

5. *Thema* **promotion in UK**
   KL reported that Amazon's presentation on Browse Tree Guides & *Thema* codes went ahead during BIC's Building a Better Business Seminar at the LBF17 on Thursday 16th March 2017. She noted that BIC continues to tweet about the *Thema* BIC Bite, and the BIC Implementing *Thema* training course is now almost exclusively focussed on *Thema* rather than the BIC codes; GB noted that he has also provided this training in North America. KL noted that this Group previously suggested that a BIC Breakfast on *Thema* should be held following LBF17 – although a theme / hook was not identified. GB suggested showing organisations how to be more creative when classifying in *Thema*, e.g. using the hugely expanded range of options for fiction. It was also suggested that testimonials from organisations that use *Thema* to date could be compiled and displayed during the event. The Group agreed that this BIC Breakfast would need to include presentations from retailers / those at the end of the book industry supply chain.
   ➢ **ACTION**: AMB to look into producing a BIC Breakfast on creative classification using *Thema* which should include testimonies from organisations which use / provide *Thema* codes and a presentation from at least one retailer.

6. **Reports of *Thema* progress from members**
   - HW – Nielsen is currently testing the migration of *Thema* codes to its new system. HW reported that Nielsen can now assign and store *Thema* codes which he said will significantly improve classification going forwards. He informed the Group that Nielsen has recently been approached by smaller publishers regarding *Thema*.
   - LM – Bloomsbury Publishing has not implemented *Thema* as yet. LM reported that Bloomsbury's internal academic code audit is now complete however.
   - GW – GW confirmed that she is promoting the idea of *Thema* internally to Waterstones' website team. She advised that there is no timescale in view for Waterstones implementation of *Thema* at this time, but that it may be aligned with the switch to

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ONIX 3.0 feeds from Nielsen.

- <u>JB</u> – HarperCollins Publishers has now completed its reverse mapping from *Thema* to BIC, enabling them to classify natively in *Thema* and generate BIC for legacy purposes.
- <u>AHU</u> – Faber & Faber has almost completed assigning *Thema* codes to its backlist titles now. AHU and HW had discussed the unexpected allocation of the <MainSubject/> flag to a *Thema* Qualifier rather than to a Subject code, in Faber's ONIX feed to Nielsen. GB confirmed this is valid ONIX (flag can be applied to any single value from any subject code list, and Qualifiers are distinct code lists), but it was agreed it was not best *Thema* practice – and that a note could be added to the Basic User Instructions.
- <u>GB</u> – EDItEUR recently provided an internal presentation on *Thema* for a specific, major academic publisher. GB reported that this presentation was given twice in one day to approximately 45 people and the organisation is now looking to implement *Thema*.
- <u>IG</u> – Amazon has created Browse Tree Guides. IG noted that in some instances the Guides are so granular that it is not possible to use *Thema* codes so keywords are then used in addition. IG informed the Group that Amazon is prioritising the supply of *Thema* codes from publishers and their ingestion; although it will continue to accept BIC, BISAC, etc. codes for the foreseeable future. IG reported that Amazon is currently experiencing issues with classifying children's and young adult books and uses keywords for this. She noted that a list of subjects / products which cannot be suitably classified to date is being compiled by Amazon which this Group will receive in due course. HW noted that if this list could be sent to EDItEUR ASAP / within the next month the suggestions could be considered as additions for *Thema* v1.3. IG agreed to circulate the list ASAP.
  - ➢ **ACTION**: IG to collate and circulate Amazon's current list of suggestions for *Thema* V1.3 to CS, GB and HW, ASAP.

HW noted that classifying children's and young adult fiction has been discussed by this Group previously and although no decision had been reached, some of the Group felt that it may not be best practice to specify 'Audience' using a subject classification scheme. He noted however that the conversation is likely to be re-opened in relation to *Thema* v2. GB noted that EDItEUR is seeking the views of other *Thema* National Groups on this topic, and all options are open, from the removal of the Children's/Teenage section, and any reference to audience, to the addition of a Young Adult section and detailed readership indicators in the Qualifiers (as had been requested by some Groups for v1.3 – see below). CS noted however that the term 'young adult' is a linguistic issue in its own right, as different regions perceive the young adult age range differently, e.g. in France young adult would mean 18+ whereas in the UK it is maybe 15+. The Group noted that there are other audience level terms in use, such as 'new adult' (ages 18-30?), Millennials, and specific issues such as titles written for 'reluctant readers' e.g. where the interest age might be 15 years, but the reading age (ability level) might be 9 years.

