

TALKING ABOUT STANDARDS.



Standards help us to connect processes and create efficiencies through interoperability and consistency. They give us a shared understanding and terminology that facilitates predictability in data, services, languages, tools and information. However, standards are not developed in a vacuum and rely on context to be useful and applicable. Standards are hollow if they are not used. The value of standards relies on a community of users that apply, maintain, develop, and derive value in working contexts to keep them coherent and useful. Behind every good standard is a community of users testing, monitoring, discussing, debating, and updating it.

This column highlights recent standards activities relevant to the library and information scene. Please get in touch to connect or promote standards activity.

Thema: bringing Australian subject headings forward

The inaugural meeting of the Australian Thema group was hosted by the Australian Publishers Association in Sydney on 13 September 2018. Thema is a global broad subject category scheme used by all parts of the book trade – from publishers to booksellers to public libraries. Thema subject headings are assigned to works as soon as possible by publishers to enhance discoverability and merchandising and wend their way into library catalogues via legal deposit and the Australian National Bibliographic Database.

While Thema is an international standard managed by EDItEUR through several international interest groups and an International Steering Committee, the Sydney meeting aimed to identify and propose any Australian extensions to Thema.

Attending the inaugural Australian Thema group were publishers, booksellers, library vendors, the Australian Publishers Association, Nielsen Book Data, and staff from the National Library of Australia. Updates on Thema in Australia can be followed via the Australian Publishers Association website (bit.ly/2zoqB2m). Learn more about Thema at (bit.ly/2FBMxwi).

Setting resource sharing standards

The ALIA Interlibrary Loan (ILL) Advisory Group is preparing to revise the ALIA Interlibrary Lending Resource

Sharing (ILRS) Code. The ILRS Code affects all Australian libraries and the way they organise their resource sharing operations. Last reviewed in 2013, the ILRS Code is designed to support a multi-faceted approach to resource sharing based on reciprocity and fairness between libraries, respect for the moral and intellectual rights of creators and publishers and compliance with legal and contractual obligations.


It is a principles-based code that outlines service-level standards and recommended delivery prices for ILL. Using information gained from a comprehensive survey of the Australian resource sharing community, the ALIA ILL Advisory Group will review the ILRS Code and make recommendations for changes. Find out more at (bit.ly/2S57std).

Deep dive into the Resource Description and Access standard

Want to learn more about the details and implementation of Resource Description and Access (RDA)? Tune into the Australian Committee on Cataloguing website for an array of RDA information at (bit.ly/2PNEtNW).

Review the detailed presentations from the seminar on Resource Description for the 21st century held at the National Library last September, available at (bit.ly/2BsHcUd). You can gain insights about international implementation of RDA from the *Diversity of Data: RDA in the international context* event held in Kuala Lumpur in August at (bit.ly/2Ao9uxt).

And finally, keep up to date with ALIA Policies, Standards, and Guidelines

Check out the recently revised Statement on Public Library Services (bit.ly/2S9FkVG). 

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