The World of ISSN—Standards Revisions and Related Projects

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The World of ISSN—Standards Revisions and Related Projects

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Abstract

There are several ongoing projects that will be of interest to the library, publisher, and vendor communities, including the International ISSN Centre-Ulrich's ISSN project, the revision of ISO-8, and the revision of the ISSN Standard (ISO-3297). The national centers that are participating in the ISSN IC-Ulrich's project and how that project benefits the greater community of scholarly publishers and users of scholarly information, the project plan and progress of the ISO-8 revision (presentation of periodicals) that is related to ISSN and the NISO PIE-J recommended practice, and the status of and details about the proposed ISSN standard revision are outlined.

The World of ISSN—Standards Revisions and Related Projects

As librarians, publishers, discovery service providers, supply chain vendors, and others know, the ISSN is extremely important in the ever-changing serials world. The following sections will provide information about several projects related to the ISSN, all designed to improve the reliability, utility, and sustainability of that very important identifier.

ISSN Projects: ISO-8 Standard Revision

Standards have always been important, and they are even more critical in today's technology-filled world. There are standards for processes, standards for preparing data, standards for transferring data, standards for tracking data, and more. Librarians, publishers, and vendors are aware that following standards leads to consistency, but it isn't always easy to accommodate, especially if system changes are involved. There are standards at every level of engagement—the company, industry, local government, national government, and international organizations. In the United States and in the library profession, there are National Information Standards Organization (NISO) standards for many different parts of the workflow, as well as standards developed by various organizations. Most people have probably heard about International Organization for Standardization (ISO) standards or have been impacted by them without even necessarily knowing a standard is involved. On the About ISO page of their website it states:

“ISO is an independent, non-governmental international organization with a membership of

163 national standards bodies. Through its members, it brings together experts to share knowledge and develop voluntary, consensus-based, market relevant International Standards that support innovation and provide solutions to global challenges ISO has published more than 21000 International Standards and related documents, covering almost every industry, from technology, to food safety, to agriculture and healthcare. ISO International Standards impact everyone, everywhere.”¹ (ISO.org, <http://www.iso.org/iso/home/about.htm>)

ISO standards have a classification system (ICS—International Classification for Standards) and are assigned to a technical committee. One standard that has been important in the publishing industry is a very early standard: ISO-8:1977, Presentation of Periodicals, part of Technical Committee 46—Information and Documentation, in the documentation sector. As noted by its title, the year this standard was last published is 1977, and this version replaced the original version, ISO Recommendation R 8-1954. The scope of the 1977 version states “This International Standard sets out rules intended to enable editors and publishers to present periodicals in a form which will facilitate their use; following these rules should help editors and publishers to bring order and clarity to their own work. These requirements are of varying importance and some may go against certain artistic, technical or advertising considerations.”² (ISO.org, <https://www.iso.org/obp/ui/#iso:std:iso:8:ed-1:v1:en>) As one might imagine, this standard focused solely on printed versions of periodicals and set out instructions related to titles, numbering, pagination, and more. The members of TC-46 recognized a need to enhance

the standard with information about online periodicals, and put forth a ballot for a revision.

The process for ISO³ (illustrated at ISO.org, http://www.iso.org/iso/home/standards_development.htm) moves through the following phases:

- proposing a new standard or revision of an existing standard;
- forming a working group of experts with a convenor to prepare a working draft;
- sharing the draft with the technical committee and the ISO Central Secretariat;
- sharing the draft to all ISO national members for comment; and
- preparing a final draft to be sent to all ISO members for a vote.

Along the way, revisions may be suggested and incorporated into the standard. If the proposed standard or revision is approved by the ISO members vote, it becomes an official ISO International Standard or Revised Standard. For the ISO-8 revision, the process started in 2015 with agreement by the voting members to revise the standard and to select Laurie Kaplan of ProQuest as the convenor. There are 26 experts representing 21 organizations from 12 countries on the working group. The countries include Belgium, Canada, China, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Russian Federation, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Some of the organization types include national libraries, the International ISSN Centre, university libraries, and publishers.

The charge of the working group included using content from NISO's PIE-J in the revised standard, to expand the focus to include electronic periodicals. PIE-J is the presentation and identification of electronic journals, NISO RP-16-2013.⁴ (ISO.org, http://www.niso.org/apps/group_public/download.php/10368/rp-16-2013_pie-j.pdf)

As noted previously, the sections of ISO-8 focus on print periodicals. These sections include title of periodical, issue, numbering, volume, date, layout, running title, pagination, presentation of articles, content list of issue, index, and special cases. PIE-J covers some of the same content areas in its recommended practice with these sections: Journal title and citations information, title changes and title

history, ISSN, enumeration and chronology systems, publication information, access to content, and preservation of content digitized from print. Both documents include information about ISSN. ISO-8 focuses more on inclusion and placement of the ISSN, declaring that the ISSN shall be present on the front cover, at the head of the contents list, and on the title page for each issue. PIE-J focuses more on availability of the ISSN for each title of a journal over time and for each format of a journal, and that each ISSN (print, online, and linking) is shown for each title available on the electronic version of the title.

