



International Federation of  
Library Associations and Institutions

# Statement of International Cataloguing Principles (ICP)

by the ICP Working Group on behalf of the IFLA Cataloguing Section

March 2025 Edition

Submitted for worldwide review

by Christian Aliverti (chair), Renate Behrens, Elise Conradi, Merideth Fletcher, Maira Kreislere, Priscilla Pun, Mélanie Roche, Marja-Liisa Seppälä, Ana Vukadin, Lucia Sardo, Joan Wang, Miki Yamaguchi and Sofia Zapounidou



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IFLA  
P.O. Box 95312  
2509 CH Den  
Haag Netherlands

[www.ifla.org](http://www.ifla.org)

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose

The original *Statement of Principles* - commonly known as the “Paris Principles” - was approved by the International Conference on Cataloguing Principles in 1961.<sup>1</sup> Its goal of serving as a basis for international standardisation in cataloguing has certainly been achieved: most of the cataloguing codes that were developed worldwide since that time have followed the *Principles* strictly or at least to a high degree.

Seventy years later, having a common set of international cataloguing principles is still necessary as cataloguers and users around the world use online catalogues as search and discovery systems. In 2009, IFLA produced a new statement of principles<sup>2</sup> that broadened the scope of the Paris Principles to cover online library catalogues and all types of resources. In addition to the existing principles and objectives, it included guidance on search and retrieval capabilities as well as general guidelines regarding a wide array of bibliographic and authority data rather than just the form of entry.

Through its subsequent revisions<sup>3</sup>, the Principles have evolved to incorporate the open access environment, issues of interoperability and accessibility, features for discovery tools and inputs from the IFLA Library Reference Model (IFLA LRM). They rely on the Multilingual Dictionary of Cataloguing terms (MulDiCat) to ensure semantic consistency throughout the suite of IFLA bibliographic standards.

## 1.2 Scope

The principles in this statement are intended to guide the development of conceptual models<sup>4</sup> or cataloguing codes and the decisions that cataloguers make. They apply to current library catalogues, bibliographies and other datasets created by libraries. As the information landscape is shifting towards linked data, the principles enable both traditional cataloguing practices relying on bibliographic and authority data, and linked data approaches (see Section 4). They aim to provide a consistent framework to the description of bibliographic resources of all kinds, regardless of the approach, the cataloguing code or the content standard that was chosen in one specific application. It is hoped that these principles will contribute to the international sharing of library metadata at large and will serve as a beacon for cataloguing rule-makers.

The statement considers library conceptual models, standards, and tools. Although cooperation with other communities such as museums and archives is always appreciated on

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<sup>1</sup> *International Conference on Cataloguing Principles (Paris : 1961). Report*. London: International Federation of Library Associations, 1963, p. 91-96. Also available in: *Library Resources & Technical Services*, v. 6 (1962), p. 162-167; and *Statement of principles adopted at the International Conference on Cataloguing Principles, Paris, October, 1961*. Annotated edition with commentary and examples by Eva Verona. London: IFLA Committee on Cataloguing, 1971.

<sup>2</sup> *IFLA Cataloguing Principles: Statement of International Cataloguing Principles (ICP) and its Glossary*. München: K.G. Saur, 2009. (IFLA Series on Bibliographic Control; v. 37). Statement available online <[www.ifla.org/publications/statement-of-international-cataloguing-principles](http://www.ifla.org/publications/statement-of-international-cataloguing-principles)>.

<sup>3</sup> *Statement of International Cataloguing Principles (ICP)*. 2016 Edition with minor revisions, 2017. Statement available online: <[https://www.ifla.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/assets/cataloguing/icp/icp\\_2016-en.pdf](https://www.ifla.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/assets/cataloguing/icp/icp_2016-en.pdf)>.

<sup>4</sup> Current conceptual models [https://www.ifla.org/resources/?sfm\\_unitid=105155&sfm\\_resource\\_type=All](https://www.ifla.org/resources/?sfm_unitid=105155&sfm_resource_type=All)

issues of data creation, management and sharing, such cooperation doesn't imply the adoption of the same principles or definitions as long as our respective standards promote interoperability.

### 1.3 Relation to other IFLA standards

As databases, library catalogues are subject to broader data policies that apply both locally and globally. On the global scene, IFLA regularly produces strategic statements promoting open and accessible data, including but not limited to the *IFLA Statement on Open Access*<sup>5</sup> or the *IFLA Code of Ethics for Librarians and other Information Workers*<sup>6</sup>. It is understood that library catalogues should align with such strategic statements to ensure a consistent application of the principles listed in this document.

