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2020

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Saberi, Mohammad Karim and Pazooki, Fatemeh, "Applying IFLA Standards to Compile National Standards: Standardization Activities in Iran" (2020). *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)*. 3889. <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/3889>

# Applying IFLA Standards to Compile National Standards: Standardization Activities in Iran

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## Abstract

The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) is a leading international body representing the interests of library and information services and their users. One of the objectives assumed by IFLA as an independent, international, nongovernmental, and nonprofit organization is promotion of high-level standards for presentation of library and information services. Over the past fifty years, IFLA has codified a wide range of standards at all fields of library and information services. Translating IFLA standards, different countries of the world make use of these standards in order to present enhanced library and information services. Even though, in Iran, as a leading country in application of IFLA standards, other activities are undertaken as well. Iran is located in south western Asia. It has more than 3,000 public libraries. According to the Iranian law, institution of Iranian public libraries is a general and nongovernmental foundation that is responsible for establishment, construction, equipment, development, management, and supervision over statewide Iranian public libraries. This Foundation has a department called Bureau of Standards. In addition to translating IFLA standards and comparing conditions dominant on the Iranian libraries with IFLA standards, Iran Public Libraries Bureau of Standards makes use of IFLA standards to codify national Iranian standards. In Iran, the National Organization for Standardization is a member and representative of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO). Before 2014, ISO standards had been used to codify national Iranian standards at all fields of library and information services. After multiple attempts made by the Iran Public Libraries Bureau of Standards, IFLA standards, much like ISO standards, were ratified in the Iranian National Standards Organization in order to be used in codification of national standards. In this research, a report on the manner by which IFLA standards are applied and the activities undertaken to codify national standards in Iran is presented. This research might serve as an appropriate framework for other countries of the world in application of IFLA standards.

**Keywords:** Iran, IFLA standards, standard codification, public libraries

## Introduction

Standard and standardization are no novel phenomenon, and they have existed in human life since long ago. Just like many other natural phenomena, standard is an impression which is taken by humankind out of his/her surrounding environment. This has been an unconscious process at the beginning. For instance, appearance of decimal counting systems, which are adopted from the pattern of human beings' fingers in his/her two hands and are currently used, date back to a long time ago (Yeganeh, 2000). Isomorphic clayware containers, ships with the same shape, fixed dimensions of bricks, and even pieces of stone in the building of the Egyptian pyramids are all samples of standard in the ancient age. Standard is the result of a particular attempt made to define rules applicable for an occupation, activity, and goods that is ratified by competent authorities. In its general sense, standard is synonymous with order. Each standard is the result of a particular attempt made to arrange ingredients in a certain background and is approved by a competent authority (Iran Public Libraries Foundation, 2015). In its particular terminology, however, standard refers to a tier of particular quality of objects, activities, or basic indices that have to be observed or defined as a basis for judgments (Neshat, 2007). Standard has encountered several developments during the history. It, at the beginning, has been held as a standard for metrology. Then, standard has been introduced as a standard for products. Finally, it has been presented as a methodology and system. As regards scope of inclusion, standards are divided into five general classes:

**A. Factory standards:** These standards are valid only in the scope of a certain factory or company. Such standards, which deal with different activities concerning production, design, test, after-sale services, personnel, management policies, etc., intend to formalize the procedures involved in a company. Standards like GE, VOLVO, FORD, RENAULT, and so forth are classified in this category.

**B. Association and guild standards:** These standards, which include contracts and documents of an experienced workgroup, are codified to facilitate a shared intergroup language and explain certain jargons respecting an industrial-technical axis. Included in this category are American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM), American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME), American Petroleum Institute (API), Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE), etc.

**C. National standards:** National standards include qualitative rules and documents, definitions, test methods, etc., that are regulated by a state's officials on its own products or those which are given sales permits. Among national standards, one could refer to the following: Institute of Standards and Industrial Research of Iran (ISIRI), American National Standards Institute (ANSI), Deutsches Institut für Normung (DIN), British Standards Institution (BSI), etc.

**D. Regional standards:** Regional standards are technical documents of a group of neighboring countries that are formulated aimed at provision of a shared quality and general language in

correspondences, businesses, and exchange of goods. Important among these standards are European Standards (EN), Arab Standards and Metrology Organization (ASMO), African Organization for Standardization (ARSO), and Pan American Standards Commission (COPANT).

