International ISRC Agency Report 2012

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

Since the ISO TC 46 / SC 9 meeting in May 2011 in Sydney, 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 have recently been reconfirmed and 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 implementation continues to grow as online music retailers insist on the provision of an ISRC with music that they accept for sale. ISRC is referenced in specifications published by standards bodies such as Digital Data Exchange (DDEX) and users such as Phonographic Performance Ltd (PPL), who also act as the UK National ISRC Agency.

This growth continues to be reflected in the increased demand for Registrant Codes (see UK situation below).

Liaison Activities

ISRC has been promoted to the SC9 working group on the proposed International Standard Document Link.

Registrant Code Exhaustion

In 2011, the supply of registrant codes in the US was exhausted and the ISO 3166 user assigned code element “QM” was allocated as a “country code” for the US. In 2012 the same issue will face the UK and a similar solution has been selected. The ISO 3166 code for the United Kingdom is “GB” (although the internet top level domain is “.uk”). Once exhaustion has happened,
further registrant codes will be allocated for use with the “UK” country code which is exceptionally reserved within the ISO 3166 system because of its use in internet addressing. Full consideration has been given to possible confusion but it is considered that this is the optimal solution.

It is not expected that this situation will recur in other countries before the expected revision of the standard takes place.

Revision of ISO3901

The New Work Item Proposal for the revision of the ISRC specification was approved in 2011 and preparations are under way to convene the Working Group and develop a Committee Draft.

Although the Candidate Working Draft distributed with the NWIP was warmly endorsed by most national bodies, one particular stakeholder became unhappy with the proposal and a proposed solution has been found to this objection and will be incorporated into the Working Draft to be reviewed by the Working Group.

It is intended that the revision will involve the creation of a central registry and considerable effort has gone into explaining the consequences of this change to stakeholders and to identifying potential partners to operate this registry.

New RA Contract

ISRC participated fully in the discussions with ISO leading to a substantially revised framework agreement between ISO and registration authorities. In retrospect this was a highly inefficient and wasteful process which could have been much better handled by ISO.

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 International ISRC Agency encourages (but does not compel) national agencies to allow the appointment of “ISRC Managers” who are authorized to assign ISRCs on behalf of their clients. This is a very successful initiative which generates much better data quality than having
individual registrants assign codes themselves. Consideration is being given to requiring agencies to allow this but the forthcoming revision probably makes this unwise.

Appointment of new ISRC Agencies

In accordance with the policy established some years ago, no new agencies have been appointed, pending the forthcoming revision of the standard.

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).

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 a facility has now been put in place to allow applications for a registrant code to be made in the local language. These are then forwarded to IFPI for action.

China

The International ISRC Agency reported in 2011 on discussions with the relevant authorities in China on the convergence of the national system for the identification of sound recordings and the international system based on ISRC. Little progress has been made and an interim solution to allow Chinese producers access to the ISRC system is being contemplated in parallel with the desired convergence.

Turks and Caicos Islands

An application was received from a producer with a presence in the British Overseas Territory of the Turks and Caicos Islands. It was decided that it was unwise to allocate a registrant code for use with the ISO 3166 country code “TC” because private organization Tunecore assigns ISRC lookalike codes starting with “TC”. A solution was found whereby the applicant will assign ISRCs in another country where they have a presence but this highlights the need for better robustness against this kind of behavior by entities outside the ISRC system.

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