IFLA Section on Cataloguing

"Why in the World?"

Ingrid Parent

The Bibliographic Control Division of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) consists of three sections: bibliography, cataloging, and classification. The cataloging section, which focuses on descriptive cataloging, is one of the oldest within IFLA, having been founded in 1935 as the IFLA Committee on Uniform Cataloguing Rules. It became the Committee on Cataloguing in 1970. The committee played a key role in planning and convening the International Conference on Cataloguing Principles held in Paris in 1961 and the International Meeting of Cataloguing Experts held in Copenhagen in 1969. The Copenhagen conference provided the impetus to develop the International Standard Bibliographic Descriptions (ISBD). The Committee on Cataloguing established a systematic process for the revision of the ISBDs. The cataloging section focuses on traditional cataloging standards and on the impact of electronic resources and technology on these standards. The section has initiated several projects at the international level to facilitate access to information.

Why in the world do we need an international committee on cataloging when we in the United States and Canada have our own very strong cataloging code and other bibliographic standards that we have developed? My objective here is to try and answer this question and to describe not only *what* the Section on Cataloguing does but *why* it has been and continues to be an important part of the cataloging environment.

But before I get to the Section on Cataloguing, I would first like to give you a brief overview of IFLA itself. IFLA stands for International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions. IFLA's main objectives are to encourage and promote research and development in all aspects of library activities and to share its findings in order to advance the cause of librarianship worldwide. You can see from its name that IFLA is basically an association of associations and libraries. Of the 1,564 total IFLA members from 146 countries, only about 20% are personal members. There are 138 national association members and close to 1,100 institutional or library members (see figure 1).

While IFLA is perhaps not among the largest international organizations, it covers a lot of ground and deals with many topics of interest to the membership. Eight divisions coordinate the professional work of IFLA (see figure 2). These divisions are grouped by type of library, by library activities, by types of material, or by geographic divisions. Directing the work of the eight divisions is the Professional Board, which is composed of the chair of each of the divisions, along with a former member of the board as its chair, and the IFLA professional coordinator, who is situated at IFLA headquarters in The Hague.

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Under the divisions are about 46 subgroups, including many sections and round tables. Division IV, Bibliographic Control, is one of the most homogeneous divisions. It consists of only three sections: the Section on Bibliography, the Section on Cataloguing, and the Section on Classification and Indexing. The issues that we deal with as catalogers are generally divided among these three sections, and the Section on Cataloguing focuses on descriptive cataloging. Even authority control does not entirely belong to the Section on Cataloguing. Its development internationally is under the responsibility of several sections and programs.

I cannot leave a discussion of the structure around bibliographic control activities in IFLA without mentioning the contribution of another part of the association's professional structure: the UBCIM Programme—the Universal Bibliographic Control and International MARC Office—which is one of five IFLA Core Programmes. The UBCIM Programme was formed in 1987 from the merger of the IFLA International Office for UBC and the International MARC Programme. The UBCIM Office is housed in Die Deutsche Bibliothek in Frankfurt, and the program officer is Marie-France Plassard. The UBCIM Programme provides overall coordination of bibliographic control activities. It organizes regional seminars and assists in the organization of international conferences such as the one held on National Bibliographic Services in Copenhagen in November 1998. It oversees the development of the UNIMARC format and coordinates activities related to developments in the authority control area. It runs an active publications program for reports and proceedings related to bibliographic standards and guidelines. All these parts of the IFLA structure work together to cover the various aspects of bibliographic control activities.

Section on Cataloguing

Now I would like to turn to the Section on Cataloguing to try to answer the question: why in the world do we need it? In doing some background research on the work of this section, I have come to the conclusion that our cataloging theory and principles, not only in North America but all over the world, would be much less advanced without the intervention over the years of this international group of very dedicated people.

The section is one of the oldest within IFLA and was founded in 1935 as the IFLA Committee on Uniform Cataloguing Rules (see figure 3). According to a former chair of the committee in the 1960s, nothing much happened in this section for the first twenty years. Members of the section met once a year during IFLA conferences and reported on new cataloging developments and talked about the problems of coordination, nationally and internationally. But its practical impact was negligible (Chaplin 1974).

