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ISBN-13 at the University of Chicago Library

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ISBN-13 at the University of Chicago Library

by **Frances McNamara** (Director Integrated Library Systems and Administrative and Desktop Systems, University of Chicago Library) <f-mcnamara@uchicago.edu>

The **ISBN** is an extremely useful identifier that we have come to depend upon in a number of different library systems, although primarily as a means of communicating with publishers, jobbers and vendors when we order monographic items. In library systems, it is not usually the unique identifier. Each system has such a control number and bibliographic utilities like

OCLC and **RLIN** also assign unique numbers within their systems. It is, however, an important and useful number that is found in **MARC** records and in many records used to communicate with vendors and sometimes with other libraries. The **MARC** record itself is of variable length and the **020** field is also of variable length, so an increase in the length would not require a change to the format.

When I did a scan of the **ISBN** index in our library system I found examples of records where a record reflected **LC** practice:

020 __ \$a 9780374104436

020 __ \$a 0374104433 (hardcover : alk. paper)

and others reflecting **OCLC's** current interim practice:

020 __ \$a 2271062217

024 3_ \$a 9782271062215

Note that the **13-digit ISBN** starts with "978" and the final digit is important because it is a check digit. Keep in mind that after 1/1/2007 there will be other valid **ISBNs** that start with "979." So you might have valid **ISBNs** for totally different titles that look like this:

ISBN-10 2271062217

ISBN-13 978 + 227106221 + 5

and

ISBN-13 979 + 227106221 + check digit

The first two represent the same book, but the third is for a different book and would never have a **10-digit** form. So you should never try to normalize a **13-digit ISBN** that starts with **979** to a **10-digit ISBN**.

Why would you want to? When we get to 1/1/2007 the goal is for all of the publisher and vendor databases to use only the **13-digit ISBN** so that we can all order and track orders using that number. For them, it seems likely that they may want to do some kind of data conversion to use all **13-digit** numbers even if they retain the old **10-digit** numbers in another field. However, our library patrons may consult bibliographies and other sources listing **10-digit ISBNs** far into the future. For library databases, we purposely retain out of print titles and we will probably want to reflect the **10-digit ISBN** actually printed on the book that we own. So our databases will contain:

10-digit ISBNs for pre-2004 imprints

10- and 13-digit ISBNs for 2004-2006 imprints

13-digit ISBNs for post 2006 imprints

While the vendor databases will probably contain:

13-digit ISBNs for all titles

POTENTIAL ISSUES

The fact that the length of the number and check digit calculations are different for **ISBN-13s** appearing on books and in various records is already causing problems with existing systems. It may be that a system that displays a **MARC**-formatted record, like the cataloging module of our **Dynix Horizon** system is accommodating variable length fields and not validating check digits, so it may not care about the new numbers.

Other systems might start rejecting fields already. Acquisitions modules may use an **ISBN** field that may be of fixed length and might or might not check the check digit. So length of field, check digit calculation, a process that supplies the hyphenation for display or searching, special **ISBN** processors or parsers, or special **ISBN** indexes all might be features that need adjustment to be able to accommodate the **ISBN-13**. And this may be true *right now* since these are beginning to appear on books and in records already.

After 1/1/2007 when we have library systems retaining **10-digit ISBNs** for older titles communicating with vendor systems that require **13-digit ISBNs** we will need a way to transform the **ISBN-10** to **ISBN-13** when communicating with a vendor. Likewise, when we are adding records with **ISBN-13** from vendors, we may need to find a way to try to match those against older **ISBN-10** records in our database if we use the **ISBN** to check for duplication when ordering or adding new books. And there will be a set of orders that are still open on 1/1/2007 that may have been ordered using **ISBN-10** but may need to use the newer form of the number for ongoing tracking of the order.

TEST CASES

The **ISBN** is used in records that we exchange with many different vendors and systems. In the area of Acquisitions alone, libraries deal with numerous vendors. Each system designer will have to decide how to make modifications to deal with this change. It would probably be less useful for libraries to try to specify exactly how each system should be changed than to develop a set of test cases that will allow us to test whether changes work for our systems and workflows. If you choose examples of each situation, the older **ISBN-10** title for which you might need to order an additional copy, the interim title with both **ISBN-10** and **ISBN-13**, and a hypothetical post-2006 title with **ISBN-13** only, you will have test cases to use to verify that changes will work in your ordering workflow. I think for any affected system you would want to

- Enter ISBN in order
- Enter in bib record; import records
- Produce EDI (EDIFACT or X12, not BISAC); Print PO
- Search ISBN including check for duplication
- Display ISBN
- Receive and pay for title
- Check documentation/user manuals

Notice that the first thing you should check for is whether your **EDI** format is **BISAC**. That format can no longer be used, as it will not accommodate **ISBN-13**.

The Acquisitions module is undoubtedly the most important software for which we will need to do an audit of where and when the changes will occur. We will need to insist the **ILS** vendor have a plan to deal with the change and be ready to test the changes provided to verify they work. In addition we will need to find out the plans for changes from the suppliers we use and with whom we communicate.