**E. International standards:** These standards are drawn up as a result of agreements reached by experts at ISO member states. Significant among international organizations for codification and publication of international standards are International Standards Organization (ISO), International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC), and International Food Standards (Codex Alimentarius) (CAC) (Iran Public Libraries Foundation, 2015).

In line with extensive international activities intended to develop technical and industrial standards, a broad range of activities has been undertaken in the field of library and information services. Following is a reference to international attempts to codify standards associated with library and information services in Iran.

### **Standardization in Library and Information Services**

Existence of appropriate standards and guidelines for libraries could make great contributions to managers and librarians to, firstly, get an insight into the status quo of their library and, secondly, take steps to improve their library's present conditions (Sabeti and Pazooki, 2015). Codification of library standards in librarianship enjoys a long history. Thus far, three types of standards have been developed and published (Neshat, 2007):

1. Standards with which library services are compared. Some standards published by IFLA and American Library Association are pigeonholed under this category. Mobile Library Guidelines are, also, samples of such standards.
2. Standards that are required to be constantly applied in conduction of certain activities as far as possible, but no similar results are necessarily obtained from their application. Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules (AACR) and International Standard Book Number (ISBN) are samples of these standards.
3. Technical standards or specifications on which precise supervisions should be made to make common use of their information. Standards imposed by National Information Standard Organization (NISO) in the US regarding issues such as specification of structures, formats, characters, and lists are classified under this category.

### **International Activities of Codification of Library and Information Services Standards**

Currently, the most activities by Codification of Library and Information Services Standards in international level are carried out by two institutions:

- 1. International Organization for Standardization (ISO):** ISO is an independent, non-governmental international organization with a membership of 162 national standards

bodies. Through its members, it brings together experts to share knowledge and develop voluntary, consensus-based, market relevant International Standards that support innovation and provide solutions to global challenges. ISO Central Secretariat is based in Geneva, Switzerland.

ISO has published more than 21000 International Standards and related documents, covering almost every industry, from technology, to food safety, to agriculture and healthcare. ISO International Standards impact everyone, everywhere.

The ISO story began in 1946 when delegates from 25 countries met at the Institute of Civil Engineers in London and decided to create a new international organization 'to facilitate the international coordination and unification of industrial standards. On 23 February 1947 the new organization, ISO, officially began operations. Since then, ISO have published over 21000 International Standards covering almost all aspects of technology and manufacturing. Today ISO have members from 162 countries and 3 368 technical bodies to take care of standard development (ISO, 2016).

In the field of library and information services, the ISO/TC 46 Technical Committee, which is known as Information and Documentation, is responsible for codification of international standards in this regard. Work scope of this Committee includes: Standardization of practices relating to libraries, documentation and information centers, publishing, archives, records management, museum documentation, indexing and abstracting services, and information science. As to 16 Jun. 2015, a number of 114 standards in the field of library and information services have been published by the ISO/TC 46 Information and Documentation.

**2. International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA):** The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) is the leading international body representing the interests of library and information services and their users. IFLA aims are to:

- Promote high standards of provision and delivery of library and information services;
- Encourage widespread understanding of the value of good library & information services;
- Represent the interests of our members throughout the world.

IFLA has 44 units and several workgroups, each of which having their own certain plans. They are responsible for examination of chief IFLA issues, including: Copyright Limitations and Exceptions for Libraries & Archives, Cultural Heritage, Information Society, IFLA, Libraries and Development, e-Lending for Libraries.

IFLA has different sections and branches, including: Academic and Research Libraries, Acquisition and Collection Development, Africa, Art Libraries, Asia and Oceania, Audiovisual and Multimedia, Bibliography, Cataloguing, Classification and Indexing, Document Delivery and Resource Sharing, Education and Training, Genealogy and Local History, Information

Literacy, Information Technology, Knowledge Management, Latin America and the Caribbean, Law Libraries and ...

Over the last fifty years, IFLA has produced a wide range of standards in all fields of library and information services. Standards' activities are now an integral part of IFLA's Strategic direction and one of IFLA's current goals is to focus on 'developing, maintaining and adhering to the highest standards that support high quality practices.

IFLA standards are internationally reviewed, published and regularly updated documents. Each IFLA standard reflects current consensus on rules, principles, guidelines, best practice or models for a particular activity or service. IFLA standards in their diversity of styles and subject matter provide optimum benefit for the international library community. Standards are established by IFLA professional units who work in collaboration and by consensus.

