ADVANCES IN KNOWLEDGE ORGANIZATION
Proceedings of International ISKO Conference - ISSN: 0938-5495 - 2026 - São Paulo

Cultural Representative Expression Clusters: Toward Community-Relative Representativeness in the IFLA Library Reference Model

Ziyoung Park

Hansung University, Republic of Korea

Abstract

Across reading communities, the expressions that come to stand for a work are culturally patterned rather than given: the same work is represented by different expressions in different communities. Representative expression in the IFLA Library Reference Model (LRM), though warranted by how users perceive a work, in practice defaults to the original expression and records abstracted attribute values rather than the expressions themselves. For readers who meet a work mainly through translation, these come apart: only a subset of the translations, community-relative and culturally salient, serves as the actual reference points. Drawing on a work-centered translation bibliography, we introduce Cultural Representative Expression Clusters (CRECs)—community-relative sets of expressions that draw their members from the expression level but are predicated of the work. CRECs stand beside representative expression rather than revising it. This paper argues that the concept is needed to capture culturally relative representativeness, and leaves open how it is best expressed—within LRM's extension provisions or in national cataloguing rules.

1.0 Introduction

When Han Kang received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2024 for works such as *Human Acts*, in what language did the members of the committee read her? Almost certainly not in Korean. For most of her readers around the world, the book that moved them was a translated one. This is not a special case. In many societies readers meet works from other languages mainly through translation.

A work-centered bibliography of literary translations makes a further point visible: a single work may have many translations, yet only a few are actually treated as the reference points through which the work is known and recommended in a reading community—typically those that are widely read or well regarded by critics, and often the first translation among them. The German–Korean translation bibliography UeDeKo is one such resource (UeDeKo Project Team 2025).

So a familiar concern reappears at an unfamiliar level. Knowledge organization has long examined cultural bias in subject description and classification, but which expressions a community treats as representative of a work is just as culturally shaped. Where in our models does this belong? The IFLA Library Reference Model (LRM) is a natural place to look,

because it introduces representative expression precisely to record the expression-level features that users associate with a work (Riva et al. 2017, 91–93). As we will see, however, the small, culturally salient set just described is not what representative expression, as the model operationalizes it, is built to capture.

The paper proceeds as follows. After reviewing cultural perspectives in knowledge organization, it shows that representative expression, though warranted by user perception, quietly defaults to the original expression—so that its stated ground and its working criterion pull apart in translation-dominant settings. It then introduces Cultural Representative Expression Clusters (CRECs): community-relative, set-valued configurations that stand alongside representative expression. Finally, using the German–Korean translation bibliography UeDeKo, it shows the phenomenon made concrete in an existing resource, while leaving open how a CREC is best expressed. Throughout, the aim is modest: to extend how we read LRM, not to replace it.

2.0 Cultural Perspectives in Knowledge Organization

Knowledge organization has long recognized that systems of description and classification are shaped by the communities that build them rather than being culturally neutral. Beghtol held that such systems need cultural warrant alongside literary and scientific warrant, and should be judged by their cultural hospitality—their capacity to accommodate different cultural perspectives (Beghtol 2002a, 2002b, 2005). Related work reads classification as reflecting particular cultural standpoints rather than a neutral universal (Mai 2016; Olson 1999, 2001, 2002), and notes that across languages knowledge cannot be aligned term for term, since cultures structure it differently (Hudon 1997, 1999).

This work, though, mostly concerns subject access—how a resource is named and classified by topic—and says less about how a work itself is identified across linguistic communities, the level we address. Translation studies bears on this level, and we take it as warrant rather than a debate to join. It names a familiar tension between an original and its translations, in which the translation is often perceived as a deficient surrogate, less faithful to the author's intention—a perception Venuti reads as a position, not a neutral fact (Venuti 1995). Yet a translation holds its own place within the receiving culture's literary system (Even-Zohar 1990), and which one counts as representative depends on how that culture receives it, shifting through retranslation and canonization (Berman 1990). In the bibliographic world the same tension reappears: one form, usually the original, is treated as representative and the rest are not. It is a convention, not a rule—and it leaves little room for the many forms through which communities actually meet a work.

