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ISBN-13: A Publisher's Checklist

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Implementation Timeline
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3. Should Library of Congress CIP data be adapted to conform to the new ISBN format (i.e., pairs of ISBNs by manifesta-
tion) as mandated by the IIA guidelines?

There was strong disagreement on this issue. Some held the
opinion that since CIP data had been based on the machine-
readable card format for decades and, secondly, since it is in-
deed "virtual" metadata (i.e., printed in the book, but not part
of the content), we should not alter the structure of ISBNs in
CIP data to accommodate the IIA prescribed format for ISBN-

However, after considering the dilemma facing publishers hav-
ing to print twice as many ISBNs in the book for each mani-
festation, we reached a compromise.

Interim Compromise

During the interim period from January 1, 2005 through Janu-
ary 1, 2007, pairs of 13- and 10-digit ISBNs would appear in
the prescribed format within the CIP data, but if a record con-
tained more than two such pairs of ISBNs, only the first two
pairs would appear in the data followed by "[etc.]". This limita-
tion was intended to address space considerations. But, be-

Involves All Stakeholders

To publishers, the conversion to ISBN-13 has an impact on the organization that is com-

ISBN-13: A Publisher's Checklist

by Greg Giblin (Director of Market Development, STM Division, John Wiley and Sons, Inc.) <ggiblin@wiley.com>

Implementation of ISBN-13 represents a
unique challenge to publishers. By
January 1, 2007 all publishers
must be fully compliant with
the new ISBN-13 stan-
dard. Systems must be
able to work with the
new standard and be
interoperable internally as well as with trading
partners and customers.

involve the conversion to ISBN-13
sions within their larger organization, such as
Trade, Consumer, Professional, Scientific, Tech-
nical and Medical, and Higher Education di-
visions. Cross-divisional collaboration is critical
because workflows, reporting systems, distribu-
tion channels and trading partners will vary
due to the nature of these respective businesses.

As well, representation is needed from all
operational and support areas such as IT, distri-
bution, production, and finance. These groups
will be heavily involved in many aspects and
phases of the new system's implementation.

Implement in Phases

In order to successfully migrate to the new
standard, publishers need to create a timeline
for implementation that addresses all relevant
internal and external dependencies. Because
the ISBN drives so many of our systems, pub-
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Caught in the Middle: The Vendor's Perspective on ISBN-13

by Wendell Lotz (Vice President, Product Database Development, Ingram Book Group) <wendell.lotz@ingrambook.com>

Inevitably, materials vendors bridge the gap between content creators (publishers) and end users (retailers, libraries and library systems). Accurate communication is the key, and during the transition to ISBN-13, the material vendor must accommodate every possible combination/variation on either side. Some have suggested that the transition to ISBN-13 is similar in scope to the Y2K projects we all endured several years ago. At Ingram we believe the project is just that extensive, touching virtually every process that is product oriented, but that it is eminently achievable with careful and detailed planning. Also, thankfully, the industry’s computers will not blow up on December 31, 2006 nor will the world come grinding to a halt. However, inadequate preparation will result in trading partners sending or receiving the wrong product causing service resolution efforts to ripple throughout the organization.

In order to avoid such costs Ingram began its preparations by convening a team of all the computer applications managers in the early spring of 2004. Because we distribute music, video, and other products which are governed by UPC codes, rather than ISBNs, an early decision made at these planning meetings was to split the project into two phases. The 2004 phase was designed to prepare the organization for Sunrise 2005, the seminal event in retailing whereby the general retailers of the North American continent were instructed by the Uniform Code Council to be prepared to handle 13-digit identifiers (in the form of EANs) as well as the historical 12-digit UPC.

The process at Ingram was eased somewhat by the use of a surrogate key (a non-ISBN control number) in most systems. As a result of the surrogate key the preparation for EAN, and subsequently ISBN-13, required the addition of a column for a 13-digit entity in the primary databases. Cross-reference tables between the values in the 13-digit column (called “Preferred EAN” in Ingram nomenclature), then allow any 13-digit identifier to be mapped to its surrogate key and legacy processes to take over processing with that identifier in hand.

For vendors that do not use a surrogate key in place of the ISBN, the transition has been or will be more complex.

All the above was accomplished before the fall selling season and, at this writing, we patiently await the first EAN representing a non-book product. Ordering systems, purchase order acknowledgements, electronic invoices and other standard EDI documents can now “talk 13” in all the standard formats such as X.12, EDIFACT, Flashback, TRADACOMs, etc.

The second phase of the Ingram plan will focus on documents that might best be described as communication documents (as opposed to order processing documents). In this phase the focus will be on communicating in both 13-digit and 10-digit formats. For vendors that do not yet use 13-digits, Ingram will continue to support in the same manner that it has for the past several years. To best accomplish this, the preparation for the future was started in mid-2005. The plan, which will be ready by the date of the Ingram-organized session at BookExpo America in May, will design and implement the tools for automated data capture and will include a demonstration of the entire process at the second phase presentation.

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Publishers must consider every area of the business — from finance and accounting to editorial, production, product information, distribution, inventory, sales and marketing.

An audit must be performed of all potentially affected internal systems across the organization, regardless of location or division within the company, including older and infrequently used systems. Once completed, a list of priorities can be established and a schedule for phased implementation can be created. The most complex systems such as financial and accounting can be put on a longer development cycle while less complex systems such as sales and marketing can be put on a fast track.

Wiley’s Calendar

The following is a high level (external) view of Wiley’s implementation schedule, demonstrating the idea of a phased approach:

December 2004
- Internal systems will start to carry both ISBNs

January 2005
- Internal reports reflect dual ISBNs
- Distribution accepts dual numbering ISBNs on manual orders

May 2005
- Catalogs and promotion pieces will start to carry both ISBNs
- TIP sheets to carry both ISBNs

September 2005
- ISBN-10 and -13 are put on copyright page of all new titles and reprints
- Bookland EAN replaces UPC identifier on all new publications and those being reprinted

September 2006

January 2007
- Only ISBN-13 appears on copyright pages
- Jackets/covers of new titles are printed with ISBN-13 only

Key Considerations

Here is a quick check-list of systems that publishers need to take into consideration with the implementation of ISBN-13:
- Finance and accounting systems (including royalties)
- Production (covers, CIP data, eBooks, etc.)
- Distribution (ordering and fulfillment)
- Marketing (catalogs, order forms, Websites, etc.)
- Product Information (data feeds, title databases, etc.)
- Sales (reporting, rights, etc.)

Action Points

- Start now. Effective January 1, 2007 publishers must be able to operate in an ISBN-13 environment. While this may seem like a long way off, January 1, 2007 will be here before you know it.
- Develop a plan that includes all stakeholders within your organization. In some cases this will include colleagues from different publishing centers, locations, and operating units. Be sure to have representation from cross-functional areas such as IT, distribution, finance, production, marketing, sales, etc.
- Conduct an audit of all internal systems across all publishing centers, locations and operating units. Be sure to include infrequently used or older systems. Given the ISBN anchors of so many systems and processes it is critical to ensure you’ve captured them all.
- Phase implementation. Your audit will allow you to identify and prioritize key systems and issues. More complex systems can run on a longer development or migration cycle while less complex systems can be put on a faster track.
- Talk to your trading partners, vendors and customers. Many potential pitfalls can be preempted by communicating and collaborating with your trading partners. The sharing of plans and timelines will lead to an effective and smooth implementation.

As with every major standard change, the more time an organization allocates to system compliance the better. If publishers adopt the ISBN-13 standard throughout their organization by the mandated date, they will guarantee themselves a very happy New Year in 2007. 

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