Hitherto, exceeding 50 standards and guidelines have been codified by IFLA for libraries and information centers, including: Guidelines for Children's Library Services, Guidelines for Easy-to-Read Materials, Guidelines for Exhibition Loans, Guidelines for Legal Deposit Legislation, Guidelines for Legislative Libraries, Guidelines for Library Service to Braille Users, Guidelines for Library Services to Prisoners, Guidelines for Multilingual Thesauri, Guidelines for Newspaper Preservation Microfilming, IFLA Public Library Service Guidelines, IFLA School Library Guidelines, Mobile Library Guidelines, etc.

IFLA Standard Committee has made good collaborations with ISO technical committees and frequently shares with them reports of its activities. These committees contain the following:

- ISO/TC 37, Terminology and other language and content resources;
- ISO/TC 46, Information and documentation;
- ISO/TC 46/SC 8, Quality - Statistics and performance evaluation;
- ISO/TC 46/SC 9, Identification and description;
- ISO/TC 171, Document management applications (IFLA, 2016).

### **Standard Codification Activities in Iran Public Libraries Foundation**

After translating IFLA standards, different countries of the world make use of these standards in order to present enhanced library and information services. Even though, in Iran, as a leading country in application of IFLA standards, other activities are undertaken as well. Iran is located in south western Asia. It has exceeding 3,000 public libraries. According to the Iranian law, institution of Iranian public libraries is a general and nongovernmental foundation that is responsible for establishment, construction, equipment, development, management, and supervision over statewide Iranian public libraries.

In 2013, Iran Public Libraries Foundation was established under the title of Standard Department in order to provide assistance to the Iran Public Libraries in standardization of procedures, processes, services, and software aspects of the state public libraries by means

of codification of library and information services standards. The most important responsibilities assumed by this department are as follows:

1. Policy-making and determination of priorities, plans, and activities relevant to standardization of state's public libraries;
2. Making continual contacts with real and artificial persons in order to prepare, codify, publish, and update the standards required for state's public libraries;
3. Making cooperation with the Iranian National Standards Organization aligned with standardization and improvement of qualitative and quantitative activities undertaken by state's public libraries;
4. Promoting national standards codified in the field of public libraries and supervision on well execution of them;
5. Arranging technical conferences in order to introduce, criticize, and examine standards codified for the state's public libraries with collaborations made by the Iranian National Standards Organization as well as relevant experts and authorities;
6. Continually presenting technical reports out of conditions of state's public libraries compared with national and international standards.

Following is a report of initiatives to codify library and information standards which have been during the recent years undertaken by the Iran Public Libraries Foundation Bureau of Standards.

### **Formation of Standards Codification Committee**

Codification of standards is performed in teamwork, and standards should be codified by a board of experts. As the first step, accordingly, National Committee for Codification of Iran Public Libraries Standards was established, in which 31 representatives from 31 state provinces, 5 librarianship professors from different state universities, and representatives from such technical organizations as National Library of Iran, Iran Librarianship Association, Iran Parliament Library, and Iranian National Standards Organization gathered in order to make collaborations in codification of library and information standards and activities taken in the field of standards.

As the second stage, priorities for codification of standards for National Committee for Codification of Iran Public Libraries Standards were identified and codification of 10 standards was undertaken by the Committee. Titles of these standards are as follows:

1. Qualitative conditions and chief indices for building of libraries: space: performance, and designation;
2. Inter-library lending;
3. Mobile library;

4. Donation to public libraries: guidelines for libraries;
5. Guidelines for readable resources;
6. IT services and equipment in public libraries;
7. The section for the blind and the visually impaired in public libraries;
8. Reference section in public libraries;
9. Children's section in public libraries;
10. Space of public libraries.

Before 2013 and formation of Bureau of Standards at the Iran Public Libraries Foundation, only ISO standards were used to codify national library and information standards. Pursuant to serious attempts made by the Iran Public Libraries Bureau of Standards, however, IFLA standards, much like ISO ones, were approved as an international reference in the Iranian National Standards Organization in order to be applied in codification of national standards. Therefore, standards approved by ISO, IFLA, and other countries of the world were adopted in codification of draft of above-mentioned 10 standards. Codification of standards 1 and 2 based on ISO standards; standards 3, 4, and 5 based on IFLA standards; and, standards 6 to 10 based on different resources (standards approved by ISO, IFLA, and other countries) was switched on. Happily, collaborations during three years by members at the National Committee for Codification of Iran Public Libraries Standards brought about codification of above-mentioned 10 standards, which are presently at the process of final approval and communication to statewide Iranian libraries.