The ISO-8 revision working group kicked off its meetings in Wellington, New Zealand, at the TC-46 plenary meeting in May 2016. Since then, the group has been meeting approximately every 2 months, reviewing the outlines of the existing standard and PIE-J, as well as reviewing related standards from the United Kingdom and Germany. Members of the working group have chosen sections to draft in smaller groups and will share those drafts in early 2017. The timeframe for completing the revision is 36 months, with the clock having started on January 21, 2016. The working group is on track to meet the deadline.

ISSN Projects: ProQuest and the International ISSN Centre Project

Since late 2014, representatives from ProQuest and the International ISSN Centre have been involved in a project to improve the coverage of ISSN in academic and scholarly titles. As reported last year at the Charleston Conference, the seeds of the project were sown when Gaëlle Béquet, Director of the International ISSN Centre/CIEPS, was researching using Ulrichsweb™ and found some results without ISSN. She contacted Laurie Kaplan, the Director of Editorial Operations at ProQuest, responsible for the team that works on the Ulrich's database. The result of the discussions was a pilot project with the Netherlands ISSN Center to determine whether the ISSN for those titles in Ulrichsweb were simply missing, or if they had never been assigned to those periodicals. The pilot project began in February of 2015 and has continued as an ongoing project into 2016.

The impetus for both organizations to work on this project is the desire to provide complete and trustworthy bibliographic metadata for as many scholarly publications as possible. Having more complete metadata would benefit researchers,

librarians, publishers, subscription agencies, and others by improving the accessibility, electronic loading, and matching of content through the ISSN in content such as catalogs, databases, discovery services, and online periodicals. The work with the Netherlands resulted in 220 additional ISSN from the pilot set being added to the Ulrich's database, of which only 17% were missing; the balance of these records were registered by the Netherlands center and added to their database. The Netherlands ISSN Center has been working on the balance of their records throughout 2016. Also in 2016, four additional National ISSN Centers were sent approximately 100 sample records to review and then schedule their participation in the project. The United Kingdom and Sweden determined that they wanted to begin to work on their titles and have received their full set of records. Germany and Ireland are interested in participating and will start their project in 2017 as resources become available.

A very important part of the process is notifying publishers that ISSN have been added to their titles; this will help to encourage the use of ISSN by publishers and providers in the metadata they deliver with their publications. Recommended usage of the ISSN is on publisher websites, on each publication's page, in metadata lists, and accompanying the publication in every delivery of that content, whether full-text or metadata only. Publishers and providers are encouraged to follow the NISO PIE-J recommended practice, and eventually the revised ISO-8 standard, to include ISSN for every iteration (title change) and format of a title. This practice will enhance the experience of researchers in citation of resources and provide better access and linking of content throughout the community.

Revising the ISSN Standard: How Do You Update an Icon?

The ISSN is a standard that the information community can rely on to ensure predictability in times of change. As serials change, so do their identifiers, and sometimes the standards themselves have to change to keep up with changing times. The ISSN, ISO-3297, is in just that situation now, where the standard has been approved to be revised, with input from the community, to make it even more

reliable. ISO standards can come up for review every 5 years, and although standards are not necessarily revised with that frequency, with the last major ISSN revision was in 2007, there are many meetings and discussions around the maintenance of a standard. It involves time, money, and energy to ensure the standards remain relevant to the communities that use them on a regular basis.

The last major revision added the linking ISSN (ISSN-L) and added a section about the display of ISSN on electronic continuing resources and on other nonprint media. This is related to ISO-8, the revision of which was discussed earlier. At the ISSN General Assembly meeting in Paris in the spring of 2016, a minor editorial revision removed the statement that ISSN are assigned free of charge, paving the way for some national libraries to set a price for ISSN. At this time, the U.S. Library of Congress is not intending to charge for ISSN registration. Also at that meeting, there were also discussions about preparing the ISSN for the linked data environment, expanding on the creation of the ISSN-L. One idea was to expose part of the ISSN Register as Linked Open Data (LOD) under a CC-BY-NC license. ISSN can help link journals with former and later titles, author registries, archives, and more. This will likely be explored further during the revision process.

There are potential revision issues to resolve, such as the difference between an identifier at the bibliographic level and the product level, whether there should be separate ISSN for subparts of a continuing resource, and whether digital formats and editions such as PDF, HTML, and EPub require a separate ISSN and how to define those editions in the first place. Other considerations include a new ISSN for serial "families," alignment with ONIX metadata standards, and incorporation of appendices for new identifiers such as ISNI.

The ISO-3297 revision is now in the preparatory stage, seeking broad community representation for the ISO working group. There is interest in including publishers, libraries, aggregators, abstracters and indexers, platform providers, and representatives from related standards. To become a member of the ISSN revision working group, contact the appropriate ISO representative for your country. In the United States, contact NISO (www.niso.org).