
Registration agencies
Since ISBN has been an ISO standard for over 40 years, many countries have already joined the system. However, in the last year we have had more detailed discussions with Myanmar about establishing an agency there and they are on the point of signing the Contract and other associated documents with us to join the ISBN system. There are now 150 national or regional ISBN agencies (not including Myanmar since they are not quite yet formally appointed) covering more than 200 individual countries.

We produce the Publishers’ International ISBN Directory (PIID) which is published by De Gruyter in both printed and online formats. The national ISBN Agencies submit data to us directly for inclusion. The data comprises details of all of the ISBN prefix assignments (i.e. the registrant elements assigned to the publishers rather than the individual ISBNs from within those registrant elements that the publishers assign to specific publications) each agency has made and the associated publisher contact details. In 2011, PIID included more than 900,000 ISBN registrant elements.

ISBNs and digital publications
Issues surrounding the correct identification of e-books are still a major and very active source of discussion. In 2010 the International ISBN Agency (IIA) undertook a survey of publishers, retailers, libraries, bibliographic data aggregators and wholesalers to establish the views of each stakeholder on these issues and the current implementation problems they faced. Following the results of that we issued a series of guidelines to establish a clear policy about the use of ISBNs on digital publications. In the US, Book Industry Study Group (BISG – a trade body that looks at standards and best practices affecting the efficiency and effectiveness of the U.S. book trade) also undertook its own survey and organised a working group. The IIA participated in the working group and BISG released its own policy statement in December 2011. In many areas this matched exactly with the IIA’s own guidelines. The areas of divergence related to how the assignment of ISBN is impacted by changes in DRM software and usage rights settings on both individual transactions and distinct products. The IIA issued a press release welcoming the BISG policy statement and also contributing extra guidance consisting of some extra examples and points of clarification.

ISBN Users’ Manual and other advisory materials
In 2012 we have made further revisions to the ISBN Users’ Manual and this now incorporates all IIA guidelines and statements concerning the identification of e-books. The Users’ Manual is intended to be used by national ISBN agencies, publishers and other
participants in the book industry and is freely available at: http://www.isbn-international.org/page/info.

A series of FAQs that are specifically for use by national agencies and providing guidance in particular on borderline ISBN assignment cases has also been further revised. Both the Users’ Manual and the agency-only FAQs were issued in January 2012.

**Revision of the Standard**
We will consider carefully whether a revision of the standard to incorporate some new definitions and to update examples is now appropriate. The next Systematic Review is due in 2013, but it may be prudent to commence the process in advance of that.

**Remaining ISBN capacity**
We are undertaking a statistical assessment of the remaining capacity within the ISBN numbering system, with a particular focus on the availability and sustainability of the higher capacity registrant elements (i.e. registrant elements providing 100k ISBNs and more).

**ISO Registration Authority Agreement**
The International DOI Foundation alerted TC46 SC9 members to concerns about the wording of the new template Registration Authority Agreement released by ISO since the original clauses were regarded as excessively onerous and punitive (and, indeed, in the case of liability insurance cover, impossible to achieve to the level stipulated). Following further analysis and in close collaboration with other RAs within TC46 SC9 and with the Secretariat, a number of proposals for amendment to the wording of the template were put to ISO. We are pleased that in the majority of instances the arguments for amendment that were put forward were accepted by ISO who have adjusted the respective clauses so making the terms of the agreement considerably more workable for RAs.

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March 2012