International ISRC Agency Report 2013

ISO 3901:2001 - International Standard Recording Code (ISRC)

Since the ISO TC 46 / SC 9 meeting in May 2012 in Berlin, the International ISRC Agency has continued to meet its obligations under ISO 3901:2001.

Management of International ISRC Agency

The management of the International ISRC Agency remains with a contractor who is responsible to IFPI. These arrangements continue to work well. Support from the staff of IFPI in London and the Recording Industry Association of America (which acts as the National ISRC Agency for the US) has been excellent.

Success and Implementation of ISRC

ISRC continues to play a vital role in the identification of recordings within the music industry. The growth in implementations of the specifications of Digital Data Exchange (DDEX) supports this role as the DDEX communications messages reference ISRC extensively.

The growth in ISRC adoption continues to be reflected in the increased demand for Registrant Codes (see below).

New Country Codes (Non Geographic)

An ISRC Bulletin has announced that the exceptionally reserved country codes CP and DG may be specified for use in the future. These join the user assigned code ZZ which is used by the International ISRC Agency when a national agency is unable to meet an urgent request.

Registrant Code Exhaustion

The planned transition from GB to UK in the United Kingdom happened as planned and no adverse consequences have been reported.
Meetings with the National ISRC Agency in Brazil indicate that it too will need to allocate registrant codes from outside the BR group in the near future.

Because there is not an unlimited supply of unused alpha-2 codes, the transition to a new allocation method as the standard is revised in very important (if not yet urgent).

**Revision of ISO3901**

The Working Group to consider a revised ISRC specification has not yet been convened as the International ISRC Agency has been working diligently to ensure that it will be possible to create a central registry and operate it in a financially stable manner. Discussions with stakeholders have confirmed the obvious: changing the standard but being unable to implement the revised version is worse than useless.

After several abortive starts, the International ISRC Agency has now identified a candidate technical partner to operate a registry. While the re-appointment of the Registration Authority is a matter for ISO, it is important that the RA is able to show that it has access to appropriate technical and operational expertise to fulfill its obligations.

The current plan is for an “interim registry” to be populated with existing and newly assigned ISRCs with a view to migrating this registry to become the registry for the revised standard.

TC46 SC9 is respectfully requested to take the appropriate steps to ensure that the Working Group can start executing its work immediately after the Berlin meetings.

**National ISRC Agencies**

The network of National ISRC Agencies continues to deliver services to ISRC system users. Where these are delivered on a cost recovery basis, the costs are often noted as being the lowest in the media identification world, and many agencies fully absorb the costs of providing this service.

Advice, training and liaison with national agencies take place on a daily basis and the International ISRC Agency often gives advice to end users in referring them to the relevant national agency.

**ISRC Managers**

The promotion of ISRC Managers as a way of increasing reach to smaller users and improving the quality of the code assignments to their recordings continues to be a success. It is now a requirement on ISRC Managers that when the ISRC registry becomes available, all the recordings that they have issued codes to must be entered into the registry.

It has been reported in previous years that it was not considered appropriate to make it mandatory for National ISRC Agencies to appoint ISRC Managers when presented with a sensible application. In the last year one National ISRC Agency has resisted the appointment of
an ISRC Manager for reasons that are unclear. That situation is now resolved and the revised standard will make the issue irrelevant but it should be reported now that the International ISRC Agency will support any application that makes ISRC more accessible to users at a reasonable cost.

**Appointment of new ISRC Agencies**

The policy of not appointing new national agencies (pending the forthcoming revision of the standard) has been continued.

Territories without an ISRC Agency are served direct from IFPI in London and this arrangement works well in the allocation of Registrant Codes and the occasional appointment of “ISRC Managers” who are authorized to assign ISRCs on behalf of their clients (this privilege normally being restricted to the rights owners themselves).

As before, no agency has been appointed in Korea (where is has always been hard to identify any body that would secure the confidence of the entire industry) but the arrangements to allow applications for a registrant code to be made in the local language has been welcomed. Discussions are advanced with a body that would like to be the National ISRC Agency to become an ISRC Manager.

**China**

Progress on bringing the Chinese system of identification of sound recordings into alignment with the international ISRC system continues to be slow. Further meetings are planned for 2013 which may produce a roadmap towards a solution.

**Turks and Caicos Islands**

The International ISRC Agency is delighted to report that the issue with unauthorized codes polluting the space of the Turks and Caicos Islands has been fully resolved.

The private organization Tunecore has agreed (following a change of management) to join the ISRC system and all its codes are now recognized as ISRCs. It will retain the use of the TC country code because it is too complex to change this in the short time remaining for the existing ISRC system. Applicants from the Turks and Caicos Islands will get codes starting DG-99. Steps have been taken to publicize this to the small but vibrant music community affected.

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