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CHAOS -- Standards Column -- Revision of the ISSN Standard: The Challenge of Change

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Projects

US Projects

The premier international cooperative authority project is **NACO**, under the umbrella of the **Program for Cooperative Cataloging (PCC)**. It began in 1976 under the leadership of the **Library of Congress** and currently has 395 contributing partners. **John Byrum of LC**, stressed that sharing the work has many advantages, ranging from cost effectiveness, to developing common standards, to creating a very large file, and gives participants a sense of ownership. 220,000 new records are added to the **NACO** file every year, including records created in sixteen foreign countries. **NACO** libraries have contributed 64% of the names and 73% of the series in the **Name Authority File**.

Ana Cristan also from **LC**, described **SACO**, the **Subject Authority Component** of the **Program for Cooperative Cataloging**. The American library community views authority control differently than its European counterparts. Many US as well as foreign libraries are invited to submit new subject headings to the **Library of Congress** subject file. This very democratic model has its shortcomings, language of cataloging being the primary problem. As the **Library of Congress** reaches out to the international community, non-English speaking countries still need to use the English form of a subject. The vernacular form of subjects are only accepted if no English form exists. In the long run, this problem of non-English subject headings will need to be solved.

Going counter to creating a single international database, **OCLC's FAST** project (**Faceted Application of Subject Terminology**), presented by **Rebecca Dean**, is developing an authority file of subject headings for metadata. There were 7.4 million Websites in 2002 (or 83 trillion pages) where metadata could be applied. **FAST** headings are a simplified version of the **Library of Congress Subject Headings**. Using the **Dublin Core**, a cataloger should be able to use these simple, easy, and intuitive subject headings. **FAST's** objective is to facilitate precision and recall of Web pages when doing a subject search. However, it seems counterproductive for catalogers to use yet another thesaurus, albeit a simpler one.

European Projects

The **MACS** project (**Multiple Access to Subject**) is a virtual multi-lingual authority file. This prototype, presented by **Genevieve Clavel Merrin**, began in 1997. It lists subject headings in German, English, and French, side-by-side. The database so far includes a limited subset of subjects (sports and theater). Subjects in each language are mapped to correspond to each other, so that when a user does a search in his or her native language, using **Z39.50** and link management software, they can retrieve documents in another

language. She discussed how to cross-search various authority files and focused on the structure of headings. The US structure consists of a main heading followed by subheadings or free-floating subdivisions. In Germany subheadings are not used, but instead, multiple headings are used. This project may prove useful for a few languages, but could become unwieldy if expanded to include more languages.

Andrew MacEwan, from the British Library, reported on "Project Interparty," and discussed the relationship between library authority files and e-commerce. This project, which is not yet operational, was initiated by people working in the trade sector. It is funded by the **European Community** and also has US partners such as the **Library of Congress** and **OCLC**. The aim of this project is for the business sector to identify the correct names of authors, performers, producers, and publishers, in order to negotiate agreements, pay royalties, and manage copyright (e.g., it is not uncommon for copyright checks to be sent to the wrong person). Retailers could also have access to this database to better serve their clients. Currently, there are many databases that contain "party metadata" and that have different structures and use different approaches. The **Interparty** membership will include parties who see a business benefit in identifying people. Libraries and retailers share the same goal, i.e., identify persons correctly. As in libraries, **Interparty** needs sufficient metadata to allow "disambiguation." Authority records need to be unique to be valuable. Complex relationships such as two authors writing under a single name, members of

a band, or the use of pseudonyms have to be indicated. Unlike libraries, the business sector is interested in the public identity of authors and performers rather than the "real" person. However, in many instances, records for public identities look like records for real people (i.e., date of birth).

Conclusion

The choice of language which the presenters used was in itself a reminder of the difficulty in creating standardized all-purpose records. Except for the Italians, who presented in Italian, the other presenters used English, regardless of country of origin. In most cases, **PowerPoint** presentations in English accompanied the Italian speeches. The papers were also available on the Web, at www.unifi.it/biblioteche/ac/ in both Italian and English. Language, even with the help of the sophisticated technology available to presenters, made it sometimes difficult for speakers of one language to understand the presentations given in the other language. Several issues became obvious from this conference. While authority control is essential, it is time-consuming and complicated. Two leitmotifs permeated the conference: infrastructure and cost. Technology per se was not identified as a barrier. Most current international projects are prototypes and are far from being operational. Naming is so deeply rooted in language and culture that even within the same country disagreements exist. Achieving international authority control is a lofty goal, and we have a long way to go. 🌱

