

# Guidelines for Maintaining and Documenting

## IFLA Vocabularies

by

LIDATEC

*Approved by Advisory Committee on Standards*

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The [IFLA Linked Data Technical Review Committee \(LIDATEC\)](#) supports the [linked data and namespaces activities](#) of IFLA professional units by assisting in the publishing of standards on the [IFLA Namespaces](#) website, and in providing training and support to these activities.

### **Information about these Guidelines**

This document is for the IFLA Review Groups to guide them in how to maintain and document their standards on the IFLA Namespaces, and to uphold IFLA policies and objectives related to the IFLA standards. These guidelines are there to ensure that the standards included on the website have clear information introducing them and have appropriate links to more information, including who is responsible for the standard and how to contact them, along with information about the version, updates and releases.

These guidelines are also for those using the standards to know what to expect on the [IFLA Namespaces](#).

Information about the IFLA Review Groups can be found on the [IFLA Namespaces](#), which is where you can find links to their websites, contact information and other information about them and the standards they maintain.

## **Vocabulary Description**

The IFLA Review Groups are responsible for documenting their vocabularies for the public pages describing the vocabularies and where to find more information.

- Definition, scope and owner of the vocabulary
- Vocabulary name
- Vocabulary URI
- Approximate (or actual, if available) number of preferred terms, classes, and properties
- Description of subject area covered or a list of topics included
- Vocabulary 'owner' or responsible IFLA Unit. This may include historical information if there have been changes in responsible units over time, and links back to the IFLA Unit websites
- Status (under development, active, retired, etc.)
- Version information and maintenance policies
- Languages available
- Delivery mechanisms and file formats available

## Licensing

IFLA Standards are published with the same license as the IFLA Website, which states:

*Unless otherwise indicated, content shared on this website is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0), which means you are free to copy, distribute, transmit, translate, adapt and make commercial use of the work without asking permission, provided that any use is made with attribution to IFLA.*

*For any questions relating to IFLA's Policies, please contact [ifla@ifla.org](mailto:ifla@ifla.org).*

Access the full text of IFLA's [copyright policy](#).

## Access

- RDF versions of the vocabulary should be available from the IFLA vocabulary server as well as from GitHub in the following flavours:
  - JSON-LD (json)
  - Notations 3 (n3)
  - N-Triples (nt)
  - Turtle (ttl)
  - XML
- Previous versions
  - Each time there's a new release, the previous version is available from GitHub as a distinct named/numbered version using git conventions, both as a set of individual files and a single zip file.

- Current version
  - The version of the vocabularies that can be directly accessed via content negotiation on the vocabulary server is always the most current version.
  - The version on the vocabulary server is updated whenever there is a new release.
  - All flavours of the current version are available as a single zip file from GitHub.
  - CSV files are included in a release. They are available on both GitHub and the vocabulary server.
- In-development version (prerelease)
  - Supports transparency in showing ongoing editorial developments.
  - As RDF is generated for review, this may be available from GitHub as Pre-Release.
  - At the working group's discretion, the online namespace documentation may contain a link to the actively edited Google Sheet. (Even before there's a Pre-Release)

## **Maintenance**

- Semantic Versioning
  - There should be numbered version levels.
    - Pre-release (0.x.x): This is for a pre-release (if there is one). The Minor and Editorial numbering can be used, if there are various versions before it becomes a release.

- Major (1.x.x): This should be reserved for changes that would render data that depends on the vocabulary invalid, requiring an update and review of the data.  
Example: removing deprecated elements
  - Minor (x.1.x): This represents a major non-breaking change by adding new information.  
Example: adding new elements without changing existing elements or adding a translation
  - Editorial/Patch (x.x.1): This is a minor editorial change that doesn't alter or refine existing semantics.  
Example: correcting spelling, minor rewording or adding missing information such as a definition.
- A published vocabulary should maintain a changelog for each version number, however minor, indicating what specifically was changed in that release.

- **Translations**

- Translations are approved by the appropriate IFLA Review Group.
- The standards are released in English, and the translations are all connected back to the English version. When there is a new release, the translations need to be updated, too, to continue to relate appropriately to the English version.
- When translations are updated along with the English version, then all of the translations can be updated along with the English version. If the translations are delayed, the links to other languages will be gone, because the translations are connected to the English version.

