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INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF LIBRARY ASSOCIATIONS

ISBD(M)



First standard edition

1974

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International Standard Bibliographic Description for Monographic Publications

First standard edition

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IFLA COMMITTEE ON CATALOGUING

1974

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CONTENTS



Foreword	vii
Introductory Notes	1
Scope and purpose	1
Definitions	1
Outline order of elements	3
Punctuation	3
Sources of information	5
Language and script of the description	6
Abbreviations — Examples — Capitalization — Misprints	6
Specification of Elements	7
1. Title and statement of authorship area	7
2. Edition area	13
3. Imprint area	15
4. Collation area	19
5. Series area	24
6. Notes area	26
7. International Standard Book Number, binding and price area	29
8. Multi-Volume Publications	31
English Language Examples	33
Index	35

FOREWORD

This publication, the first standard edition of the International Standard Bibliographic Description for Monographic Publications – ISBD(M) – supersedes the text published in 1971 as the recommendations of an IFLA Working Group.

The purpose of the ISBD(M) is to provide an internationally accepted framework for the representation of descriptive information in bibliographic records of monographic – i.e. non-serial – publications. It is designed to meet three requirements for the efficient international use of such records: first, that records produced in one country or by the users of one language can be easily understood in other countries and by the users of other languages; secondly, that the records produced in each country can be integrated into files or lists of various kinds containing also records from other countries; and thirdly, that records in written or printed form can be converted into machine-readable form with the minimum of editing.

To achieve these aims it was necessary to find a way by which the different elements making up a description could be recognized, by the eye or by a machine, without the need to understand their content. The means adopted is a prescribed system of punctuation. Within any one of the main areas of the description, each prescribed punctuation mark is a signal showing the nature of the element which follows it. This is different from the normal use of punctuation marks, which is to separate words or phrases and at the same time to indicate a particular relationship between them. For this reason, and also because the need to distinguish a considerable number of elements has led to the introduction of some symbols not normally used as punctuation marks, the ISBD(M) punctuation sometimes presents an unfamiliar appearance. It must be remembered that ISBD(M) punctuation is being used in a purely formal way for a particular technical purpose which is only distantly related to its use in a continuous text.

The ISBD(M) can be regarded as an essential instrument in the implementation of the long term policy of Universal Bibliographic Control, which in its essence was formulated in the following resolution of the International Meeting of Cataloguing Experts (IMCE), organized by the IFLA Committee on Cataloguing at Copenhagen in 1969:

“Efforts should be directed towards creating a system for the international exchange of information by which the standard bibliographic description of each publication would be established and distributed by a national agency in the country of origin . . . The effectiveness of the system would depend upon the maximum standardization of the form and content of the bibliographic description.”*

It was at the IMCE that the possibility of an international standard bibliographic description was first discussed and the Working Group to draw up such a standard was set up.

The text of the ISBD(M) published in 1971 embodied the recommendations – arrived at after much discussion and the circulation of three drafts for comment – of the Working Group. On publication copies were sent to over seventy national bibliographic agencies and cataloguing organizations, with a request for their observations; and the foreword also included a general invitation to users to comment. Within a year of publication the ISBD(M) had been adopted by a number of national bibliographies, and several others have adopted it during 1973 or are actively considering its adoption. Translations of the original English text have been made in various languages, and the ISBD(M) has been taken into account by a number of cataloguing committees in redrafting national rules for description.**

The comments from these organizations which were received by the IFLA Committee on Cataloguing showed that, while there was general acceptance of the purpose and structure of the ISBD(M) as drafted by the Working Group, the text contained some ambiguities and also failed to solve some of the problems encountered by its users. Entries in the national bibliographies which were using it also revealed some differences in interpretation. It seemed desirable, therefore, to invite representatives of the organizations which had adopted the ISBD(M), were considering its adoption or had submitted comments on it to a meeting at which amendments could be considered and a revised text agreed. The ISBD(M) Revision

* Report of the International Meeting of Cataloguing Experts, Copenhagen, 1969. *Libri*, vol. 20, 1970; no. 1, pp. 115-116.

** See “ISBD(M) Checklists” for details of organizations using the ISBD(M), of translations, and of organizations which have commented on it: in *International cataloguing*, vol. 2, 1973, no. 3; and (with additions) in *Unesco bulletin for libraries*, vol. 28, 1974, no. 1.

Meeting was accordingly organized by the IFLA Committee on Cataloguing and was held on 23-24 August 1973 at Grenoble immediately before the IFLA General Council Meeting.

In advance of the Revision Meeting all the comments which had been received were reviewed and possible amendments based on them were suggested by a small editorial group. The discussions at the Revision Meeting were based on a document in which the original text and the suggested amendments were displayed side by side.

The revised text that emerged from the Meeting does not differ in essentials from the original text, but a considerable number of verbal amendments have been made for the sake of clarity and precision. The new text includes more detail and so leaves less to the discretion of bibliographic agencies; this meets the wishes of the majority of those who had made comments, but is a departure from the original intention of the Working Group to provide a framework without making detailed rules for its contents. The character of the ISBD(M) as primarily a description of the particular publication in hand rather than of the work embodied in it was confirmed by the decision of the Revision Meeting that a statement of authorship derived from a source outside the publication would not be given in the main description, but in a note. It was also decided that the text should include more examples, and that these should be in a wide range of languages. Final editing of the text and the choice of examples was entrusted to an enlarged editorial group.

The Revision Meeting was conducted in English, and the authoritative text now published is also in English. In the examples in the text, whatever the language of the publication described in the example, elements which are required by the ISBD(M) to be "in the language and script of the bibliographic agency" (Areas 4, 6 & 7: see p.6) are given in English. It is suggested that in translations of the ISBD(M) these elements should always be given in the language of the translation. Similarly, the examples presented on p.33 describe English language publications of varying complexity, and it is suggested that these be replaced in translations by a similar collection of examples in the language of the translation. This will result in the building up of a comprehensive set of examples in a number of languages which can later be published.

The abbreviation ISBD(M) has already been widely adopted in references to the standard, and it has been used throughout this text as well as being adopted as the "title proper" of the publication. It is suggested that the abbreviation be preserved, as an internationally recognizable acronym, in the titles of all editions in other languages. (M) has been added to the initials used in the earlier edition to distinguish this document clearly from the International Standard Bibliographic Description for Serials – ISBD(S) now being published as the recommendation of the Joint Working Group of the IFLA Committees on Cataloguing and Serial Publications, as well as from similar documents which may later be issued for other forms of library materials.

London, December, 1973

A.H. Chaplin

Chairman, IFLA Committee
on Cataloguing