Work Item Title:
Unique Electronic Resource Package Identifiers

Proposal for Consideration by the NISO Voting Membership
Approval Ballot Period: August 3 – September 3, 2021

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Background and Problem Statement:
Electronic resources are frequently purchased as packages. While some of the packages contain only a few titles, others can include hundreds of thousands of titles. Many content providers offer a variety of packages with often similar content. Currently the packages can only be identified by their name in the supply chain, such as invoices, publisher websites, knowledge bases etc. The name for the same package can vary, depending on where it is used. In addition, packages may undergo name/label changes over time and may no longer match information included in library invoices or knowledge bases. It has become cumbersome and work intensive to identify packages across the supply chain. This problem appears at many different places and affects all stakeholders: libraries, content providers and knowledge bases providers.

- **Example from the library perspective:** License agreements or invoices issued by publishers to libraries may not list every title included in the purchase, making it difficult to determine exactly what titles are included in a package. Knowledge bases may contain many similarly named packages from the same publisher, and the subscriber must often use trial and error to determine which package should be activated. Different knowledge bases may use different names for the same packages, making Library Services Platform (LSP) migrations difficult.
- **Example from the provider perspective:** The lack of unique identification of packages complicates the communication in the supply chain, from verification of feeds between content providers and knowledge bases to tracking changes in packages.

The unreliability of package names can even affect the user experience because the knowledge base packages often provide the basis for availability settings on a library discovery system.

In addition, the ability to uniquely identify packages is a pre-requisite for KBART Automation phase 2. The work item for phase 2 has not yet been formalized. However, it was already proposed in phase 1 that a later phase should address updating specific packages in the knowledge bases.

Statement of Work:
The work item is to evaluate and create recommendations for a unique package identifier that provides disambiguation across the supply chain. This project will begin as a Recommended Practice.

The unique identifier would allow all stakeholders to streamline and simplify their processes, to track changes and would allow libraries not only to know what titles a package contains but also, for example, to manage claims if a journal moves between publishers and “disappears” from a package. The package ID could possibly be hierarchical to express packages and their subsets in order to simplify identification of which subset belongs to which package.

For this project to be successful the unique package identifier must also refer to the same content (title list) for every subscriber, meaning for selective packages (packages for which only a subset of

titles may be subscribed), that every subscriber can choose from the same default list of titles and date coverage within a package. For aggregator packages that can only be subscribed in their entirety, the content must again be the same for every subscriber, meaning the title list as well as each date coverage. The working group has to discuss and decide on how to deal with perpetual access rights in this context.

The goal is to create reliability across all systems and entities that are using package information. At the same time, the recommendations for unique package IDs must be simple enough for all stakeholders to be able to adopt them.

Specific Deliverables:
Recommended practice to provide:

1. Rules for creating and maintaining unique IDs including a proposal of how IDs can be kept unique, for example by creating a registry
2. Definition of what constitutes a package, keeping in mind that it must provide reliability in terms of what content each package contains across the supply chain, and how packages relate to similar packages and how they change over time
3. Define a scope and metadata for the configuration of a Package Identifier standard
4. Recommendations on how changes to the content of the packages are communicated across the supply chain to enable the ongoing accuracy of content listings for such packages, and impacts on the package ID

Process:
Form working group to:

1. Conduct an initial analysis, possibly by forming subgroups
    - Conduct landscape analysis on current processes and related standards
    - Document use cases and examine gaps
    - Identify minimum and ideal requirements and prerequisites from each stakeholder
    - Identify possible problems with defining a package that qualifies for a unique ID, especially with reliably identifying the exact content of a package
    - Identify possible problems for stakeholders to implement a unique identifier to and potential solutions to ensure that the recommendations can be successful
    - Identify specific requirements for package IDs to be usable for KBART Automation
        - Explore how identifiers can be structured or are structured in comparable cases
        - Explore if the creation of common parameters to create a package ID is sufficient or if a registry is needed and if the latter, how and by whom this would be managed
2. Create specific recommendations, or possibly a standard for creating and maintaining a package ID, filling the gaps and addressing the requirements and problems identified in 1.

Return on Investment:
Potentially reduce redundant and/or inaccurate work for all stakeholders – mitigate issues of preservation, perpetual/aggregator access, user experience for accuracy in user facing systems, overlap analysis.

Save time for librarians, content providers, knowledge base vendors who need to maintain specific packages.

Engagement Plan
During the analysis phase, create surveys, conference presentations, and webinars for a very comprehensive and inclusive coverage of all stakeholders.

After analysis, create webinars and conference presentations to introduce the outcome and discuss the work of the group.

After recommendations are drafted, create webinars and conference presentation to “test” the reaction of a wider audience.

After publication, ideally implement at least one end-to-end flow with stakeholders from the group which can be used as a test case, and to discuss and promote the recommendations again in webinars and conference presentations and through communication within the supply chain.

Partners & Participation:
It is essential for the success of this work item to have several different representations from every possible stakeholder, those consuming and those providing package information:

- Publishers, aggregators, and other content providers
- Subscription agents and book jobbers
- Electronic resources librarians
- Knowledge base providers
- Identifier standards groups (i.e. ISSN, ISBN, Crossref)
- Project COUNTER

This work item is closely related to KBART and will require communication and collaboration. Ideally, members of the KBART Standing Committee will participate or recommend a colleague to participate on the Working Group.

Timeline:
Month 1: Appointment of working group
Months 2-3: Approval and publication of charge and initial work plan (including determination of scope)
Months 4-8: Phase 1 - Completion of information gathering, including (potentially) examination of related work, interviews/surveys with stakeholders, analysis of necessary workflows, strategizing for future adoption - including landscape analysis and use cases
Months 9-13: Phase 2 - Analysis of requirements and potential solutions; description of implementation and prototypes
Months 14-17: Phase 3 - Completion of initial draft recommended practice
Months 18-19: Public comment period
Month 20: Responses to comments and publication of final NISO Recommended Practice