Membership Categories	No. of Members
International Association Members	17
National Association Members	138
Institutional Members	1,075
Personal Affiliates	284
Sponsors	36
Bodies with Consultative Status	14
Total Registered Members	1,564
Total Countries Represented	146

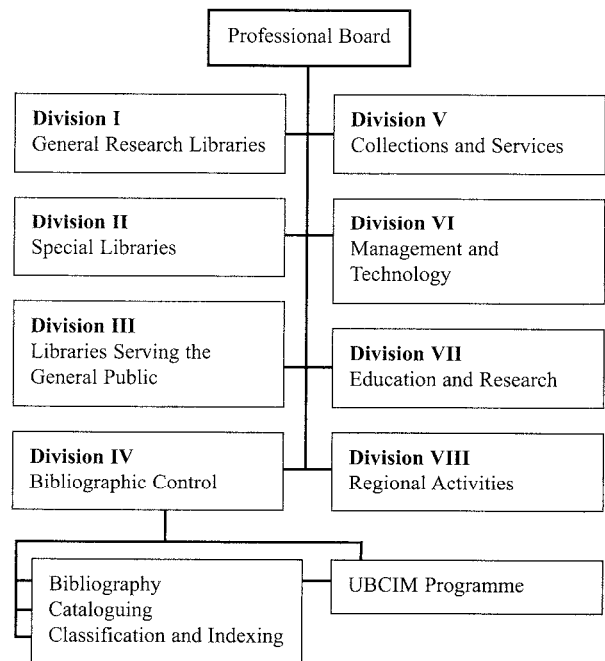**Figure 1.** IFLA Membership Information (as of January 1, 1998)

Figure 2. IFLA Divisions

1935	Committee on Uniform Cataloguing Rules
1954	Working Group on the Coordination of Cataloguing Principles
1961	International Conference on Cataloguing Principles, Paris (ICCP)
1969	International Meeting of Cataloguing Experts, Copenhagen (ICME)
1970	Committee on Uniform Cataloguing Rules becomes Committee on Cataloguing
1976/77	Committee on Cataloguing becomes standing committee of the Section on Cataloguing as a result of an IFLA reorganization

Figure 3. IFLA Section on Cataloguing Development and Milestones

However, all that changed in 1954 when the committee established the Working Group on the Coordination of Cataloguing Principles. In a world where national cataloging rules were undergoing a fundamental rethinking in several

countries, the time seemed to be right to consider whether there could be convergence of some of the ideas around the establishment of main entries, in particular for anonymous works and works of corporate authorship. At the same time, of course, Lubetzky's views on cataloging principles and Ranganathan's "canons" also were being widely discussed. There appeared to be great willingness and enthusiasm on the part of the working group members as they participated in the first international cataloging project set up by IFLA (Verona 1980).

The working group's report was well received and led to the proposal that an International Conference be held to consider cataloging principles from an international point of view. IFLA accepted this proposal, and the result was the celebrated International Conference on Cataloguing Principles held in Paris in 1961. The objective of this conference was to develop basic principles governing the choice and form of entry in alphabetical catalogs. After much discussion and work, international consensus was achieved on a logical basis for choosing and creating entry points, an agreement that provided the foundation for cataloging codes to follow.

However, even as the principles were published and being applied, other factors began to appear that pointed out the inadequacy of agreement only on catalog entry points. The 1960s ushered in an era of great expansion in library collections, and with it, the need to create more catalog records. In order to save time and resources, some shared-cataloging programs were initiated nationally, and there was an expressed desire to share records internationally as well. With the growing use of electronic data processing to manage bibliographic data rapidly and efficiently, it soon became apparent that catalog records for the same publication didn't look the same, because the descriptive elements in the records were not standardized between countries and often within countries.

Figure 4 shows four catalog entries created by four national agencies in 1959. Although the heading is the same in all four examples, the descriptions and the punctuation vary considerably. It would be difficult to share these records internationally through any automated system.

