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Chaos — EDItEUR

by Brian Green (Managing Agent, EDItEUR and Book Industry Communication)

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Since EDItEUR was conceived at a meeting at the 1991 Frankfurt Book Fair as 'The European Book Sector EDI Group' it has expanded both geographically and in its activities, becoming known as 'The International Group for Electronic Commerce in the Book and Serials Sectors'.

EDItEUR has truly become an International group, with members from US, Canada, South Africa, Australia, Japan as well as all the European countries. It now covers books, serials and digital publications and is concerned with all aspects of the standards infrastructure for publishing.

Why EDItEUR had to be invented

The original *raison d'être* of the group was the realization that many European countries were working to establish or expand EDI in their national book trades, using a variety of different national or ad-hoc standards but all planning to move to UN/EDIFACT, the international EDI syntax developed under the auspices of the United Nations. EDIFACT, however, is not an "off-the-shelf" standard. It is a defined syntax together with a complex and wide-ranging directory of data elements, segments, messages and code lists, which provides an enabling framework for EDI application designers to use to meet the needs of a particular trading community.

It would not only be wasteful for each community of users to design their own subset, it would result in a lack of interoperability that would hinder international communication.

So EDItEUR was created as an umbrella group to develop and maintain a book trade subset of EDIFACT on behalf of its members. Sponsored by the European publishers, booksellers and library associations and with fund-

ing from the European Commission's TEDIS (the Trade EDI Systems Program of the European Commission) program, EDItEUR rapidly produced its first manual of messages and implementation guides. Rather than start from scratch, EDItEUR made the decision to work with EAN, the International Article Numbering Association, to use their existing EANCOM subset of UN/EDIFACT, already widely used in the retail sector, as the basis of the EDItEUR book sector EDI messages. The EANCOM subset of UN/EDIFACT is one of the most stable of the "wide ranging directories of data elements, etc."

Expanding the brief

The serials community, that most international of sectors, asked EDItEUR to develop the messages for their use and, in collaboration with individual publishers, subscription agents, libraries and ICEDIS, (the International Committee for EDI in Serials), an implementation guide to the use of the messages for serials was developed.

Publication of the EDItEUR messages was welcomed internationally, with BISAC and SISAC immediately starting to review the messages with a view to adopting them. Indeed, the US library community were among the first users of the EDItEUR messages, with all the major integrated library systems vendors now implementing them in their acquisitions modules.

National book and serial sector EDI groups have been set up recently in Denmark, Italy,

Finland, Germany and Sweden to join the longer established Book Industry Communications in the UK and BISAC/SISAC in the US under the EDItEUR umbrella. They, like BISAC and SISAC, provide the national focus for promotion, dissemination, implementation and feedback, helping their members to reap the benefits of EDI.

Beyond EDI

In the last year or so, EDItEUR's activities have expanded well beyond EDI, with activities in the areas of product information, rights metadata and new standard identifiers.

BISAC and SISAC play a key role in these new EDItEUR projects, collaborating in a project to produce a data dictionary of product information and develop an EDIFACT message to transmit it, jointly hosting a rights and descriptive metadata workshop in New York and working on international identifiers for authors, publishers and imprints.

The area of identifiers and descriptive and rights metadata, enabling automated rights trading, is a particularly hot topic crossing traditional media barriers and involving the music, visual arts and film and video communities in joint standards activities.

In a networked multimedia world, traditional geographic and media barriers break down and EDItEUR will be there to coordinate

activities on behalf of its member organizations and user communities.



Bibliotheca Alexandrina from page 86

comments in 1990 at the Aswan Conference, where \$65 million was raised for the Bibliotheca Alexandrina.

Several Bibliotheca Alexandrina friends groups have sprung up in the U.S., with California being the most active state. "Our American friends see the value of the library for both the preservation of culture and the promotion of peace and democracy," Lohner said.¹²

The California Friends of the Alexandrina Library—Valley Group is an independent grass roots support organization

of educators, scholars and librarians and others that was formed in 1991. "We help in a lot of ways," said Rosalie Cuneo Amer. "We publicize the project, give money and materials and provide advice to the planners."¹³

When Bibliotheca Alexandrina finally opens its doors, the library is sure to be a boom for culture and libraries for decades to come. UNESCO reports that it has received requests from several countries, including Iran, Thailand, Kuwait and Afghanistan asking if the international agency can implement library projects in their countries, similar to Bibliotheca Alexandrina, once it is completed.

"The Bibliotheca Alexandrina is an ex-

ample of an institution developing within a peaceful environment in a region noted for war, strife and violence," said Amer. "Its existence and function will be a beacon of peace and world culture, representing interests, heritage and knowledge of the people of the Middle East, Africa, Mediterranean and Asia, along with the rest of the world. Moreover, it will be a place to access global information in the twentieth century."¹⁴

Ron Chepesiuk is a contributing editor to *Against the Grain* and Editor in Chief of *International Leads*, the international arm of ALA.