CHAOS — Standards Column

Revision of the ISSN Standard: The Challenge of Change

by **Regina Romano Reynolds** (Head, National Serials Data Program, Library of Congress, 101 Independence Ave., S.E., Washington, DC 20540) <rrey@loc.gov>

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Column Editor's Note: One of the most enduring (and bogus) arguments against the adoption of standards is that they are difficult to change and lock us in. Not so! Standards do change (sometimes on a continual basis) as implementers re-tool them to keep them responsive to new technologies or new ways of doing things. One of our community's most stable and widely used standards, the **ISSN**, is now entering a revision cycle. The US is a key participant in the international deliberations just begun under the auspices of the **ISO**; the delegation of experts appointed by **NISO** includes **Yvette Diven**, **Ed Pentz**, and **Regina Reynolds**. In this first report **Regina Reynolds** reports on the initial meeting of the **ISO working group** tackling the revision. **Regina Reynolds** highlights the range of discussion and specific issues that the **Working Group** will address. Look for updates in this column as the work progresses. Undoubtedly, the decisions taken (or not taken) will have the potential to shape the industry. — **PH**

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Use of the ISSN is so widespread in the serials world that it is almost taken for granted. Good ole' ISSN! But ISO (International Organization for Standardization) doesn't allow standards to be taken for granted. Each ISO standard comes up for a "Systematic Review" every five years.

ISO 3297, the official ISO number for the ISSN standard, was first published in 1975 and, during most of its review cycles the standard has simply been reaffirmed. However, in May 2003, with the support of the ISSN International Centre, ISO TC46/SC 9 (the ISO technical committee which oversees the ISSN standard) agreed to establish Working Group 5 to revise the ISSN standard to take into account changes in the serials world and the current digital environment. The first meeting of this new Working Group, held in Paris, January 26-27, 2004 launched the revision effort. The Working Group's discussions brought the group's goals and challenges into sharp focus.

Happily, the first meeting of the Working Group brought two significant successes. First, the membership of the Working Group includes representation from the serials and information communities, including representatives from CrossRef, DOI, and the OpenURL, and journal publishers. Thanks in part to these representatives, it was decided to add an informational appendix to the revised standard that will specify "best practices" for the use of ISSN in DOIs, relate the ISSN to the OpenURL standard, and give examples of the uses of the ISSN in OpenURLs. The ISSN is already an identifier within the OpenURL URI Namespace (info:ofi/nam:urn:ISSN:) and is listed in the initial OpenURL Registry. A second success of the first meeting was the emergence of several scenarios for allowing the ISSN to function as both a "work" and "product" identifier. These scenarios are discussed later in this article.

The three main goals and concomitant challenges of the revision were the topics of extensive discussion during the two-day meeting. One main goal is to determine the potential for broadening the scope of the ISSN, which has

heretofore been limited to those publications that meet a traditional library definition of "serial." A second—and very critical—goal is to resolve concerns about the current policy of assigning a separate ISSN to different versions (e.g., print, online, CD-ROM) of a serial. A third general goal is to address issues relating to which resources can be assigned ISSN and how centers assign ISSN. The aim of these goals is supporting or extending the use of the ISSN in publishing, distribution, and library applications. Expectations for the content and wording of the revised standard are set forth in the "Terms of Reference" document for the revision which states:

The revised ISSN standard should:

- Specify any agreed extensions or changes to the scope of the ISSN system;
- Clarify the types of resources to which ISSN may and may not be assigned, including those in electronic formats;
- Provide definitions to support the introduction of any new concepts into the revised standard (e.g., "continuing resource");
- Incorporate specifications for the display of ISSN on various formats of eligible resources, including electronic resources;
- Clarify policies for assigning ISSN to different editions or versions of a resource;
- Specify the required metadata associated with each ISSN assignment;
- Incorporate other agreed revisions necessary for the alignment of ISO 3297 with the latest version of the ISSN manual.

The Working Group consists of over twenty experts nominated by national standards organizations, such as NISO in the US, as well as others invited for their specialized expertise. The group is chaired by Françoise Pellé, director of the ISSN International Centre in Paris, and includes directors of several ISSN national centers, as well as representatives of other stakeholders such as publishers, subscription agencies, rights management organizations, related registration agencies, and other organizations that use or may potentially use ISSN.

