

ONIX 3.0, Thema, ICEDIS: How Klopotek implements the EDItEUR standards for its customers

As part of our membership of EDItEUR and as partner of the publishing business, we are involved in the continuing development of standards for data quality in publishing. In this interview, Dr. Michael Castner, Head of Product & Solution Management, Dr. Dirk Wetzel and Bernd Scheufler-Bolze, Product Managers, set out how Klopotek supports and utilizes the standards in general and the 2016 updates ONIX 3.0.3, Thema 1.2, and ICEDIS in particular in software solutions for its customers.



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The ONIX 3.0.3 update was released in April 2016. The switch from ONIX 2.1 to ONIX 3.0, which was released some time ago, went less quickly than many expected. Why?

Dirk: We were one of the first software companies that supported ONIX 3.0 when it was released in 2011. However, it has taken the market until now to complete the switch from ONIX 2.1 to ONIX 3.0, despite that fact that EDItEUR „sun-setted“ ONIX 2.1 and has not released any codelist updates for quite some time. The US and UK are a bit faster than the German language market, where everybody was waiting for the VLB (German Books in Print) to support ONIX 3.0 – which it now does. Because the VLB is the primary receiver of deliveries in this market.

Do you anticipate any difficulties for our customers when they switch to ONIX 3.0?

Dirk: What we get from EDItEUR is a vocabulary, or rather a language with a great number of words. And, as is the case with any language, you can express the things you want to communicate in different ways. The German language market now faces the challenge of finding a common idiom in order to understand each other well. The German Publishers and Booksellers Association has an interest group – „IG Produktmetadaten“ – that analyzes various areas of the new

standard and intends to develop Best Practices, so that there is a uniform foundation for at least the D-A-CH market. An idea we support. Klopotek operates internationally though, which is why we carefully watch not just these activities, but also the UK and US markets.

Do you recommend switching to ONIX 3.0 now?

Michael: Yes, aside from the fact the ONIX 3.0 offers much better support for ebooks, for instance, it permits ebook sales at different prices depending on how strictly usage is limited, the standard will also make it easier for our customers to maintain their metadata. For ONIX 2.1 we published a stylesheet template that each publisher was able to customize to suit their needs. As a result, when we made enhancements to the product pool that it made sense to implement in ONIX for exports, it wasn't always easy for publishers to decide whether they wanted to make or request a modification to the stylesheet.

To make this simpler, for ONIX 3.0 we have modified the technology so that you can use multiple successive stylesheets, one of which, you the first one, is managed by Klopotek. The stylesheet that we provide offers a completely functional ONIX, but the customer can set up their own subsequent stylesheets – either on their own or with our

support – if they want modifications. Now, when new ONIX attributes come along, like the e-variants in 3.0.3, then we simply update the stylesheet that we are responsible for, and every customer receives the extension immediately, without needing to do anything themselves or incurring any costs.

Moving on to the subject of Thema and the attempt to unify the various subject classification systems on the market, like BIC, BISAC and the German Warengruppen-Systematik, which is not especially precise.

Dirk: With Thema there is now an international variant that is already available in 18 languages and is has better extensibility than other classification schemes. In Asia in particular, a great number of publishers are already using it.

Michael: Some of our customers, like Elsevier and Taylor & Francis, are also migrating completely to Thema so that, in the long term, they no longer have to maintain BIC and BISAC and save time as a result.

Dirk: Our observations show a tendency toward Thema as the sole classification system. For us, from a technological perspective, it's simply another key that we store in a classification tree, but we offer installation of this Thema tree for our customers. However, those publishers then have to allocate Thema categories to their backlist titles, which is why we developed Classification Manager. With the app it's very easily possible, for example, to allocate a Thema category to a large number of titles at once. And with around 2,500 subjects and 2,000 additional qualifiers, many of our customers are glad to have this tool to categorize their backlist titles efficiently.

Michael: Mixing subjects and qualifiers yields a vast number of possible combinations. Klopotek also ensures that the data remain consistent when a new version is released. We have Thema 1.2 at the moment. If categories change, then we'll take care of it for our customers if they use Classification Manager.

Do you advise the use of Thema?

Dirk: Absolutely. The use cases go beyond the classification of goods, where it was merely a matter of putting a book on the right shelf. We're talking about, for example, searching for a book in an online shop and seeing other relevant titles as recommendations which actually match the search.

Michael: German publishers in particular are also using Thema intensively because they previously had a meager classification system. Naturally, the situation is different in the case of the UK and US due to BIC and BISAC, but if they operate internationally then Thema is relevant for them, too.

Dirk: We're seeing exciting way of using it, for example, publishers building dynamically generated websites for the Thema subjects, where suitable titles are retrieved on the basis of the code and displayed when someone searches for a particular subject. This allows publishers to generate catalogs or previews on the fly using particular keywords. E-commerce makes Thema important: it's about controlling how you can sell more and how you can place your products in certain locations. To be clear: a product that doesn't have a Thema classification, at the very least a subject, will be exceedingly difficult to find in online shops – at least in the backlist.

The ICEDIS standard is also part of EDItEUR's activities...

Bernd: Some of our customers use the ICEDIS interface to handle their renewals business with international agencies in the „traditional“ way: the subscriptions that are to be renewed are exported for the agency, and the renewals and new orders are imported from the agency. This has been the case for a number of years.

Michael: We also store the other standards that come from EDItEUR like ISBN, ISNI and DOI as values in our system. In order to generate check digits, for instance. But, compared to ONIX and Thema, they are significantly less important.

Will Klopotek continue to support the activities of EDItEUR?

Michael: Yes, because these standardization endeavors are extremely important for streamlining processes in the publishing industry. We're going to continue to quickly incorporate the standards that EDItEUR develops into our products and to provide these features to our customers. We'll react immediately to any changes to or extensions of the standards.

Dirk: We'll be incorporating the findings of the „IG Produkmetadaten“ into our technology as well. Because it's important that our industry speaks a clear language regarding data exchange and categorization.