Management of the International ISTC Agency
EDItEUR continues to provide management services to the International ISTC Agency and manages the organisation’s financial and administrative tasks (EDItEUR being the London-based international group coordinating development of the standards infrastructure for electronic commerce in the book, e-book and serials sectors).

The Board of the International ISTC Agency has seen changes in the past 12 months. This time last year, RR Bowker had just announced its withdrawal from Directorship and as a registration agency. Since then, Julian Sowa of Nielsen was replaced as Chair of the International ISTC Agency by Jonathan Nowell (also of Nielsen); José Macarro was appointed in place of Adrian Garcia (both CISAC); and Jonathan has now announced that he (and Nielsen) will be stepping down from Directorship of the International ISTC Agency – though they will continue to operate their two registration agencies. None of these changes has compromised the work of the Board, which has remained quorate and active throughout the year. A new Chair will be elected at the Board Meeting on 10 April 2014.

Systematic Review of the ISTC Standard
The ISTC as an ISO standard is now five years old and consequently the ballot of systematic review was issued on 15 January 2014. On behalf of the Board of the International ISTC Agency the Chair confirmed to ISO that it recommends that ISO 21047 be confirmed because ISTC implementation to date has not shown any need for changes.

ISTC Registration Agencies
There have been no changes to the number or identity of the ISTC registration agencies since last year.

The ten registration agencies appointed represent interest across the globe, located as they are in each of the following countries: Belgium, Canada, China, France, Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, Russia and the UK. There remains a need to fill the gap left by RR Bowker for ISTC in the United States. A Registration Agency Strategy Review meeting will be held on 10 April 2014 during the London Book fair (see below).

In addition we have had tentative expressions of interests from several other organisations, including one in the United States and others in Kazakhstan and in France.
Strategy Review Meeting

The focus of the International ISTC Agency is firmly on increasing implementation rather than on increasing registration agencies, recognising that the cost of becoming a registration agency (both in terms of licence fee and the systems development cost) is something of an obstacle. The International ISTC Agency has organised a meeting of existing registration agencies (in conjunction with the London Book Fair) to review this strategy and seek advice from registration agencies on the best way to increase adoption.

Assignment of ISTCs

The latest assignment figures for ISTC stand at around 184,000 records. There has been an extensive exercise to improve data quality and disambiguation of records, which has now been accomplished. This had the effect of reducing the number of ISTC records but increasing the reliability of the database. On the other hand, the Registration Agencies Nielsen and Electre have assigned some 82,000 new ISTCs. The ones assigned by Electre aim at facilitating the ReLire project in France on the digitisation and making available by the French National Library of out-of-commerce works published in France before 2001.

This also ties in with ISTC having been able to agree a collaboration with the European Union-sponsored ARROW Plus project. ARROW Plus is a project that aims at implementing the ARROW system, an electronic rights management information system developed jointly by libraries, authors, publishers and collective management organisations in the print sector, throughout Europe. ISTC is one of the identifiers that are foreseen to be used in the ARROW system. Initially, but not exclusively directed towards large scale digitisation projects in libraries, ARROW is now made available for the use in 16 EU Member States. ARROW Plus also contributed to the development of a generic, productised ‘Books in Print’ system that can be implemented in those countries and ISTC is obviously useful in this arena to pull together the various editions of the same work. As part of the collaboration Electre (our registration agency based in France) has made a substantial number of allocations in recent months.

Interest in the ISTC standard

Interest in the standard is growing steadily, as referenced by the increasing number of initial enquiries received by the International ISTC Agency. Presentations continue to be given on the benefits of ISTC at various conferences including the annual meetings of other identifiers, such as those of ISBN and ISMN in September 2013. The International ISTC agency has also given its support to the fledgling Linked Content Coalition movement.