As can be seen from the above list of needs that the revised ISSN standard should meet, the revision work is a large undertaking. During

the Paris meeting it was no surprise that clarifying the policies regarding the assignment of ISSN to serials issued in multiple versions or editions emerged as one of the most difficult challenges. The present policy whereby different ISSN are assigned to print, online, CD-ROM, etc. versions does meet the needs of those (e.g., subscription agents and press distributors) who have to differentiate between the different versions. However, the Working Group also acknowledged the

need expressed by other ISSN users to identify the content of serials for purposes such as abstracting and indexing, and linking, including reference linking and OpenURL linking applications.

The need for one ISSN to identify a serial was expressed very strongly in the results of an online survey undertaken by NISO in 2003. The survey sought input from the US community on the major issues involved in the ISSN revision in order to have background upon which to base its vote during the review of the standard. (NISO voted to revise the standard.) The following question addressed the issue of how many ISSN should identify a serial: "Should the current practice of assigning different ISSNs to online, CD-ROM and print versions be continued?" One respondent's reply expressed concerns that were raised by a number of those surveyed:

The fact that different formats are given different ISSN is the one aspect that seriously impairs the usefulness of the ISSN for my purposes. In every other way it is the perfect identifier. Working in the realm of "connecting patrons with content," content identification is what I need. . . .

Many respondents to the survey mentioned linking as a key use of the ISSN. Linking is also a use that has great potential to grow in the future. Library patrons and other users of electronic content want to click on article citations in databases or in other articles and be connected directly to the full text of the article. The ISSN is an ideal mechanism to identify journals for these linking purposes. The OpenURL standard for context-sensitive linking, which can connect users to that content to which they have rights, is poised to revolutionize linking in the online environment. Although linking is possible when several ISSN identify a work, it functions much more smoothly and easily when there is only one ISSN.

The Working Group responded to the various needs expressed above by concluding that serial identification at two levels is needed: at both a loosely-defined "work" level, and at a fairly general "product" level. These two levels would allow the two functions of collocating and differentiating to be fulfilled. How to achieve both levels is the challenge facing the group. Input on some possible scenarios will be gathered from various user communities and discussed at the next Working Group meeting to be held in Amsterdam in mid-May. Some scenarios posit the ISSN choosing either the "work" or "product" level and another identifier filling the alternative role. Other scenarios posit the ISSN filling both roles, either by use of a base ISSN to represent the work and a suffix to represent the medium of the product; or by designating a "master" ISSN to represent the "work" as embodied in, for example, the print product and additional ISSN to represent other products. In this multiple ISSN scenario, all related ISSN are linked in the ISSN database.

The scope of the revised ISSN standard also generated considerable discussion. Over the past several years, the library cataloging com-

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ISSN At A Glance

Monitor the ISSN revision on the TC46/SC9 WG 5 Website:
<http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/iso/tc46sc9/wg5.htm>

Further info on international standards development:
NISO: <http://www.niso.org/international/index.html>
ISO: <http://www.iso.ch/>

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munity has adopted a new model to represent the spectrum of bibliographic resources: a first division into finite and continuing resources, with continuing resources being further divided into "serials," (resources that are issued in discrete parts) and ongoing "integrating resources" such as databases and Web sites that integrate new material into a seamless whole. In an historic international "harmonization" effort, the model and terminology were accepted into the *Anglo-American Cataloging Rules* (Chapter 12), the *International Standard Bibliographic Description* (ISBD CR), and the *ISSN Manual*. Questions for the ISSN revision group are whether the scope of the ISSN should be extended to cover all "continuing resources," (i.e., serials, plus ongoing loose-leafs, databases and Websites) and which terms to use to represent the broadened scope. The preliminary conclusion of the **Working Group** was that serials will continue to be comprehensively registered and other types of continuing resources will be registered on a selective basis that will be more clearly defined in the revised standard. As to the terminology, it was felt that the terms used in the cataloging standards are too difficult for those outside the cataloging community to understand, and that the term "serial" should continue to be used to cover the broadened scope but defined in the context of the standard to encompass all the resources that libraries are now calling continuing resources.

At the next **Working Group** meeting in May, the results of various user communities' reactions to the proposed single vs. multiple ISSN scenarios will be discussed, with the goal of reaching a decision on how many ISSN to assign to resources issued in multiple versions and editions. Some remaining issues to be addressed are the possibility of broadening the ISSN decision structures to ISSN user communities outside of the library world, and development of a contract between ISO/TC46 officially designating the ISSN International Centre as the registration agency for the ISSN, an ISO practice that was begun after the original establishment of the ISSN International Centre. The target date for completion of a **Draft International Standard (DIS)** of ISO 3297 is April 2005 (or earlier, if possible).

Will drastic changes in the ISSN result from this revision? The **Working Group** expressed the importance of avoiding changes that would seriously disrupt the functioning of those who depend on the ISSN. On the other hand, hope was expressed for helpful improvements to enable the ISSN to function more effectively in the current digital environment.

