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CHAOS — “It Takes More Than a Village” to Develop a Standard

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Ann-Marie Breaux and her team of authors have done a superb job of explaining what you need to know as the **ISBN** transitions from its **10-digit** format to its **13-digit** transformation. I hope that you will take-in each article, save it in your clipping file, and share it with your colleagues and staff. It is seldom that a change as significant as this occurs in the standards domain. Consider this: this is a change that will go on globally and have an impact on every organization and company that touches information.

The **ISBN** standard, known in the standards world as **ISO 2108**, is our community's most recognizable and ubiquitous standard. When I introduce what **NISO** does to someone who is unfamiliar with standards I always use the **ISBN** as my prime example of a standard we care about. The **ISBN** makes the usefulness and value of standards real and understandable. The **ISBN** also illustrates the need for people, organizations, and a worldwide network to support standardization.

The expansion of the **ISBN** from **10-digits** to **13** although it appears to be a simple change — almost a “no-brainer,” some would say — was done deliberately and required coordination at both the national and international levels. One of my colleagues in the standards world has observed that standards like fine foods and wine are the product of careful and often laborious processes. How true! The **ISBN** is a good example of this “careful and laborious process.”

The formal part of the revision process be-

gan in 2001. But before the first “New Work Item” form was filed with the **ISO** there were years of informal discussion to lay the groundwork for the revision process. Through those discussions and meetings the key players were brought together.

The process was officially launched with a formal vote taken by the members of **Technical Committee 46** (the equivalent of **NISO** at the international level), **Subcommittee 9** on Identification and Description. “Members” in this case refers to countries (not individuals). Each member (country) of **Subcommittee 9** was required to review the scope of the work to be undertaken in the revision of the **ISBN** standard and to nominate national representatives to serve on an international working group.

In the U.S. **NISO** is responsible for selecting the delegations of national experts that will represent our needs and viewpoints. The delegation of experts that **NISO** engaged included representatives from the book and publishing industry as well as the library community. Participants in the U.S. delegation included **Richard Stark** and **Doug Cheney** (from **Barnes and Noble**); **Laurie Stark**, **Ed Ramsey**, **Lisa McCloy-Kelley** from **Random House**; **Wendell Lotz**, **Ingram**; and **Albert Simmonds**. Leading the delegation of experts was **Michael Cairns** the President of **R. R. Bowker**, the maintenance agency for the **ISBN** standard in the U.S.

Over the course of four years the **ISO's ISBN** working group held a series of multi-day meetings. **Michael Healey** (with **Nielsen Book Data** in the U.K.) chaired the working group, assisted by **Stella Griffiths** and **Jane Thacker** the secretariat of **Subcommittee 9**. Although the group met in wonderful locations, such as Milan, Rome, Berlin, and Paris I can assure you that there was no time for sightseeing. International standards meetings are drill-down events, that require preparation, full-attention while in progress (often fighting jet-lag), and a lot of follow-through afterward.

The proposed revised standard went through two-levels of balloting in the **ISO** as a **Committee Draft** and a **Draft International Standard**. Through the ballot cycles hundreds of questions and comments were submitted by the members. As the document progressed from a **Committee Draft** to a bona

fide **Draft International Standard** the text was examined and re-examined and further refined. Concurrent with the preparation of the text of the revised standard the group drafted an implementers' manual to flesh-out all of the details associated with implementing the **ISBN** standard.

The final ballot on the revised **ISBN** standard was conducted in 2004. The result was

YES...
all **APS**
journals are in
LOCKSS

15 Journals of the **American Physiological Society**
www.the-aps.org

unanimous: all twenty-three members of the **Subcommittee** supported the **DIS**. However, the working group was not able to “rest on its laurels” as accompanying the approval votes were 59 comments that required a response.

The newest edition of the **ISBN** standard, **ISO 2108**, will be published in 2005. The fact is that no one requires a copy of the standard to use the **ISBN**. What you do need is the firm understanding and global commitment that this international standard signifies. That is the significance of standards development at the international level. And that is why **ISO** standards must be the product of a careful and, at times, laborious process.

CHAOS SIDEBAR:

ISBN LINKS — You'll find information for publishers and librarians at: <http://www.niso.org/standards/resources/ISBN.html>

Also, check-out:

ISBN FAQ — <http://www.collectionscanada.ca/iso/tc46sc9/isbn.htm>

The U.S. **ISBN** Agency's Website on the **ISBN** revision: <http://www.isbn.org/standards/home/isbn/transition.asp>

Information about the **ISO** committee revising the **ISBN**: <http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/iso/tc46sc9/2108.htm>

An **FAQ** about the **ISBN** revision: <http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/iso/tc46sc9/isbn.htm>

About the **GTIN** and **Sunrise 2005**: <http://uc-council.org>

The **Book industry's** perspective on the **ISBN**: www.bisg.org/news_isbn_what.html