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FINAL

Activity Report on ISO 21047 (ISTC)

The International ISTC Agency Ltd – May 2015

Introduction

The Board of the International ISTC Agency continues to believe that an identification system for textual works is a vital part of the portfolio of identifiers published by ISO under the supervision of TC 46/SC 9. However in the last year it has become clear that changes are needed to fulfil this vision.

As well as the customary summary of “business as usual” activities, this report outlines the background to the recommendation for change and the steps that the International ISTC Agency is taking to prepare for it to be brought about.

Management of the International ISTC Agency

EDItEUR¹ continues to provide management services to the International ISTC Agency and manages the organisation’s financial and administrative tasks. These arrangements have worked well and provide an effective infrastructure and deliver good value to the ISTC system.

The ISTC database is outsourced to PepperTag Inc², a Canadian specialist in publishing data processing. The contractual terms have been reviewed in the course of the year and the board of the International ISTC Agency is satisfied that they reflect current activity levels and offer good value.

The board of the International ISTC Agency now comprises CISAC (International Confederation of Societies of Authors and Composers) and IFFRO (The International Federation of Reproduction Rights Organizations). José Macarro of CISAC acts as Chairman and Olav Stokkmo of IFFRO as Treasurer. The board meets regularly and has been active on the issues outlined in this report.

¹ EDItEUR (<http://www.editeur.org/>) is the London-based international group coordinating development of the standards infrastructure for electronic commerce in the book, e-book and serials sectors

² <http://www.peppertag.com/>

ISTC Registration Agencies

The current list of Registration Agencies is contained in Annex 1 to this report.

Several of these agencies have informed the International ISTC Agency that the *status quo* is not viable and they intend to withdraw, or will soon have to consider withdrawing, from the system.

ISTC Register Status

The database of assigned ISTCs (termed the “register” in the standard) contains 185,426 records of ISTCs with their associated metadata, as of 30 April 2015

The rate of registration of new ISTCs is quite low in light of the actions described below.

Interest in Text Identification

There is currently considerable interest in the use of standard identifiers to enable commerce at large and small scale in creative works. Examples include the ARROW Plus project³ (a refined implementation of the Arrow tool which assists libraries and other users identify copyright owners), work on which will now be continued by the ARROW Association organisation, and the UK’s Copyright Hub⁴. All have shown interest in using ISTC to enable use of textual works in a licensed environment and discussions with such initiatives have informed the use cases mentioned below.

The International ISTC Agency supports the efforts of the Linked Content Coalition (and would want to see the standard remain in conformance with the LCC Principles of Identification⁵) but it has not yet joined the newly-formed legal entity.

Systematic Review of ISO 21047 - International Standard Text Code (ISTC)

Following a recommendation⁶ to confirm the standard from the board of the International ISTC Agency, the ballot results⁷ were:

Confirm:	15
Revise:	3
Abstain	14

³ <http://www.arrow-net.eu/what-arrow-plus>

⁴ <http://www.copyrighthub.co.uk/>

⁵ See page at <http://www.linkedcontentcoalition.org/#!/documents/cvjv>

⁶ ISO TC 46/SC 9/N 736

⁷ ISO TC 46/SC 9/N 785

There were comments from national bodies that abstained or voted to revise that noted complexity and low levels of adoption.

The SC 9 secretariat proposed confirmation in accordance with the result but added:

Due to the lack of uptake of this standard in the five years since its publications and the comments from some voters about its complexity, the Secretariat has serious concerns about the viability of the standard. Despite the lack of support for a revision, further discussion is needed about whether a revision or even withdrawal is appropriate. This will be a topic for discussion at the 2015 plenary meeting.

Actions Following Systematic Review

The International ISTC Agency consulted with its Registration Agencies in accordance with the plan noted in the report⁸ in 2014. These discussions happened in the context of the remarks of the secretariat above.

There was broad agreement that an identifier along the lines of ISTC was needed by the industry but that the current structure was not, in practice, set up to encourage registrations.

A working group was set up to examine use cases so that a recommendation to ISO could be made by the International ISTC Agency. This concluded that the two principal problems with the current standard were:

- the granularity of the identifier was inflexible and not suited to all users and
- the responsibility for registration was placed with publishers, who were not always motivated to do this.

The current granularity is hard coded into the standard: two textual entities share the same identifier if (and only if) all their metadata is the same. This prevents an identifier being associated with, for instance, all the translations of a textual work – which a retailer might want to present together.

The group recommended that the standard be revised to address these points but that backward compatibility with existing registrations should be maintained.

The International ISTC Agency has been looking at how a revised standard could be drafted to meet these objectives and this will be presented at the TC 46/SC 9 plenary meeting. It recommends that TC 46/SC 9 there requests the generation of a New Work Item Proposal to revise ISO 21047 based on the work that has already been done by the Registration Agencies.

⁸ ISO/TC 46/SC 9/N 753

The International ISTC Agency, having enabled this initial phase of preparatory work, believes that a useful and implementable revised standard could be developed quite quickly and that at least some of the current Registration Agencies would be able to support the development process. It further believes that there would be a range of Registration Agencies prepared to work with a revised standard.

Annex 1

Current ISTC Registration Agencies

La Société de gestion de la Banque de Titres de Langue française (BTLF)

Electre

CB

Meta4Books

MvB

Nielsen UK

Nielsen Asia-Pacific