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New Products and Services

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New Products and Services

Tagax®: A standard solution for automatic application of Security Tags in the Book Industry

by Adrian Cudmore

A revolutionary new system is now available for automatically applying security tags into the spines of books in order to prevent theft from libraries and retailers. Hence, publishers edition books can be delivered to libraries, as part of the acquisition process with tags already inserted, just as are some journals and commercial bindings which are re-bound at present. The system, branded Tagax® offers libraries, retailers and publishers significant advantages over current systems as for the first time widespread, automated introduction of tags across a broad range of titles has become both economically and technically feasible. This will save libraries the time-consuming and expensive task of inserting tags by hand for many of their acquisitions.


Tagax®, was developed in the United Kingdom by **PP Payne Ltd** and is now being marketed in the United States by its American subsidiary, **Supastrip Inc.** Tagax® addresses the needs of libraries, manufacturers, retailers and publishers alike, by covertly applying tags into the spines of books during the manufacturing process and consists of three main components: switchable electro-magnetic tape, a dispensing unit and an applying head.

In order to take advantage of this low cost approach by applying tags at the manufacturer and as publisher edition books are not distinguished between their end use, standards need to be agreed within the library and book retailing community. For the first time, Tagax® offers a solution to this scenario as it is fully compatible with all existing electro-magnetic systems which are currently installed in libraries and book retailers. This includes compatibility with detection and de-activation equipment as well as the latest in automated self check-out systems for libraries. Further, the nature of the electro-magnetic tag and its placement mean that it is completely hidden from view, with no alteration to the product appearance, hence it is virtually impossible for the thief to find, short of tearing the book apart. Thus, once applied at source, a tag will operate effectively in all systems for the duration of the book's working life.

This tag compatibility has recently been independently certified by **FLOG**, a European research facility associated with the **University of Dortmund** in Germany, and which is the leading organization in Europe for defining source tagging compatibility standards. Tagax® is the only material to date which meets these rigorous standards.

In the UK, **PP Payne** has been at the forefront of defining standards for source tagging within the book community. This arises from our work with **BIC (Book Industry Communication)** which is the UK book trade standards body, sponsored by the **Booksellers Association (UK)**, **The Publishers Association (UK)**, **The Library Association (UK)** and the **British Library**. Source tagging standards have been accepted in principle and final terms are in the process of being negotiated. **The Library Association** have been party to these discussions with no objections raised. As part of this process **PP Payne** is already talking to a leading international educational publisher in order to identify the specific details of the implementation process. Elsewhere within Europe, similar activities are taking place and most recently the **Danish Book Industry** approved source tagging using Tagax®. It is likely that this will be the first country to fully implement the system.

In the North American market place **Supastrip Inc.** has started the awareness and consultation process and is currently working with **The Book Industry Study Group's BISAC (Book Industry Systems Advisory Committee)**, **CBISAC (Canadian Book Industry Systems Advisory Committee)**, the **American Library Association**, the **American Booksellers Association**, the **National Association of College Stores** and the **Association of American Publishers**.

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and, ultimately, costs.

One pointed out that, when libraries use the vendor's automated system for ordering, ISBN error is virtually nil. Many libraries still send orders to vendors by other means and vendors have to connect the library's wishes to its database and/or to the publisher's database. One stated: "The amount of research we have to do on library orders is increasing." Problems include: phone calls to customers and/or publishers, delays, return of incorrect books, mixup of cloth and paperback ISBNs and bibliographic information. Others said: "It is a rare occurrence when a library provides the correct ISBN when ordering a set or volume of a set" and "There are many libraries whose pre-order searching [is] outstanding. For those libraries whose information is incomplete, occasionally inaccurate, or difficult to understand, a more laborious task is employed ..." Even the vendor who felt that libraries' usage of ISBNs is improving said that "we need to go further yet."

Vendors were also given the opportunity to make additional comments. Here is what they said:

"It would speed fulfillment of orders if the librarians would supply correct authors, titles, publishers, ISBNs, and prices."

"We are very much opposed to ISBN ordering alone without the other bibliographic data. There is too much room for error and delayed order fulfillment with only an ISBN as identifier."

"ISBNs are increasingly important in book ordering, especially in the electronic environment in which we operate. Barcoding and OCR [optical character recognition] technologies depend upon ISBN, and that is the direction in which publishers and vendors are developing their technology."

"Computers prefer numbers (actually, they require only numbers). The further we remove subjectivity from deciding which book fits your order, the more accurate your shipment. Now, if we could only remove human error!"

Conclusion

The ISBN is far more than a number. Its history is linked inextricably with the rise of automation, yet it carries with it the stigma of dependence on error-prone human beings. Its early promise has not been entirely fulfilled, partly because development of automation capabilities has lagged behind hopes and partly due to misuse of the scheme. Different segments of the information community use the ISBN in different ways and have somewhat different attitudes toward it, largely a result of their degree of dependence on automation. The ISBN is best used with care. If libraries verify ISBNs and accompanying bibliographic data, they can enhance the vendor's ability to

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