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Electronic Ordering and ISBN-13 — “How Will I Order Books in a 13-Digit World?”

by **Eric Thronson** (Chair, Internet Commerce Committee, Book Industry Study Group and Manager, Third Party Systems Integration, Baker & Taylor) <thronde@btol.com>

The night before our **PVL R Open Forum** I took some time to rehearse my presentation. Like most Americans, I seem to have the T.V. on regardless of what I'm doing. Therefore it should come as no surprise that I had the T.V. in my hotel room on — albeit muted — while I practiced my spiel. About halfway through the run-through I glanced at the screen and was greeted with the tag line for a product I would rather not see advertised, “When the moment is right, will you be ready?”

Despite my aversion to such programming, I got a chuckle out of how apropos those words were to my presentation. January 1, 2007 is the moment by which we must all be ready.

EDI (Electronic Data Interchange) has been a boon to libraries in the last several years by automating formerly manual processes. Electronically ordering saves time and prevents errors. The addition of electronic order confirmations and invoicing further eases the load.

The term “**EDI**” is actually an umbrella term that refers to a number of standards for formatting the data that is transmitted between systems. The book industry in North America relies on **X.12**, **EDIFACT**, and the **BISAC Fixed Field Format**. While much data is transmitted in an **EDI** document, it can be argued that the single most important item is the **ISBN** and of course all three formats carry it. Since the **ISBN** is changing, the **EDI** standards for these formats must likewise be adjusted.

The **Internet Commerce Committee (ICC)** of **BISG (Book Industry Study Group, www.bisg.org)** is tasked with creating guidelines and roadmaps for **EDI** usage in all segments of the book industry. To be more accurate, the **ICC** is part of **BISAC (Book Industry Standards And Communications)** which is the standards-setting arm of **BISG**.

The **ICC** has been grappling with **ISBN-13's** impact on **EDI** for almost two years. It was clear that before specific guidelines could be issued we had to settle on the conceptual approach to be taken. Ideas were floated, discussed and sometimes torpedoed. It came down to a choice of “flipping a switch” on the January 1st of the year in question, or of offering a more gradual process. Doubting that we could get every organization's **EDI** subsystem to simultaneously start using a **13-digit** — and only the **13-digit** — **ISBN** at the stroke of midnight, it became apparent that we had to add **ISBN-13** support to the existing **ISBN-10** support. Carrying both iterations of the **ISBN** for each item in an **EDI** document would allow organizations to migrate from **ISBN-10** to **ISBN-13** at their own pace (but before 1/1/2007). So, the general philosophy for **ISBN-13** and **EDI** is to continue to support **ISBN-10** while adding **ISBN-13** support and then transitioning to **ISBN-13** use exclusively. For those interested in the nitty-

gritty details, there is a paper on the **BISG** Website with the pertinent information (http://www.bisg.org/docs/BISG_EDI_Roadmap.pdf).

I want to reiterate that we need to think of the **BISAC EDI** format as obsolete. It has served us well over the years, but it is time to let go. The **BISAC** format was created in the 1970's and has limitations that reflect the punch cards in use at the time. **BISAC** (the committee) ended support for **BISAC** (the **EDI** format) in 1995. It is a rigid format and can not accommodate the need to add **ISBN-13** support while maintaining **ISBN-10** functionality. Rather than rigging some improbable workaround, it is time to retire it.

The good news is that the **X.12** and **EDIFACT** formats can easily handle the transition to a **13-digit ISBN**. Guidelines and supporting documentation have been issued and posted on the **BISG** Website for **X.12** and www.editeur.org for **EDIFACT**.

In practical terms, libraries currently using **BISAC** to transmit orders to suppliers need to talk to their **ILS** vendors to determine their options for migrating from that format to **X.12** or **EDIFACT**. This conversation needs to happen soon as there may be a charge to add this functionality and money will have to be budgeted. The upgrade needs to be scheduled and time allowed for testing and implementation.

Those using **X.12** or **EDIFACT** should not think that they escape unscathed. They too need to talk to their **ILS** vendor about their plans to support **ISBN-13**. When will they be ready? When will your library be up-

graded? Have they been coordinating and testing with your book vendors? Speaking of which, do you know what your book vendors are doing to prepare for **ISBN-13**?

I would counsel that you ask detailed questions of your **ILS** and book vendors. For instance, many **ILS** systems use the **ISBN** from the **020** tag when you wish to order additional copies of an existing title. However, **OCLC**

is releasing records with the **ISBN-13** in the **024** field. You may also have records with the **13-digit ISBN** in an additional **020** field. How will

your **ILS** system handle this admixture of digits and tags? Will it populate the correct numbers into the correct fields in your **EDI** order? How will the dedupe process work?

The questions don't end there. Will your order confirmations and invoices have the **10-** or **13-digit** number, or both? How will you **ILS** system process these inbound **EDI** documents? How will these incoming items match to existing bib and order records?

Obviously the change to a **13-digit ISBN** is a little more complex than just adding three digits. The **ISBN** flows from system to system and vendor to vendor. Systems need to be upgraded and tested. Sample **EDI** documents need to be exchanged to ensure compatibility between the upgraded systems. Time needs to be budgeted for working out the inevitable kinks. At first blush, January 1, 2007 may seem like a long way off; but when you consider all that needs to be done it starts to seem like it is very near indeed. So, when the moment is right, will you be ready? 🐼

Rumors from page 18

check their email. “This service is paramount for students, particularly as many are working alongside their studies,” says **Sue Roberts**, Head of Learning Services. “With this in mind we were keen to become associated with **Innovative**, which has built a strong reputation on their reliable and flexible software.”

www.iii.com

This comes courtesy of the clever **Ramune Kubilius** <r-kubilius@northwestern.edu> (NOTE address change!) — **The National Library of Medicine (NLM)**, a component

of the **National Institutes of Health**, has announced the release of a **PDA software tool** designed to help first responders when they arrive at a hazardous material (Hazmat) incident, such as a chemical spill. **WISER (Wireless Information System for Emergency Responders)** provides the emergency responder with critical information on hazardous substances. The operational versions of **WISER** for **Palm OS** and for **Pocket PC** are now available without charge for downloading to users' PDAs at <http://wiser.nlm.nih.gov>. More than 1700 copies of the **WISER** software have been requested and downloaded. A desktop version will be available later this

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