7. **Consolidated list of proposals for *Thema* v1.3**

HW noted that this document was circulated to the Group on Wednesday 31st May 2017. A technical working group will be set up in due course to go through the proposed codes in detail and a representative from the UK will be needed for this. The final document will be

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reviewed by the *Thema* ISC at FBF17 and is likely to be published in early 2018. The Group discussed the following sections of the proposals list:

- Interest Age

  There were a number of proposals around more specific indication of reading age. Currently in section 5A, *Thema* allows only for the approximate indication of lower limits (e.g. from c 3 years), but there were requests to enable interest age to be expressed as either: an exact age (e.g. for 3 year olds); or as a fixed age band (e.g. for 3-5 year olds); or as a flexible combination of lower and upper limits as required. GB noted there are arguments for and against all of these options: they increase precision in discoverability, but may also be unhelpfully restrictive, and they are of course open to misuse. HW informed the Group that age range bands were not added into the BIC Subject Classification Scheme because the age ranges could not be agreed upon – everyone consulted had different bands; also, proposals to indicate ranges on books by colour coded flags had been abandoned in the face of strong opposition.

  KL noted that all interest age options are to a certain extent subjective as each child and parent will differ somewhat. It was noted that there is not currently a list of subjects / content / language that would be unsuitable for each age, i.e. a tool to help publishers decide which band their book should be in. JB noted that too much flexibility can prove to be detrimental as it will not aid consistency. He told the Group that in his experience booksellers want an upper limit whilst publishers don't want to restrict potential readership in this way. IG noted that Amazon isn't supplied with age ranges in the UK, France or Germany however they do receive this information from Italy and Spain but only for children's books. The bands supplied to Amazon are as follows: Ages 0-3, 3-6, 6-9 and 9-12. HW commented that 'young adult' therefore starts at 12 / 13 at Amazon.

  CS noted that the *Thema* ISC suggested that a sub-group of specialists should be formed to discuss the handling of audience and age ranging of titles in *Thema* – consisting of both publishers and retailers. HW commented that intended readership age (although it covers a range of abilities and interests) is at least an objective fact, whereas terms such as 'young adult' are much less clear. GW agreed, noting that young adult is also a genre which could complicate matters further. LK informed the Group that Czech books consider teenagers to be 11-19 years of age whereas in the UK it's 13-19. GB noted that any solution to this issue may not be universally approved.

  GB noted that most indications of intended audience are dealt with using separate Audience schemes, e.g. through the Audience composite in ONIX. HW commented it is a key principle of *Thema* that it should not replicate or encompass information that is already enabled in well-maintained code lists e.g. in ONIX; thus he objected strongly to proposals for the addition of standard terms such as 'postgraduate' as these are catered for elsewhere. However, he accepted that children's and teenage readership was a special case – not least as it is already included in *Thema*; HW accepted the need to allow for more specificity where required but warned against too rigid structures or restrictive requirements.

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- Social & Cultural Interests
CS noted that by modifying the heading at 5P and adding a new Qualifier at 5PX, the UK can propose a National Extension for Shakespeare, as follows:
  - 5P   Relating to specific groups *or social & cultural interests*
  - 5PX   Relating to specific cultural interests
  - 5PX-GB-S   Shakespeare

HW and CS confirmed that Finland have suggested that a code for the Moomins might be something added in this area in the future, and it is likely that other *Thema* National Groups will have their own regional suggestions too. CS commented that the any proposed addition would have to be something that: cannot be adequately classified currently, is of enduring and wide-ranging applicability; and is not contentious, i.e. a trademark. GB noted that retailers are likely to have a shelf dedicated to books which relate to such topics: thus a shelf labelled 'Shakespeare' in a UK bookshop may have books classified variously under plays, theatre, poetry, lit crit, biography, history – even fiction, travel, humour etc. LK noted that there is a folklore character in traditional Czech fiction who might be a candidate for a Czech qualifier also.

- Other proposals / suggestions
CS informed the Group that there have been multiple travel suggestions put forward for *Thema* v1.3 including cycle paths and canal / narrow boat trips. New suggestions for transport and sport – including barges, dog-sledging, and tai chi – have also been requested. CS noted that yoga has also been put forward as a suggestion for spiritual disciplines (in addition to the current 'yoga for exercise'. Arthurian Literature has been suggested however HW noted that this could equally be included as a social / cultural UK qualifier. Other proposals include new suggestions for: plants, insects, romance serials (fiction), science fiction and fantasy, and superhuman / superpowers. JB noted that there are existing Browse Tree Guides for romance that aren't catered for by BIC, BISAC or *Thema* presently. GB noted that the number of romance genres is justified by the volume of titles available.

HW suggested that the Group should, following this meeting, provide feedback on the proposals to date and make any further suggestions they have ASAP. GB noted however that the Group should be conservative in its suggestions.
  - ➢ **ACTION**: ALL to review the spreadsheet of proposals for *Thema* V1.3 and provide feedback / make further suggestions, sending this information to CS, GB and HW. The feedback should be supplied ASAP but especially **before Friday 30th June 2017**.
  - ➢ **ACTION**: ALL to consider volunteering to sit on the *Thema* V1.3 working group; liaise with CS to find out more.
  - ➢ **ACTION**: CS to circulate a list of the current members of the *Thema* v1.3 Working Group.

8. **A.O.B.**
The Group did not have anything further to report.

9. **Date of next meeting**
Wednesday 13th September 2017.