The same applies to other bibliographic standards endorsed by IFLA: the International Cataloguing Principles are the stepping stone for other IFLA standards interested in creating and sharing library metadata – namely conceptual models and bibliographic content standards. As its principles are not grounded in time, it is supposedly less likely than others to undergo continuous revision, so that it can be referred to and applied by such standards with a certain sense of stability. However, the ICP should also reflect the significant changes brought in other standards over time by consequential revisions or the addition of new normative documents, to ensure a consistent application of the IFLA suite of bibliographic standards.

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<sup>5</sup> *IFLA Statement on Open Library Data*. 15 December 2021. Statement available online: <<https://repository.ifla.org/bitstream/123456789/1842/2/IFLA%20Statement%20on%20Open%20Library%20Data.pdf>>.

<sup>6</sup> *IFLA Code of Ethics for Librarians and Other Information Workers*. 12 August 2012. Full text available online: <[www.ifla.org/news/ifla-code-of-ethics-for-librarians-and-other-information-workers-full-version](http://www.ifla.org/news/ifla-code-of-ethics-for-librarians-and-other-information-workers-full-version)>

## 2. Principles

The following principles direct the construction and development of cataloguing codes, the decisions that cataloguers make and policies on access to and exchange of data. Of these, the convenience of the user is the most important, while principles 2.2 through 2.10 are in no particular order. If there is a conflict among principles 2.2-2.10, the principle of interoperability should be rated higher than others.

1. **Convenience of the user.** Convenience means that all efforts should be made to keep all data open, accessible, comprehensible and suitable for the users. The word “user” embraces anyone who searches the catalogue and uses its data. Decisions taken in the making of descriptions and controlled forms of names for access should be made with the user in mind.
2. **Inclusivity.** The catalogue should be freely accessible to all users, without exclusion or judgment.
3. **Representation and accuracy.** A description should be an accurate portrayal of the entity and represent a resource as it appears. Controlled forms of names should be based on the way an entity describes itself. Alternately, the form commonly used in reference sources should be used.
4. **Sufficiency and necessity.** The data elements required should facilitate access for all types of users, including those with specific needs; fulfil the objectives and functions of the catalogue; and describe or identify entities.
5. **Significance.** Data elements should be relevant to the description, noteworthy, and allow for distinctions among entities.
6. **Economy.** When alternative ways exist to achieve a goal, preference should be given to the way that best furthers overall expediency and practicality (i.e., the least cost or the simplest approach).
7. **Consistency and standardisation.** Descriptions and construction of access points should be standardised as far as possible to enable consistency.
8. **Integration.** The descriptions for all types of resources and controlled forms of names of all types of entities should be based on an interoperable set of rules and data models.
9. **Interoperability.** All efforts should be made to ensure the sharing and reuse of data within and outside the library community. For the exchange of data and discovery tools, the use of vocabularies facilitating automatic translation and disambiguation is highly recommended.
10. **Rationality.** The rules in a cataloguing code should be defensible and not arbitrary. If, in specific situations, it is not possible to respect all the principles, then defensible, practical solutions should be found and the rationale should be explained.

### 3. Objectives and Purpose of the Catalogue

The catalogue should be an effective and efficient instrument that enables user tasks such as defined by the conceptual model IFLA LRM:

1. to find bibliographic resources in a collection as the result of a search using attributes or relationships of the entities, that is to find a single resource or sets of resources representing:
  - all resources realising the same work,
  - all resources embodying the same expression,
  - all resources exemplifying the same manifestation,
  - all resources associated with a given agent,
  - all resources on or about a given entity,
  - all resources characterised by other attributes or relationships (language, place of publication, publication date, content form, media type, carrier type, etc.), usually as a secondary limiting of a search result;
2. to identify a bibliographic resource or an agent (that is, to confirm that the described entity corresponds to the entity sought or to distinguish between two or more entities with similar characteristics);
3. to select a bibliographic resource that is appropriate to the user's needs (that is, to choose a resource that meets the user's requirements with respect to medium, content, carrier, etc., or to exclude a resource as being irrelevant to the user's needs);
4. to obtain an item that is described (that is, to access a physical item through loan, purchase, etc., or to access a digital item through an online connection to a remote source);
1. to explore (that is to navigate within a catalogue, through the logical arrangement of bibliographic and authority data and the clear presentation of relationships among entities; or beyond the catalogue, to other catalogues and communities

When searching retrieves a large amount of data, results should be displayed in some logical order convenient to the catalogue user, preferably according to a standard relevant to the language and/or script of the resource.

Names should be searchable and retrievable by means of any device available in the given

library catalogue or bibliographic file (by full forms of names, by keywords, by phrases, by truncation, by identifiers, etc.). Data should be open and searchable even by non-library devices in order to increase interoperability and reuse.