### **Cooperation and Interactions with Iranian National Standards Organization**

Currently, a wide range of scientific efforts are made by worldwide standard institutes in order to develop, regulate, and execute standard-related rules and regulations. The standards which are regulated by these institutes within a country are referred to as national standards. All standard institutes at different countries are members of the ISO, which is responsible for development of international standards collaborated by national standard institutes.

The first documented standardization initiative in Iran was initiated after ratification of Weights and Scales Act in 1925. In 1960, after ratification of the Act for Establishment of Iran Standards Institute, this Institute moved on with its duties within the outline of defined purposes and responsibilities. In 2011, finally, Iran Standards Institute was renamed to National Standards Organization (Iranian National Standards Organization, 2015).

Administrative and Educational Documents and Equipment Committee at the National Standards Organization is responsible for codification of library- and librarianship-related standards. This Committee has, so far, codified, registered, and published more than 30 standards.



Following establishment of the Iran Public Libraries Foundation Bureau of Standards, representatives of this Bureau started their diligent, regular, and continuous collaborations with the Iranian National Standards Organization. They have made collaborations in technical committees, national committees, and planning library and information standards committees. Some examples of such collaborations are pointed out in the Table 1.

**Table 1. Collaborations with Iranian National Standards Organization**

Type of Collaboration	Specifications of Standard
Technical committee	Performance indices of library and International Standard Book Number (ISBN)
	Terminological entries in standards
	Schemas for information entities
	Methodologies and procedures for effects of libraries
	Environmental conditions for arrangement of archive and library materials exhibitions
National committee	Identifier for International Standard of Libraries and Affiliated Organizations (SHABKA)
	Radiofrequency Identification in Libraries, Subject of the Meeting of National Information Technology Committee
	Language Resources Management – The Framework for Grammatical Notification
	Methodologies and procedures for effects of libraries
	Link Standard Identifier
Planning committee	Examination of suggestions for administrative equipment and documents major

### **Arrangement of Technical Sessions and Promotion of Documented National Standards**

In addition to standard codification initiatives, one of chief activities by the Iran Public Libraries Foundation Bureau of Standards is promotion of documented national standards, supervision on well execution of them, and arrangement of technical sessions in order to introduce and examine standards collaborated by pertinent experts and authorities. As cited in the Table 1, the Identifier for International Standard of Libraries and Affiliated Organizations (SHABKA) is one of the standards which was codified through collaborations made by the Iran Public Libraries Foundation Bureau of Standards as a national standard.

After publication of this national standard, a technical session was held by the Iran Public Libraries Foundation Bureau of Standards with representatives of relevant organizations (Iranian National Standards Organization, National Library of Iran, and managers and librarians of Iranian public libraries) in order to introduce and examine this standard. It was

regulated that an International Standard of Libraries and Affiliated Organizations (SHABKA) is required to be received for all Iranian public libraries.



**Pic. 1. SHABKA standard technical session**

International Standard of Libraries and Affiliated Organizations (SHABKA) is a unique 12-digit code that is allocated to all libraries and information centers. After codification of this national standard, Iran Public Libraries Foundation Bureau of Standards took measures to execute this standard for all Iranian public libraries. It has, thus far, received SHABKA standard for more than 1,600 public libraries.

### **Comparative Standard Research**

In 2014, Iran Public Libraries Foundation Bureau of Standards compared conditions of Iranian public libraries with IFLA standards and presented outcomes of this national research within the framework of an article in the 81st IFLA International Conference in 2015.



**Pic. 2. The article presented by Iran's representative in the 81st IFLA International Conference (2015)**

### **Presentation of the Report of Participation in the 2015 Annual IFLA Conference**

After participation of representative of Iran's Bureau of Standards in the 2015 Annual IFLA Conference held in Cape Town, South Africa, a report of this participation was presented in a technical session arranged in the Iran Public Libraries Foundation focusing on articles of IFLA Standard Committee. It was warmly welcomed by librarians, managers, and LIS professionals.



**Pic. 3. The report of participation in 2015 Annual IFLA Conference by Iran experts**

### **Standard Educational Courses**

In order to promote standard and standardization and educate standardization experts, Iran Public Libraries Foundation Bureau of Standards arranged several educational courses aimed at acquainting Iranian LIS experts with two standards developed by ISO and IFLA international organizations and gaining their participation in codification of national standards. Therefore, Iran Public Libraries Foundation Bureau of Standards, collaborated by the Iranian National Standards Organization, held an educational workshop for members of Iran Public Libraries Committee of Standards. In this workshop, Committee of Standards members were instructed, in addition to international standards, about the processes and manners by which national standards are codified.