Some things never change and thus grow stale. Other things change only enough to become better. That is the goal for the ISSN revision.

ATG Special Report — How Not To Write An Architecture Book

by Gene Waddell (College Archivist, College of Charleston) <waddelle@cofc.edu>

Some Approaches to Writing

"If you write a page a day, you'll have a book a year." That's what a professional writer, **Robert Marks**, told me, and he wrote several dozen books and hundreds of articles. About half of his books were non-fiction, and the rest were novels. He could write an erotic novel in six weeks, but he had already done his research.

Robert's point was the importance of diligence. It is not necessary to take twenty-five years to write a book, and if I had taken good advice, I would have finished my book on Charleston architecture much sooner than I did.

Robert also told me something else of great importance for a writer to know. He said the philosopher **René Descartes** wrote that any problem can be solved if it is divided into small enough parts so that each part can be solved separately. A book should be written one section at a time. If you can't write a page on some days, you should be able to write a paragraph. The point is to write at least a minimum amount on some kind of regular basis.

Robert never wrote a line until he had a contract. He took editors to lunch and discussed his idea and found out exactly what they were willing to pay for. I wrote my book on Charleston architecture without considering who might be willing to publish it, and it took me nine years to find a publisher.

Other good advice that I was given and didn't take includes creating a place that you only use to write and setting a regular time to write. I knew a writer and painter who built a separate studio in his backyard so he would have a place to go to only to work. By leaving his house and going to his studio every morning, he was able to maintain a good work schedule and produce a tremendous body of work. A room that you use only for work might suffice to put you in the right frame of mind to write or even a desk used for no other purpose. As with exercise, if you do not set aside a regular place and time to do it, something else will take its place. You need to find a routine that you can stick to unless you want a writing project to continue indefinitely.

To keep working on a regular basis, you will probably need to pace yourself. I didn't do that either. By pacing yourself, I mean deciding how much you can do without exhausting yourself and being unable to keep to some kind of schedule. When I get a good idea that needs to be put on paper, I can't help but exhaust myself, but I try now to make that the exception rather than my regular way of writing. If you do better by exhausting yourself on a regular basis, that's fine if you allow enough time to recover in between. If you can write 20 pages in one day, that's great unless you don't write another 20 pages until a year later. Whatever works.

One of my problems is that I like to write about several different subjects at the same time. That refreshes me better than rest. When I return to

another subject, I am more likely to see the material differently and to have new insights as well as new enthusiasm. However, it takes much longer to finish any one of the books I am working on.

I recommend writing about what you like best and want to know the most about. Your work will become a labor of love and will take longer than you want it to, but you will enjoy the research and writing. Unless you care passionately about something, what you write is unlikely to be better than what many other people could write on the same subject, and I see no point in writing what anyone else could write.

If you want to write a book in a reasonable length of time, I recommend that you select a manageable topic and stick to it. I am not very good at that sticking to a narrow topic or even to sticking to one topic, but I am fairly good about eventually finishing what I start, and you shouldn't start anything you don't intend to finish.

While you are not actually writing, there is much that you can do to get ready to write, and that too needs to be done on a regular basis. I have found no better way to locate information when I need it for writing than to pull a book off the shelf and look for a passage I recall having read. Making marginal notes and marking passages will remind you of what most impressed you when you initially read a book and of the insights you had at the time, and it makes a lot of re-reading unnecessary. All the relevant information that I might need (including citations) is in hand. This approach to research and writing requires a large personal library, but for me it's the best possible investment. I don't waste time taking notes unless I can't find a copy of a book for myself, and the Internet makes it possible to find any books more easily and less expensively than ever before. I mark everything I might ever want to refer to.

While I am reading and have an insight that I know I want to include in an article or book that I am currently working on, I draft a paragraph or several paragraphs to get the idea on paper immediately. I put my drafts in file folders, and when I am ready to write a section or a chapter, I resort and subdivide my file folders. Before I start writing a full draft of a section, article or chapter, I have usually already drafted substantial parts of the text, and the work consists primarily of filling in what is missing and rewriting.

Some of my best insights happen after I have been reading or writing, and I always carry a pencil and paper to make notes to myself. Eventually these notes also get sorted into folders or inserted directly into drafts. In other words, my books accumulate, and in my opinion, that is the best way to write comprehensively about any subject. Since the value of every book is in proportion to how nearly definitive it can be made, every author who wants to make a permanent contribution to scholarship should try to write as definitively as possible.

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