3.0 Representative Expression in the IFLA Library Reference Model

LRM separates the work, an abstract intellectual creation, from the expression, its realization in a particular language or form (Riva et al. 2017, 21–23). Formally, all expressions of a work are equal. But studies with end-users found that people often

perceive certain features—language or form, say—as belonging to the work itself (Riva et al. 2017, 91). Representative expression is LRM's way of recording that perception: a single work-level attribute that records selected expression-level values to help identify the work, with the exact criteria left to individual cataloguing codes (Riva et al. 2017). Its object-oriented rendering LRMoo makes this concrete through two properties: one records the representative value at the work level (R79), the other links the work to the expression or expressions those attributes are drawn from (R73). The scope note is explicit that a source expression may or may not be identified, and that the attributes may come from one expression or several (IFLA LRMoo 2025). Representative expression, then, records abstracted attribute values, not the expressions themselves—though the criteria for selecting them are left open, and selection becomes uncertain where the original expression is plural or absent (Lee 2019; Park and Lee 2025).

So the model does not require a single representative expression, and it does not fix the criteria. Why, then, does representativeness so often settle on the original? Not because of a formal rule, but because three things pull in the same direction. First, the model's own examples repeatedly take the earliest or original-language realization as representative. Second, cataloguing has a long collocation tradition in which one authorized form—the uniform title, the main entry—stands for the whole work (Svenonius 2000, 15–20; IFLA 2016). Third, LRMoo draws the representative attributes from the canonical expression, usually the one considered original (IFLA LRMoo 2025). Read this way, representative expression is the work-level heir of an older cataloguing convention: choosing one authorized form to stand for the rest.

This one work-level attribute is doing two jobs at once. The first is to identify the work: to give an unseen abstraction a stable, human-readable label, so it can be shown to a reader and collocated with related works. For this, any single settled form will do. The second is to represent the work: to signal which expression typifies it. These are not the same task. As Goodman (1976, 5, 52–53) notes, a label merely denotes what it points to; but an attribute value drawn from one particular expression is also read as exemplifying the work—as standing for what the work is like. Cataloguing settled the first job long ago, choosing one authorized heading, usually from the original. Representative expression extends the same original-oriented convention to the second: rather than a single form, it records attributes of a representative expression—typically the original language and literary form—at the work level. Han Kang's *Human Acts* becomes, in effect, Han Kang's Korean-language novel *Human Acts*: what was chosen to label the work also represents it.

Here a gap opens. The stated ground of representative expression is user perception; its working criterion, in practice, is proximity to the first or original expression—the realization closest to the creator's initial intention. For a reader inside the work's own language, the two coincide. For a reader who reaches the work mainly through translation, they part: what feels inherent comes from prominent translations, not from the original-language expression. User studies of the model found that readers often give the original a special place, closer to the work than other expressions, valued almost as a surrogate for the work itself (Pisanski and Žumer 2010, 2012). This standing is real, and a CREC keeps it. Recording the original's attributes still matters, and no translation takes the original's place. But a

special place in the mind is not the same as the version a reader reaches for. Those studies were conducted in Slovenia, with Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* among the examples: a reader there may well know the English text stands closest to the work, yet the text that actually kept them turning pages was surely the Slovenian one. Which expressions a community actually reads by is the dimension a CREC addresses.

One qualification of scope. Our concern is the general reader, who meets a work through whatever version reaches them—not the specialist, who will rightly turn to the original.

4.0 Cultural Representative Expression Clusters

A Cultural Representative Expression Cluster (CREC) is the set of expressions that a particular linguistic or cultural community treats as its primary reference points for a work. What decides membership is not proximity to the original but cultural salience—critical endorsement, educational adoption, patterns of circulation. In the translation case, a CREC typically gathers the translations a community has foregrounded—those that are widely read, those well regarded by critics, and those by translators taken as authoritative. The first translation and the first complete translation often belong, but a CREC is not made up of them alone. And the single most prominent member can be hard to pin down—much as the authorized form for a main entry can be hard to settle under cataloguing rules.

A CREC is a set rather than a single value. Equating the representative expression with the original does the opposite—it defines the work by one necessary criterion, proximity to the original, the kind of classical, Aristotelian category that knowledge organization has long questioned (Olson 1999; Hjørland 2017). A CREC instead lets several expressions stand together as a community's reference points. Differences in readers' expertise, purpose, or period need not spawn separate clusters; they can be accommodated within a single community-relative set.

