



Submitted on: 28.09.2023

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***Title of the Satellite Meeting: Universal Bibliographic Control at the crossroads: the challenges of unifying IFLA bibliographic standards***

***Date: 18-19 August 2023***

***Location: KBR, Brussels, Belgium***

## **UBC, Background and Future Perspectives**

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### **Abstract:**

*This paper reviews the background of IFLA involvement in Universal Bibliographic Control (UBC) from 1950 to present. The goal of UBC is to reduce cataloguing costs through metadata reuse on an international scale. Each National Bibliographic Agency (NBA) is responsible for producing authoritative bibliographic and authority data for resources published in its own territory and making this data available. The purpose of UBC is to preserve all documentary heritage. UBC is linked to legal deposit regimes in each country and the provision of national bibliographies. In the IFLA Professional Statement on Universal Bibliographic Control, produced by the Bibliography Section in 2012, NBAs are given two responsibilities: for authoritative bibliographic data and authorized access points. IFLA is tasked with three responsibilities, all relating to standards. The presentation raises questions to be considered regarding the possible revision of the UBC Statement.*

**Keywords:** Universal Bibliographic Control, UBC, metadata interoperability.

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## **Significant Conferences and Guidelines**

Universal Bibliographic Control (UBC) as a concept can be traced back to the 1950 UNESCO conference on the improvement of bibliographical services which made recommendations on national bibliographic services. By 1977, IFLA was working jointly with UNESCO and sponsored the UNESCO/IFLA international congress on national bibliographies. The first *Guidelines for the National Bibliographic Agency and the National Bibliography* (1979) were a joint IFLA/UNESCO publication. This was the first of a series of IFLA guidelines in this area, the most recent being the *Common Practices for National Bibliographies in the Digital Age* endorsed in 2022. IFLA continued without UNESCO, sponsoring the 1998 International Conference on National Bibliographic Services. The Universal Bibliographic Control and International MARC (UBCIM) core activity, one of five IFLA core activities, was responsible for IFLA's role in UBC until 2003, at which point the IFLA-Conference of Directors of

National Libraries (CDNL) Alliances (first ICABS then ICADS) took over until their dissolution in 2011. There has been no specific IFLA office for UBC since.

## **Goals and Assumptions of UBC**

The goal of UBC is to reduce cataloguing costs through metadata reuse on an international scale. Each National Bibliographic Agency (NBA) is responsible for producing authoritative bibliographic and authority data for resources published in its own territory and making this data available internationally to libraries and other NBAs. The purpose of UBC is to comprehensively preserve all documentary heritage. A major underlying assumption is that it is worthwhile to retain all published heritage worldwide and that preserving documents also requires provision of access through full description. An additional assumption is that each country should have an NBA and that dividing responsibility along national lines is natural and provides clear boundaries. In its operation, UBC is linked to legal deposit regimes in each country and the provision of national bibliographies.

## **2012 IFLA Professional Statement on UBC**

The Bibliography Section was given the responsibility of producing the *IFLA Professional Statement on Universal Bibliographic Control*, issued in 2012 and available in all seven IFLA languages. In this compact one-page statement, which reaffirms the importance of UBC and following some background on IFLA's history of engagement with UBC, NBAs are given two responsibilities while IFLA is tasked with three responsibilities.

NBAs are given the responsibility for:

- “providing the authoritative bibliographic data for publications of its own country and for making that data available to other NBAs”
- “documenting authorized access points for persons, families, corporate bodies, names of places, and authoritative citations for works related to its own country”

This gives bibliographic and authority data equal importance, retains the national scope of the NBA's work, and also stresses the exchange of metadata internationally. Authority work is framed in terms of creating authorized access points instead of the more recent understanding of identity management.

IFLA's role in UBC relates to development and promotion of standards:

- “maintaining and promoting the Statement of International Cataloguing Principles (ICP), published in 2009, as the foundation for the sharing of bibliographic data”
- “creating, maintaining and promoting bibliographic standards and guidelines to facilitate this sharing of bibliographic and authority data”
- “works collaboratively with other international organizations (e.g., ISO, ICA, ICOM, etc.) in the creation and maintenance of other standards in order to ensure that library standards developments, including compatible data models, are coordinated with those of the wider community.”

The need for IFLA metadata standards is squarely situated in the requirement for sharing the data internationally among libraries, but also working with other international organizations concerned with standards and heritage.

## **Evolution and Rethinking**

Since the initial conception of UBC the technological context in which libraries operate has changed in many ways, leading to new views on national bibliographies. For instance, the

methods used to distribute metadata have drastically changed, from batch to online, from printed national bibliographies and card sets to MARC record distribution, then shared databases, and now linked data. Although authoritative data is still valued, what constitutes authoritative data has been rethought, particularly for authority data. The goal has moved from the creation of a single authorized form of name to identity management and interoperability through identifiers. Metadata interoperability is the goal instead of exact reuse.

This satellite meeting is to explore whether the time is right for a revision of the UBC statement. Questions to ask are:

- Is the goal of UBC still valid?
- Is there a need for an IFLA statement on UBC?
- And if so, how would this be formulated today?

In conclusion, UBC has enduring meaning. Working with an international view allows us to break down silos isolating metadata. It remains important to craft interoperable metadata at the global level. UBC provides a framework for an ecosystem for sharing metadata.

## References

IFLA Bibliography Section (2022). *Common Practices for National Bibliographies in the Digital Age*. <https://repository.ifla.org/handle/123456789/2001>

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