- Translations will not be updated for deprecated versions.
- **Deprecation**
  - This status should be prominent on the namespace documentation at both the vocabulary and the element level
  - When there are new releases of a standard, the deprecated versions will be kept and labeled as deprecated in the namespace
  - Deprecated terms within a version vocabulary will include specific deprecated terms, marked as deprecated, until the next major version when they will be deleted
  - If the standard is available in a dynamic online environment, please consider the following aspects:
    - Updating your documentation to let users know about the change
    - Work through issues related to versions and their connections to the namespace
    - There could be maintenance issues when there is a specific term that is deprecated in a vocabulary

## **Governance**

- **Extension**
  - If there are *authoritative* extensions of IFLA vocabularies, then these can be acknowledged and linked to on the Namespaces. Approval comes from the responsible IFLA Unit.

- Mapping - *formal and authorized*
  - Acknowledge and link to mappings related to IFLA vocabularies that are approved by the appropriate IFLA Unit.  
*Example: [RDA to LRM Mapping](#), [ISBD to FRBR Mapping](#), etc.*
- Translations - *formal and authorized*
  - Use the processes in place for translations from the IFLA Review Groups.
  - Authoritative translations are those that come from and are approved by the responsible IFLA Review Groups.  
Organizations with translations that want to collaborate on their translation should contact the responsible IFLA Review Groups.
  - Translations should be clear about which version and language is the original.

## Footnotes

- *Versioning Vocabularies in a Linked Data World*, by Diane Hillmann, Gordon Dunsire and Jon Phipps (2014)  
<https://ecommons.cornell.edu/handle/1813/40559>
- *Maps and Gaps: Strategies for Vocabulary Design and Development*, by Diane Hillmann, Gordon Dunsire and Jon Phipps (2013)  
<https://hdl.handle.net/1813/42443>

## Appendix 1

*Excerpts from the NISO Standards that we reflected on for this document.*

[https://groups.niso.org/apps/group\\_public/download.php/18410/NISO\\_TR-06-2017\\_Issues\\_in\\_Vocabulary\\_Management.pdf](https://groups.niso.org/apps/group_public/download.php/18410/NISO_TR-06-2017_Issues_in_Vocabulary_Management.pdf)

- *“A sustainable vocabulary is protected by organizational or institutional commitments, policies that make clear who makes those commitments and what they mean, as well as a record of responsible maintenance and growth. A vocabulary without those commitments may not be sustainable over time and may be a questionable investment for organizations seeking to use the vocabulary in their data.” p.5*
- *“The W3C Data on the Web Best Practices advocate that a number of different aspects of policy be documented, including information about access, usage, versioning, licenses, and quality measures. The report highlights three metadata archetypes: structural, descriptive, and localized.” p.14*
- *“Perhaps the most useful, comprehensive, and authoritative example of providing descriptive documentation for structured vocabularies is the Linked Open Vocabulary (LOV) model. LOV-recommended data includes contributors (attribution data), frequency of maintenance, date of origination; descriptions; links to datasets about the vocabulary; version information; namespace; namespace prefix; number of properties and classes; and which vocabularies are referenced, extended, specialized, or generalized, when such information is known to exist about any given vocabulary in LOV’s integrated hub of vocabularies. LOV’s submission metadata template, usage of which is required of vocabularies that submit to its database, is often cited as a clear set of basic descriptive recommendations.” p. 14*

### Licenses

- *“For the most part, currently available public vocabularies lack license statements, which is unhelpful, because many potential users will assume that the lack of a license means that the vocabulary owner intends to disallow use by others—and indeed they should not make such assumptions. Until Creative*



*Commons recently developed its CC0 license, there were no open licenses suitable for general use by vocabularies.*

*“CC0 helps solve this problem by giving creators a way to waive all their copyright and related rights in their works to the fullest extent allowed by law. CC0 is a universal instrument that is not adapted to the laws of any particular legal jurisdiction, similar to many open source software licenses.” p. 15*