So what kind of thing is a CREC? Its members come from the expression level—hence expression clusters. But membership is not a property of any one expression. Whether an expression belongs is settled only in relation to a given work and a given community, so the same translation can be central for one community and peripheral for another. This is why a CREC cannot be folded back into an expression-level attribute without losing the community it belongs to. In translation cases the two often do not overlap—the Korean cluster need not contain the German original—while in a work's own language they may; so the two are best read as parallel, not as one refining the other. Nor is the phenomenon confined to language or translation: what a community foregrounds may differ in form or medium as well. Table 1 sets the two constructs side by side.

Table 1 Representative expression (RE) and the cultural representative expression cluster (CREC) compared.

Aspect	RE	CREC
Basis for membership	Usually the original or a canonical expression (the model's default)	Cultural salience within a community
What is recorded	Abstracted attribute values; source expression need not be identified	The expressions themselves, as a community-relative set
Scope	Global — one per work	Community-relative — per work and community
Stability	Relatively stable	Historically dynamic
Role	The work's single identifying anchor	A reference layer beside RE

How, then, might a CREC be expressed in the current model? The obvious moves do not fit. A representative value recorded through R79 abstracts away from particular translations and competes for the single slot the original-language default already holds; R73 names expressions only as the source of the work's representative attributes, with no community dimension. Per-expression attributes—an audience attribute for scholarly versus general-reader translations, or one recording quality—fare no better: each is an intrinsic value of a single translation, not a community-relative set predicated of the work. A CREC complements these attributes rather than replacing them, and needs what they lack: to record a selected set of expressions, relative to a community, as standing for the work. These failures share one cause: representativeness is given silently, by position, with nothing to mark a value as representative. There is thus no room to record a second, culturally salient kind of representativeness beside the original-oriented one, and no way to tell a CREC from a representative value without a marker the model does not provide. This is part of why the best way to express a CREC is still open.

Two paths remain. In the near term a CREC can be realized as a curation resource: an instance of the general Work class whose content is the curated selection itself, related to the target work as its subject (LRM-R12). LRM offers a precedent for a work defined by selection rather than content of its own—the aggregating work (Riva et al. 2017, 93–96)—but the parallel is only partial: an aggregate reaches its expressions through one manifestation that embodies them together, whereas a CREC binds expressions across manifestations by cultural reception. In this near-term realization, then, membership is not itself formalized in the model: which expressions belong is carried in the curation resource's own content, while LRM expresses only its subject link to the work. Section 5 shows this in practice.

We offer the CREC at three levels of commitment. As an interpretation—and this is our main claim—it rethinks what representativeness means once the user-based warrant is taken seriously: the concept is needed even where its expression is not yet settled. As a near-term possibility, the curation resource described above lets a community's set be held today, though, as noted, its membership is not formalized in the model. And should the

phenomenon prove general, that membership relation could be formalized more fully in either of two ways: by extending LRM/LRMoo within its permitted range—a set-valued, community-qualified counterpart to R73, marking an original-oriented representative value (RE) apart from a culturally salient set (CREC)—or through conventions in national cataloguing rules, which already carry the community through their scope.

5.0 UeDeKo: A CREC Made Explicit

What does this look like in practice? The German literature translation bibliography UeDeKo gives us a working example (UeDeKo Project Team 2025), and has itself served as a source for scholarship on Korean translation history and reception, both bibliometric (Lee and Park 2025) and literary (Lee 2024). Organized by work, each entry gives an introduction and a full bibliography of a work's translations, then, for a selected few, a critical discussion—for *Die Verwandlung*, five of the roughly two hundred recorded translations (Table 2; UeDeKo 2024). The selection goes not by seniority but by standing in the reception: the first translation, translations that have stayed in print, those by recognized Kafka scholars, and those whose translators bring a distinctive interpretive approach. The remaining translations receive no criticism. That critiqued subset is a CREC made explicit: a culturally salient set of translated expressions treated as the reference points for the work, distinct both from the full set of expressions and from the single original expression on which representative expression, by default, draws.