OTHER MODULES AND SYSTEMS

Other modules and systems used in the library will need to be examined to see if any changes are needed.

Cataloging. If the **ISBN** is used to automatically match and overlay records upon import, systems will have to recognize equivalent **ISBN-10s** and **-13s** in case an existing record bears the **ISBN-10** and an incoming duplicate record bears the **ISBN-13**. Likewise, if records are extracted and sent out for automatic matching and enhancement for full cataloging or Table of Contents records, if **ISBN** is used as

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the match there could be issues depending on how the matching is done. Input and edit as well as searching of ISBNs in this module should be checked.

Public Catalog. The ability to search by either form of ISBN must be retained. Many older bibliographies will use the ISBN-10 in the citation. A user should be able to input the search in any form and let the system normalize it as needed for the best results. Display of the ISBN should also be checked. If the system was automatically supplying hyphens, this feature could require changes.

InterLibrary Loan. A number of ILL systems allow search of a union catalog and then behind the scenes the system may automatically check your catalog to verify you don't already own the title, or it may automatically go around to a list of library catalogs to find a copy for the user. If the ISBN is being used for this search it will need to be tested to see that the multiple ISBNs currently in records and the ISBN-13 post-2006 do not prevent the system from working as efficiently as possible.

External Linking. A new feature of many catalogs is the ability to do an Open URL or other link to external sources to display book jackets and reviews or to use an institutional link resolver. Often for monographic titles the ISBN has been the best identifier to use for this type of search. Now, however, the MARC records used to provide the ISBN may contain multiple fields and in the future an older record may contain the 10-digit ISBN while the file of reviews may have the newer number. Keeping these links working will be another challenge.

against the grain people profile

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Frances McNamara

BORN & LIVED: Boston, last 20 years in Columbus, Ohio and Chicago.

EDUCATION: BA Mount Holyoke, MSLS Simmons, MA English Simmons.

FIRST JOB: Wellesley College Library.

PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES: Worked with computers in libraries at Wellesley, Mass. State Library, NELINET, OCLC, NOTIS, Ameritech Library Services, University of Chicago.

IN MY SPARE TIME I LIKE TO: Race small sailboats (Rhodes 19).

FAVORITE BOOKS: *Persuasion*.

HOW/WHERE DO I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS: For librarians, continuing to assist in the organization and navigation of published knowledge in nonprint and electronic as well as print formats. 🐼

ACTIONS

Since we are already receiving and loading records with ISBN-10 and -13 into our systems now, it is time for us to draw up a list of library processes that use the ISBN and a set of test cases of typical examples from our collections and then to identify where there are going to be problems. We need to start asking the system vendors for their plans and implementation schedules. There are two avenues to do this if the current system can-

not accommodate the changes. One is posing the question at the level of the system's user group, or to your vendor representative. The second is a specific problem report for an example that does not work. When the system vendor presents their proposed change, it is the responsibility of the customer to verify that the approach will work with real examples. 🐼

Adventures in Librarianship — Recent Developments

by Ned Kraft (Ralph J. Bunche Library, U.S. Department of State) <kraftno@state.gov>

In a recent issue of *Science*, **Jeb Cartledge** and **Surri Ray** finally confirm through carbon dating and other techniques what many of us have long suspected: that the **Nippur Codex**

is the oldest library catalog known to man. Discovered in 1998 by German tourists looking for a shortcut to the Simmuh Valley, the **Codex** has been under scientific, linguistic, and bibliographic scrutiny ever since. The *Science* article, "Nippur: Yes or No, Library or Laundry List?" (v.68, #4, pp 97-115) puts all doubts to rest.

Now called the "*Nippur Catalog*," the document lists 64 manuscripts. If there is an order to the list, it has yet to be deciphered. **Manny Seaver**, who consulted with **Cartledge** and **Ray** on semantic issues, suggested in a recent interview that the catalog may be in "spontographical" order. But when asked to explain, **Seaver** began coughing and would not respond to the question.

The style of script and the quality of the papyrus lead earlier scholars to believe that the *Nippur Catalog* is actually the result of a well known rivalry between the **Mo** family on one side of the Nippur River and the **Ma** family on the other. **Ray** and **Cartledge** don't dispute that possibility. In fact, their article states that "**Cosimo Ma** and **Maximus Mo** were known to publicly draw daggers over the issue of the size of their respective libraries...." And the document's introductory matter contains the phrase "'contus quentis im pardo Mo,' which translates roughly as 'in your face, Mo.'"

Ray and **Cartledge** will present their paper and entertain questions at the **British Library's Heretofore Auditorium**, part of the **Bombasticum Lecture Series**, on August 2nd. Although **Ms. Ray**, who will lead the discussion, expects to be "heralded by enthusiastic bibliophiles and a few hangers on," **Mr. Catledge** is not as optimistic. "They don't allow spoiled fruit in the **Heretofore**, do they? I'll be all dressed up, you see. And with my fellowship running low, the last thing I need is a pelting." 🐼