So once again the IFLA Committee on Uniform Cataloguing Rules was instrumental in planning and convening another international conference to focus on the standardization of descriptive data. This conference was called the International Meeting of Cataloguing Experts, and was held in 1969 in Copenhagen. It was smaller than the Paris conference, and as its name implies it was attended by cataloging experts rather than by national delegates as was the case in 1961. If I can summarize years of preparation and work in a few sentences, the Copenhagen meeting was a historic event, and it resulted in the recommendation that a standard bibliographic description that determined the

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                                                    [British Museum, London]

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    Walter Holzhausen. . . . Braunschweig, Klinkhardt und Biermann, 1959.
In 8° (24 cm). 320p., fig. pl. en noir et en coul. portr. (Bibliothek für Kunst
    und Antiquitätenfreunde. Bd. 38).
                                                    [Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris]

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Lackkunst in Europa. Ein Handbuch f. Sammler u. Liebhaber. Mit 208
    Abb. u. 26 Farbtaf. 3rschw.: Klinkhardt & Bier mann ('59). 320 S.gr.
    8°=Bibliothek f. Kunst u. Antiquitätenfreunde. 38).
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Standards for the International Exchange of Bibliographic Information edited by I.
C. McIlwaine, 1991.

Figure 4. Examples of Descriptive Cataloging, 1959

order of data elements and the punctuation to be used. The resolutions discussed during the conference led to the development of the concept of universal bibliographic control (UBC), whereby bibliographic data about all publications issued in all countries would be made widely available in a standard descriptive form. Emphasis now shifted to the importance of national bibliographies as the source of the definitive bibliographic records for the national imprint that would be shared promptly and universally. The directions developed at this conference thirty years ago still underlie the range of bibliographic work we do today and account for the tremendous successes we all have had in disseminating bibliographic information around the world.

My point in providing this historical overview is not to debate the merits of cataloging principles and description, nor Universal Bibliographic Control, but to try to illustrate the key role that the predecessor to the Standing Committee of the Section on Cataloguing played in making all this happen.

International Standard Bibliographic Descriptions

As I've just mentioned, out of this Copenhagen conference came the impetus to develop what I think is the most important achievement of the work of the Section on Cataloguing:

the development and the almost universal adoption of the various International Standard Bibliographic Descriptions (ISBDs).

By 1972 several national bibliographic agencies and national cataloging codes had adopted the preliminary edition for books of the Standard Bibliographic Description, and many more were to follow. Aside from the obvious benefits that came through standardization, the rapid adoption of the ISBD for books and then for other formats of material showed that international standardization was achievable. However, it was not a simple process, and many meetings, negotiations, and draft texts were necessary before consensus was reached on each of the different ISBDs.

There is a whole family of ISBDs, and countries either use these ISBDs directly as their cataloging standard, or incorporate the guidelines for description into their national cataloging codes (see figure 5).

The Section on Cataloguing thus has a lot of children to look after. A systematic process of revision was established in 1978 when the Cataloguing Committee decided that ISBDs should come up for review every five years in order to maintain their currency but also to provide a certain degree of stability for libraries trying to follow the ISBD provisions.

As you can see from the publication history of the various ISBDs, it usually takes about ten years to produce a revision. Over the years the Committee on Cataloguing has had an almost permanent working group to decide on which revisions are necessary. They may even recommend that a particular ISBD be abandoned or that a new one be developed for some new format of material or for a part of an existing type of material.

Two revisions that I would like to mention relate to Electronic Resources (ER) and to Serials (S). The ISBD for Computer Files (CF) was almost out of date as soon as it was published in 1990. After a few years the process of revision was begun. Editor Ann Sandberg-Fox did most of the drafting of the revised text and an international working group with expert commentators provided the input. Once the group was satisfied with the revised text, it was sent out for a six-month worldwide review, which is a general practice within IFLA. The responses were generally positive because the working group had done its preparatory work very well, and the revised ISBD(ER) was published in 1997.