Table 2 Selected expressions of Franz Kafka's *Die Verwandlung*: the German original and representative Korean translations (Korean title romanized as Byeonsin).

Expression	**Year**	**Basis of salience**
Die Verwandlung / Franz Kafka (original)	1915	source expression (RE default)
Byeonsin / Park Jong-seo & Jeong Gyeong-seok	1957	first translation
Byeonsin / Lee Deok-hyung	1973	sustained reprinting
Byeonsin / Park Hwan-deok	1989	by a recognized Kafka scholar
Byeonsin / Jin Il-sang	2012	distinctive interpretive approach
Byeonsin / Kim Tae-hwan	2015	fidelity–readability balance

UeDeKo's translation criticism, written for each work by a specialist, does not crown a single canonical version. It foregrounds a small group of translations, each with its own interpretive strengths or historical importance. Each is the work of a named translator who bears intellectual responsibility for it, so the cultural diversity a community reads is made of

these distinct translated expressions, not of an abstraction over them. What emerges, through critical endorsement, educational adoption, and circulation, is a culturally salient set that different communities enter differently.

This set does not depend on expert literary criticism to exist or to be identified. The specialists' selections follow patterns that anyone—not only the compilers—can read from the bibliographic record: the first translation, editions from established publishers, translations by those who have returned to the same author more than once, and versions that have stayed in print. These are traces a catalogue already carries: dates and editions, publishers, and the relationships among work, translator, and author. And such signals can be measured. Recent bibliometric work has done exactly this, profiling translators from this kind of data (Park and Lee 2026). No single reason fixes the set, and different selectors weight these signals differently; but a cataloguing code could approximate a work's culturally salient set from them. UeDeKo makes one such set unusually visible, but the set it displays is one that reception has already shaped—readable, in principle, from any sufficiently rich bibliography of a work's translations.

For *Die Verwandlung*, then, an original-oriented reading fixes the representative expression to the German first expression, as LRM and RDA would record it. But the Korean reading community's reference points are a subset of the Korean translations, and that subset shifts as new translations appear and the canon settles (Berman 1990). This is a representativeness that recording abstracted attribute values is not meant to express; it is exactly what a CREC records.

6.0 Conclusion

We began with a simple question—in what language a work is really read—and it led us deep into how bibliographic models decide what represents a work. What a community treats as representative, this paper has argued, is not settled once and for all by the original; in translation-dominant settings it is instead a community-relative subset of the expressions. Representative expression, grounded in user perception yet defaulting to the original, is not designed to carry this set on its own. Cultural Representative Expression Clusters are proposed to carry it—expression-derived but predicated of the work, and set alongside representative expression as a second layer.

CRECs can be taken up at more than one level of commitment—reinterpreting representativeness, holding a community's set today as a curation resource, or formalizing the relation later. What matters most here is the first: the concept is needed to name a representativeness that an original-default reading cannot carry. How best to express it—within LRM's extension provisions or through national cataloguing rules—we leave open.

What this asks is only that, beside the single expression a catalogue must name, we keep room for the several a community actually reads. If a work can win its highest recognition in translation, our models can learn to recognize the versions its readers hold in hand.

Declaration on the Use of Generative AI

During the preparation and revision of this paper, the author used a generative AI assistant (Claude, Anthropic) to correct typographical and grammatical errors and to help refine selected passages. The author reviewed all such content and takes full responsibility for the final text.

References

Beghtol, Clare. 2002a. "A proposed ethical warrant for global knowledge representation and organization systems." Journal of Documentation 58, no. 5: 507–532.

Beghtol, Clare. 2002b. "Universal concepts, cultural warrant and cultural hospitality." In Challenges in Knowledge Representation and Organization for the 21st Century: Integration of Knowledge across Boundaries, edited by María José López-Huertas, 45–49. Würzburg: Ergon.

Beghtol, Clare. 2005. "Ethical decision-making for knowledge representation and organization systems for global use." Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology 56, no. 9: 903–912.

Berman, Antoine. 1990. "La retraduction comme espace de la traduction." Palimpsestes 4: 1–7.

Even-Zohar, Itamar. 1990. "The position of translated literature within the literary polysystem." Poetics Today 11, no. 1: 45–51.

Goodman, Nelson. 1976. Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols. 2nd ed. Indianapolis: Hackett.