**Pic. 4. Standardization Educational Course**

The educational workshop Standardization of Libraries' Safety was held collaborated by Shahid Beheshti University in order for acquainting librarians at public libraries and universities with this type of standardization. In this educational workshop, librarians were practically acquainted with various types of safety standards and ergonomic standards and principles at libraries.





**Pic. 5. The Educational Course 'Standardization of Libraries' Safety'**

The educational workshop Standardization and Codification of Standards for Libraries and Information Centers was another educational course that was held by representative of the Iran Public Libraries Foundation Bureau of Standards for Khorasan Razavi Province librarians. In this educational workshop, librarians were acquainted with experiences of participation in IFLA as well as principles of standardization in order for them to acquire more knowledge about IFLA as an international institute in the field of library and information sciences.



**Pic. 6. The Educational Course ‘Codification of Standards for Libraries and Information Centers’**

### **World Standards Day Conference**

In 1961, ISO General Assembly regulated that World Standards Day is named and celebrated internationally each year on 14 October since 1970 on. This confronted UN appreciation in order to shed light on importance of standard for all people of the world (Iranian National Standards Organization, 2016). In 2015, Iran Public Libraries Foundation Bureau of Standards, as an institute participating in codification of LIS standards, decided to arrange a national conference each year on 14 October, celebrating this day and appreciating LIS standards codification activists. Accordingly, the first World Standards Day conference was held in 14 October 2015 by Iran Public Libraries Foundation Bureau of Standards collaborated by the Iranian National Standards Organization and National Library of Iran. In this conference, three leading figures in the field of library and information sciences were appreciated and one standard was inaugurated.



**Pic. 7. World Standards Day National Conference**



**Pic. 8: Unveiling a LIS Standard**

## Conclusions

In this article, after a brief glance into LIS standards codification initiatives in international level by International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), a report of national standards codification initiatives carried out in Iran was presented. As cited hereinabove, the ISO/TC 46 Technical Committee, which is reputed as Information and Documentation, is responsible for codification of international standards in the field of library and information sciences. IFLA, over the past fifty years, has codified a wide range of standards at all fields of library and information services .

Iran is a leading country in codification of LIS standards. Before formation of Bureau of Standards at the Iran Public Libraries Foundation, National Library of Iran and Iranian National Standards Organization were responsible for codification of library standards. They used ISO standards to codify national Iranian standards. After establishment of Iran Public Libraries Foundation Bureau of Standards in 2013, initiatives for codification of LIS standards, especially public libraries standards, were followed in a more ordered and coherent trajectory. IFLA standards, just like ISO standards, were ratified as an international reference in the Iranian National Standards Organization in order to be used in codification of national standards .

In addition to this, formation of National Committee for Codification of Standards, codification of draft of 10 national standards, interactions and collaborations with the Iranian National Standards Organization, holding technical sessions, reception of SHABKA standard for more than 1,600 public libraries, comparison of Iranian public libraries' conditions with IFLA standards, participation in the 2015 Annual IFLA Conference (Cape Town, South Africa), arrangement of standardization educational courses, and arrangement of World Standards Day conference are among the initiatives carried out by the Iran Public Libraries Foundation Bureau of Standards. These initiatives could offer an appropriate pattern for other countries of the world in the field of library and information sciences .

In this article, a summary of the initiatives undertaken by the Iran Public Libraries Foundation Bureau of Standards was presented. All these activities need supports made by Iran Public Libraries Foundation managers. Until May 2016, Iran Public Libraries Foundation Bureau of Standards was lodged in the Research and Innovation Department General. Due to some changes made in the organizational structure, however, Iran Public Libraries Foundation Bureau of Standards was transferred to the Planning Department General since mid-May 2016. This transference is hoped not to create obstacles in the way of Standard activities. Rather, Bureau of Standard is anticipated to pursue its duties even more powerful than before, presenting a report of Iran's initiatives in the field of standard in the 83rd IFLA International Conference in 2017.



## **Acknowledgments**

This article has been presented in "IFLA WLIC 2016 – Columbus, OH – Connections. Collaboration. Community in Session 144 - Committee on Standards".

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