The review of the ISBD(ER) excluded consideration of electronic serials, maintaining they were more properly in the domain of the ISBD(S). This was one of the reasons why the Cataloguing Committee decided to activate the revision of ISBD(S). The development of this particular standard caused much discussion and criticism in the mid-1970s, not only because the working group was dealing with a notoriously difficult type of material to describe bibliographically. At the same time the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), through UNISIST,

ISBD(M)—Monograph Publications: 1st ed. 1974; rev. 1978; rev. 1987
ISBD(G)—General: 1st ed. 1977; rev. 1989
ISBD(S)—Serials: 1st. ed. 1977; rev. 1988; under revision
ISBD(NBM)—Non-Book Materials: 1st ed. 1977; rev. 1987
ISBD(CM)—Cartographic Materials: 1st ed. 1977; rev. 1987
ISBD(ER)—Electronic Resources (formerly Computer Files): 1st ed. 1990; rev. 1997
ISBD(A)—Pre-1801 Monographs: 1st ed. 1980
ISBD(PM)—Printed Music: 1st ed. 1980; rev. 1989
Guidelines for the application of the ISBDs to the desciption of Component Parts: 1st ed. 1988

Figure 5. The Family of ISBDs

was setting up the International Serials Data System (ISDS), and was developing cataloging guidelines and a format to describe the same serial publications. The dilemma for the ISBD(S) Working Group was whether to align itself with ISDS developments or to stay in the family and follow ISBD. While the primary purpose of ISDS is the identification of a serial, most notably through the assignment of a key title and the ISSN number, the primary purpose of ISBD(S) is standardized description of the title in hand. However, it was a difficult decision, but after much and probably often painful debate, ISBD(S) followed the standardized description pattern. With hindsight, we can say that here was a missed opportunity to develop one bibliographic descriptive standard for serial publications.

However, twenty-five years later, we again have a historic opportunity to align these standards. A formal revision of ISBD(S) began in 1998 with a working group consisting of members from the cataloging committee and other serials experts. Our plan is to have a revised standard ready in the year 2000. What is making us move rather quickly is the fact that the Joint Steering Committee for the Revision of AACR has undertaken a major review of the code. A large part of that review deals with basic questions related to seriality. The cataloging experts who met in Toronto in 1997 had the foresight to look beyond AACR to other international standards for serials such as the ISDS and ISBD(S) and to suggest that we work toward compatibility of the standards. Communication lines among the three groups are very much open, and I hope that this time we will seize the opportunity to come up with one standard for describing serial publications, or at a minimum, to ensure that the standards for serials cataloging are compatible.

While we have accomplished so much with standardizing description through the development of the ISBDs, there is still a lot of work to do to make these standards truly international. Even though they have been translated into dozens of languages, the ISBDs do not adequately cover the needs of non-Roman scripts or the different nature of publications in some parts of the world such as the Middle East, Asia, and Africa. This was recognized as a serious problem

twenty-five years ago, and it is still a problem and a challenge for the IFLA cataloging committee today.

The development of the ISBDs is just one example to show how the Standing Committee of the Section on Cataloguing has been and will continue to be a leader in developing and promoting cataloging standards and guidelines (see figure 6). Its scope of work is described in its Medium Term Programme, which runs from 1998 to 2001. The section focuses on both traditional cataloging standards *and* on the impact of electronic resources and electronic technology on these standards. We are involved in the metadata debate and will continue to ensure that appropriate guidelines for the cataloging of electronic resources exist.

In line with its mandate, the Standing Committee of the Section on Cataloguing has also initiated several projects at the international level to facilitate access to information (see figure 7).

First I would like to mention the Study on the Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records. The Section on Cataloguing was charged with the task of implementing a recommendation from the 1990 Stockholm Seminar on Bibliographic Records to do a functional study of bibliographic data so that logical decisions would be made on what data should be included in a catalog record to meet national and international bibliographic needs consistently. The study was published in early 1998.

Members of the Cataloguing Committee are also involved in revising and updating three international guidelines related to standardized headings. *Anonymous Classics* will be reviewed in phases and will be expanded to include non-European headings. *Form and Structure of Corporate Headings* will update a work first published in 1980. And *Guidelines for Authority and Reference Entries* is being revised and expanded to cover legal and music headings. These guidelines are highly valued in many parts of the world and are used as cataloging standards in several countries.