Hjørland, Birger. 2017. "Classification." Knowledge Organization 44, no. 2: 97–128.

Hudon, Michèle. 1997. "Multilingual thesaurus construction: integrating the views of different cultures in one gateway to knowledge and concepts." Knowledge Organization 24, no. 2: 84–91.

Hudon, Michèle. 1999. "Accessing documents and information in a world without frontiers." The Indexer 21, no. 4: 156–159.

IFLA. 2016. Statement of International Cataloguing Principles (ICP), edited by Agnese Galeffi, María Violeta Bertolini, Robert L. Bothmann, Elena Escolano Rodríguez, and Dorothy McGarry. The Hague: IFLA.

IFLA LRMoo. 2025. LRMoo: Object-Oriented Definition and Mapping from IFLA LRM, version 1.1.1. IFLA. https://repository.ifla.org/handle/20.500.14598/3677.

Lee, Haneul. 2024. "Reception of Kafka in South Korea (1955–2023)." Oxford German Studies 53, no. 4: 461–496. https://doi.org/10.1080/00787191.2024.2433362.

Lee, Jae Yun, and Ziyoung Park. 2025. “A Historical Bibliometric Analysis of Bibliographies of Translated German Literature in Korean: A Distant Reading Approach to Translation History.” Journal of the Korean Society for Information Management 42, no. 1: 351–374. https://doi.org/10.3743/KOSIM.2025.42.1.351. (in Korean).

Lee, Mihwa. 2019. “Considerations for BIBFRAME Acceptance of Expression and Representative Expression Attributes in LRM.” Journal of the Korean Biblia Society for Library and Information Science 30, no. 2: 33–50. https://doi.org/10.14699/kbiblia.2019.30.2.033. (in Korean).

Mai, Jens-Erik. 2016. “Marginalization and exclusion: Unraveling systemic bias in classification.” Knowledge Organization 43, no. 5: 324–330.

Olson, Hope A. 1999. “Exclusivity, teleology and hierarchy: our Aristotelian legacy.” Knowledge Organization 26, no. 2: 65–73.

Olson, Hope A. 2001. “Sameness and difference: A cultural foundation of classification.” Library Resources & Technical Services 45, no. 3: 115–122.

Olson, Hope A. 2002. The Power to Name: Locating the Limits of Subject Representation in Libraries. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic.

Park, Sunjae, and Jongwook Lee. 2025. “Expert Perceptions on the Adoption of LRM Representative Expression Attributes.” Journal of the Korean Society for Information Management 42, no. 3: 185–205. https://doi.org/10.3743/KOSIM.2025.42.3.185. (in Korean).

Park, Ziyoung, and Jae Yun Lee. 2026. “A Historical Bibliometric Analysis of Translators’ Activities and Relational Structures in the Bibliography of German Literature Translated into Korean.” Journal of the Korean Society for Library and Information Science 60, no. 2: 53–74. https://doi.org/10.4275/KSLIS.2026.60.2.053. (in Korean).

Pisanski, Jan, and Maja Žumer. 2010. “Mental models of the bibliographic universe. Part 1: Mental models of descriptions.” Journal of Documentation 66, no. 5: 643–667.

Pisanski, Jan, and Maja Žumer. 2012. “User verification of the FRBR conceptual model.” Journal of Documentation 68, no. 4: 582–592.

Riva, Pat, Patrick Le Bœuf, and Maja Žumer. 2017. IFLA Library Reference Model: A Conceptual Model for Bibliographic Information. The Hague: IFLA. https://repository.ifla.org/handle/20.500.14598/40.

Svenonius, Elaine. 2000. The Intellectual Foundation of Information Organization. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

UeDeKo. 2024. “변신 (Die Verwandlung).” Übersetzungsdatenbank deutschsprachiger Literatur in Korea [German literature translation bibliography database] (in Korean). http://www.uedeko.or.kr/wiki2/index.php?title=Die_Verwandlung.

UeDeKo Project Team. 2025. Übersetzungsdatenbank deutschsprachiger Literatur in Korea (in Korean). http://www.uedeko.or.kr/wiki2/index.php/UeDeKo.

Venuti, Lawrence. 1995. The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation. London: Routledge.