Revision of ICP 2025: statement of intent

In accordance with the mandate given by the IFLA Cataloguing Section to the ICP Working Group, the 2025 edition of the International Cataloguing Principles (ICP) is a lighter version aiming to streamline the previous one, issued in 2016. The main objective of this revision was to consolidate a long-term, principle-based Statement, to which end the following guidelines were applied:

- keep the number of sections as limited as possible;
- focus on the principles of cataloguing (former Section 3, now section 2) and objectives of the catalogue (former Section 6, now section 3);
- take into account both bibliographic/authority and entity-relationship cataloguing;
- align the Statement on the IFLA suite of bibliographic standards.

The use of the word “cataloguing” was questioned and debated. The working group eventually decided to keep it, as it is a common word known by all and applicable to a variety of bibliographic contexts. The Cataloguing Section fully endorses this decision. While it is true that the word “metadata” is widely used today to refer to both bibliographic and authority records and that cataloguing can indeed be defined as the creation of metadata, the term “metadata” in itself and taken out of the particular context of resource description is too general to be used in an IFLA standard.

A new section (Section 4 Consistent use of cataloguing standards) was added to account for the fact that cataloguing now and for the foreseeable future is not as stable a world as it once was. This section introduces a distinction between “traditional” (i.e., based on bibliographic and authority records) and “entity-relationship” cataloguing based on linked data principles. Instead of opposing the two approaches, this section rather aims to find as much common ground as possible between them so that all principles and objectives apply to both contexts of production.

Very little change was introduced to the principles themselves, which have now regained a central place in the document. One major change consisted in the removal of former principles 11 Openness and 12 Accessibility, introduced in 2016. This is not to say that cataloguing doesn’t uphold the values of accessibility and openness: on the contrary, they form a key focus point of cataloguing, so much so that they were instead included in Principle 1 as inherent components of the convenience of user, on par with comprehensiveness and suitability.

The phrasing of the principles was sometimes altered to simplify it for non-native English speakers or for consistency purposes. Other than that, the Cataloguing Section finds that the principles remain as up-to-date today as they were 50 years ago – a testimony to their long-term solidity. This is the kind of stability the 2024 edition aims to achieve.

Former section 7 Foundations for Search Capabilities was removed altogether. Although a historic section of the statement, it is now outdated both in the language used and in its content, as it was mainly concerned with display rather than cataloguing itself. It also introduced semantic ambiguity as to the use of the term “access point”, which the Cataloguing Section felt confusing.

The glossary was removed, as MulDiCat (currently under revision) is acting as common glossary for all IFLA bibliographic standards. Likewise, the bibliography (former section 9) was removed for the sake of streamlining.