I would also like to briefly mention a new task force that the Section on Cataloguing has initiated to develop guidelines for online catalog displays. It was felt by several members of the committee and elsewhere that libraries internationally would benefit from having general guidelines that they could use in developing their catalog displays, taking into account the possibilities offered by new Web interfaces. While this task force is being led by the Section on Cataloguing, a catalog display is by no means a "cataloging-only" issue, and input is being solicited from other IFLA sections, including Information Technology, and from the user communities. This activity points out that IFLA projects are becoming more "interdisciplinary" where sections and divisions cooperate on a particular project or standard. Even though IFLA has a very hierarchical structure, communication is increasingly moving horizontally to form a convergence of views, which I think is a very positive development.

Scope
The Section on Cataloguing analyzes the functions of cataloguing activities for all types of material and media, including both bibliographic and authority information, for the benefit of all users. The Section proposes and develops catalguing rules, guidelines and standards for bibliographies information taking into account the developing electronic and networked environment in order to promote universal access to and exchange of bibliographic and authority information. The Section has close relationships with many organizations and institutions including national cataloguing and standardization committees, various multinational organizations, various committees of ISO, especially with TC46, with the Sections on Bibliography, Classification and Indexing, and Information Technology, and in particular with the UBCIM programme office of IFLA.

Figure 6. Section on Cataloguing Medium Term Program, 1998–2001

- ISBD family
- Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records: Final Report. 1998
- Anonymous Classics, 1978, revised: 1996–
- Form and Structure of Corporate Headings, 1980, revised 1997–
- Guidelines for Authority and Reference Entries, 1984, revised 1997–
- Guidelines for OPAC Displays, 1997–

Figure 7. Major Projects

All of these projects and standards that we have developed and are developing rely on people to make them happen. This might sound rather simplistic but I think we sometimes forget that there is only a small group of people who are responsible for achieving the goals that we have set.

The Section on Cataloguing within IFLA had 146 members in 1998 (see figure 8). That number has remained relatively stable for several years. The Standing Committee of the section consists of twenty members, which is the maximum number allowed according to IFLA Statutes. Members are nominated and then appointed, or elected if there are more than twenty, for a period of four years. They can be reappointed for an additional four years, to a maximum of eight years. Every two years, some of the membership changes as terms come to an end, which ensures rotation but also continuity. We have a good mix of members from fourteen countries, although these members represent countries mainly in Europe and North America. We also have corresponding members in Australia, China, and Fiji.

The section has had much success over the past fifty years in providing leadership in the development of bibliographic standards that have made possible the implementation of universal bibliographic control and have brought tremendous benefits for all libraries and all countries. But standards development has not always been a smooth and timely activity. It is a very slow process getting international consensus, but there are very legitimate reasons behind this, reasons that are just as valid today as they were fifty years ago.

The first consideration relates to the people themselves. Most of us within IFLA volunteer our time to undertake these international responsibilities in addition to doing our regular work in our own countries. The people are generally full of enthusiasm, intelligent, and willing to work. But the reality is that there is not enough time to do everything that is required as quickly as we would like. Revolving membership, where a person with particular expertise in an area might leave the committee before a project is finished, is also a problem. However, in recent years we have begun the practice of inviting former members to sit on project teams to finalize some work if their expertise is still required.

An even greater problem is communication. The Cataloguing Committee meets twice during each annual IFLA conference, which is barely enough time to say hello and go through the business portion of our activities. Our various project teams try to fit in some meetings between program sessions, but it is not easy to fit in quality time together. Communication mechanisms have improved over twenty-five years, through the use of fax machines and e-mail. However, these methods are not perfect, and we spend many frustrating hours trying to transmit attached documents electronically to each other around the world.

