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SISAC (Serials Industry Systems Advisory Committee)

by **Tina Feick**, Sales Manager, Blackwell's Periodicals Division
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As a part of the Book Industry Study Group, SISAC was established in 1982 to "provide a forum for the serials industry to discuss and resolve mutual concerns and to develop standardized formats for the electronic transmittal of serials information." The primary focus continues to be the creation of standardized computer-to-computer formats for business transactions within the serials industry. All parties of the serials information chain -- librarians, subscription agents, publishers, library system automation vendors, etc. -- participate in SISAC. SISAC also maintains close liaisons with ALA and other library organizations plus its counterparts in Canada (CSISAC) and the United Kingdom (BIC -- Book Industry Communication) and other industry organizations (ICEDIS -- International Committee for the EDI of Serials).

During its first years, SISAC focused on the need for a standard method to uniquely identify specific parts of serials publications -- an issue, a supplement, an article, etc. The result was an ANSI/NISO approved standard -- ANSI/NISO Z39.56 (1991), Serial Item and Contribution Identifier (SICI). This is what one SICI looks like: 0885-3959 (199221/22)7:1L4:SART;1 [Citation: "SISAC Announces Release of Time-Saving Diskette" *SISAC NEWS*, vol. 7, no.1 (Spring/Summer 1992), p.4.]

Starting with the ISSN for the journal title, the SICI is a string of letters and/or numbers which uniquely identify a particular issue and/or article of a serial. In parentheses is found the issue date (chronology) followed by the volume/issue numbers (enumeration). After the colon the location of the article is presented along with the abbreviation for the title. At the end is the version number of the standard. With the SICI in hand, SISAC was now ready to actually look at business transactions. SISAC needed a code that could be identified by a computer and translated into actual issue (item) and contribution (article) information. Free text, especially of the title,

would require human interpretation.

The SICI has just recently been revised and was unanimously approved by vote of the NISO membership. Many SISAC members were part of the Revision Committee. In order to achieve its purpose, SISAC turned to EDI -- Electronic Data Interchange. EDI is defined as the exchange of commercially oriented information in standard electronic formats between systems, without human intervention or interpretation. EDI is used extensively throughout the commercial world -- transportation, banking, retail such as Wal-Mart and Barnes & Noble. As ANSI ASC X12 is the US standards committee charged with developing EDI transaction set formats, SISAC adopted their EDI formats.

Over the past four years, SISAC committee members have been hard at work and have now completed and published the following ASC X12 transaction sets: Invoice, Ship Notice/Manifest (Journal Issue Shipment Notice), Order Status Inquiry (Claims), Order Status Report (Claim Responses), and Functional Acknowledgment. Earlier this year work was completed on a Book and Serial Purchase Order and Purchase Order Acknowledgment -- a joint venture with BISAC. How does SISAC create these transactions sets? Initially five subcommittees were formed -- one for each transaction set. Working in closed rooms, over the Internet and with fax communication, committee members strove to cover the issues for each partner within the serials industry. The major concern was to discern what elements are essential in order to transact business, not to redo what already existed in paper. What really makes up a claim or an invoice??? SISAC members answered these questions to the best of their ability.

Upon completion of the subcommittee's work, the transaction set is then turned over to the Technical Advisory Group (TAG). This group is comprised of technical experts from various parts of the serials industry -- SISAC's quality control!! TAG essentially takes the data elements as defined by the subcommittee and puts them into X12ese. Before releasing each SISAC X12 transaction set, the Implementation Task Force (ITF) actually performs live tests to ensure that electronic data can actually be exchanged. Through this process the ITF has been able to discern bugs and make the necessary corrections.

SISAC also developed the SISAC Bar Code Symbol which is an implementation of the SICI standard. It is essentially the machine scannable barcode representation of the SICI at the issue level. Some publishers have been putting the SISAC Bar Code Symbol on their journals in order to assist libraries during the check-in process. The system has proven to work well. We now need more publishers and library automation vendors to participate in this process.

Right now SISAC is keeping tabs on EDIFACT -- the United Nations-created EDI standard. ASC X12 is moving to EDIFACT and the SISAC-approved ASC X12 transaction sets are now being translated into EDIFACT by BIC (Book Industry Communication) in the United Kingdom. As SISAC has defined the required data elements the translation work should be streamlined. SISAC meets four to six times year, always at the ALA and ALA Midwinter Conferences. We invite all to join us as we search for ways to better serve our serials world through the electronic exchange of business transactions. For more information and for copies of the SISAC X12 Implementation Guidelines for EDI, contact: The Serials Industry Study Group, Inc., 160 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010-7000, Phone: 212-929-1393 Or visit our Home Page: <http://www.bisg.org>.

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