The user should be able to choose among different sorting criteria: oldest or newest date of publication, alphabetical order, relevance ranking, etc.

When possible, preference should be given to a display showing entities and their relationships.



## 4. Consistent use of cataloguing standards

There are two ways of approaching cataloguing. “Traditional cataloguing” makes the distinction between bibliographic and authority data, while “entity-based cataloguing” uses entities and relationships such as defined by a conceptual model to serve as a support for linked data. These two methods are not mutually exclusive: often, both may co-exist within a single library system so as to allow linked data cataloguing even when using bibliographic and authority data. Typically, instances of IFLA LRM entities may be represented by descriptions known as bibliographic, holdings and authority data in traditional cataloguing systems.

### 4.1 Conceptual model

A conceptual model defines the entities of the bibliographic universe, their characteristics and relationships. Entities are the key objects of interest to users of library information systems. Each entity can be described by its attributes, which identify the entity and also serve as the means by which users formulate queries and interpret responses when seeking information about a particular entity. Entity-based cataloguing should use attributes that identify each entity as data elements. Relationships explain the connections between and among entities. A user may search using an attribute or relationship of an entity, or any combination of attributes and/or relationships. Bibliographically significant relationships among the entities should be provided. The current model is the IFLA Library Reference Model – IFLA LRM.

Extensions and refinements of entities, attributes and relationships should be documented and mapped to the IFLA LRM. When using a different conceptual model, all efforts should be made to provide open access to published mappings between the model used and the IFLA LRM.

### 4.2 Content standard

A content standard provides instructions on how to record data elements. The current standard is ISBD. When based on a different standard, all efforts should be made to provide open access to published mappings between the standard used and the *International Standard Bibliographic Description* (ISBD), to foster better interoperability and accurate reuse of information.

In general, a separate bibliographic description is created for each manifestation. A bibliographic description is usually based on an item exemplifying the manifestation being described. This description may include attributes or link to attributes that pertain to the item and to the embodied work(s) and expression(s). Descriptions may be at several levels of completeness, depending on the purpose of the catalogue or bibliographic dataset. Information about the level of completeness should be conveyed to the user.

## 4.3 Identifiers

### 4.3.1 Purpose and principles

Identifiers provide unambiguous access to an instance of an entity by differentiating that instance from other instances. In an online system, unique identifiers are usually assigned to the entities that are described and to the descriptions themselves. Assigning agencies should ensure the persistence of the identifiers for which they are responsible.

### 4.3.2 Access points

Access points are identifiers that provide reliable retrieval of bibliographic and authority data and their associated bibliographic resources. They are useful to collocate and limit search results. They usually consist of a name string, or any combination of signs that forms the appellation associated with an entity – its nomen. Access points support the user tasks Find, Identify, and Explore.

Authorised access points are based on the preferred name of an entity, which should be chosen according to international rules or standards. Additional access points are based on the variant forms of names associated with that entity.

Authorised access points for works and expressions embodied in the resource, the title of the manifestation, and the authorised access points for the creators of works, should be included as access points to bibliographic data.

Additional authorised access points for any other entity should be provided to bibliographic data, when deemed important for finding and identifying the bibliographic resource being described.

The authorised form of name for the entity, as well as the variant forms of name, should be included as access points to authority data. Additional access points may be provided through names of related entities

### 4.3.3 Construction and choice of authorised access points

Authorised access points provide disambiguation between entities and must be constructed following a standard. The authorised access point for the name of an entity should be recorded along with identifiers for the entity and variant forms of name. An authorised access point may be used as a default form for displays in the catalogue.

The preferred name for an entity should identify the entity in a consistent manner, either as it is found in the representative expression of the work, as it most frequently appears on manifestations, or as a form of name well-accepted name by the users of the catalogue as found in reference sources (e.g., "conventional name").

When choosing the form of the name on which to base the authorised access point of an entity, differences should be made whether considering agents or WEMI entities:

- Agents: in terms of selection and order of words, the form of name of an agent should be chosen following conventions of the country and language most associated with that

agent as found in manifestations or reference sources<sup>7</sup>.

- WEMI entities: an authorised access point for a work, expression, manifestation, or item may be created either from a title that can stand alone or from a title combined with the authorised access point for the creator(s) of the work.

To distinguish an entity from others of the same name, further attributes should be included as part of the authorised access point for an entity to identify one and only one instance of that entity. If desirable, the same attributes may be included as a part of the variant forms of name.

Whatever name is chosen for the authorised access point, the variant names and variant forms of name should also be recorded as authority data for controlled access.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.ifla.org/g/cataloguing/names-of-persons/>