The other aspect of communication that I would like to mention is language. IFLA has five official languages—English, French, German, Russian, and Spanish—but the working language of meetings is generally English, and to a lesser extent, French. Simultaneous translation during the Annual Conference is available only for plenary sessions and for a few program sessions. The language of our committee meetings is English and for many members whose first language is not English, it must be difficult to participate in our technical discussions and to understand the nuances of English words within the cataloging context. An example would be our discussion of the Functional Requirements study where, even for native English speakers, it was difficult to understand the differences between terms such as "expression," "manifestation," and "presentation."

While language is not as much a barrier to meaningful discussion as it once was, lack of English skills might make someone hesitate in taking on the chair of a project team or the committee itself. I researched the names and nationalities of the former chairs of the Cataloguing Committee, and although the information in the early years is rather sketchy, I think the list shows quite clearly the predominance of Anglo-American chairs (figure 9). Only Eva Verona from Yugoslavia broke the pattern. There could be other reasons why certain people are elected as chairs, but I think that a lack of confidence in English-speaking skills might factor into why some people do not put their names forward for consideration.

The third and most important factor that delays the development and implementation of international biblio-

graphic standards through IFLA, in my opinion, is funding, or rather the lack of it. This was a problem fifty years ago, and it is still a major problem today. The 1961 Paris conference and the 1969 Copenhagen conference would not have succeeded to the extent they did, and might not even have been held, without the funding provided by external organizations such as UNESCO and especially by the Council on Library Resources (as it was known then). The funding allowed for adequate preparation time leading up to the two conferences; it permitted cataloging experts to attend even if they came from a have-not country; and it sustained the follow-up reports and work needed to transform the recommendations from the conferences into concrete action.

IFLA is not a rich association. It relies on volunteers to do the work and on libraries and library associations to host meetings and support staff participation. If a working group needs to hold a meeting more than once a year, it must secure funding to ensure that its members will be able to attend. UNESCO is no longer a sure source of funding. The European Commission funds library projects, but generally only for European libraries. The Soros Foundation is a source of funding for eastern European countries. We have also received funding for particular projects from the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science and the Council on Preservation and Access and from bibliographic utilities such as the Research Libraries Group and

Zohreh Alavi (Iran)	Dorothy McGarry (USA)
Nadine Boddaert (France)	Monika Münnich (Germany)
Paul Bunn (UK)	Anne Munkebyaune (Norway)
Kerstin Dahl (Sweden)	Ingrid Parent (Canada)
Zlata Dimec (Slovenia)	Glenn Patton (USA)
Assumpció Estivill (Spain)	Isa de Pinedo (Italy)
Ton Heijligers (Netherlands)	Reinhard Rinn (Germany)
Lynne Howarth (Canada)	Ljudmila Terekhova (Russia)
Natalia Kasparova (Russia)	Barbara Tillett (USA)
Mona Madsen (Denmark)	

The Section on Cataloguing has 146 members.

Figure 8. Section on Cataloguing Standing Committee Members, 1997–99

1995–99	Ingrid Parent	Canada
1993–95	Olivia Madison	USA
1989–93	Nancy John	USA
1985–89	Tom Delsey	Canada
1981–85	Peter Lewis	UK
1978–81	Lucia Rather	USA
1974–77	Eva Verona	Yugoslavia
1969?–74	A. H. (Hugh) Chaplin	UK
1950s	Sir Frank Francis	UK
	Dorothy Anderson	UK

Figure 9. Section on Cataloguing Chairs

the Online Computer Library Center. We are finding that increasingly funding is directed more toward particular libraries, or regional groups of libraries. Therefore, to hold one specific meeting, it is often necessary to approach several agencies for financial resources.

There are valid reasons why the international development of bibliographic standards takes time. But I think that the results speak for themselves, and that the IFLA Section on Cataloguing has developed into an effective mechanism for organizing international cooperation on bibliographic control issues, and persuading member countries to put bibliographic standards and guidelines into practice. The Section on Cataloguing is truly international and consists of dedicated professionals, working for the benefit of the whole, and that is why it is needed. Other regional or even international bibliographic projects can be initiated and funded by international organizations or government agencies or by bibliographic networks. That is certainly an increasing trend. Therefore continued dialogue and cooperation among all parties will be essential for the future of cataloging in the world.

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