November 2013

Chaos/ Sick of the SICI and On to EDI

Sandra K. Paul
SKP Associates

Follow this and additional works at: http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/atg

Part of the Library and Information Science Commons

Recommended Citation
DOI: https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.1388

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact epubs@purdue.edu for additional information.
Are You Sick Of The SICI Yet?
And What About Implementing EDI?

Two areas of concern have come to the fore lately in the Book and Serials Industry System Advisory Committees (BISAC and SISAC). I'll look at both of them, in an attempt to stimulate some of you, frustrate others, and hope for some input on both.

ARE YOU SICK OF THE SICI YET?

In a recent column I pointed out some of the problems that have been created by confusing the ANSI/NISO Serial Item and Contribution Identifier (SICI) Standard with the machine-readable encoding of the item level section of that standard. The latter is known as the SISAC Bar Code Symbol. Now more confusion has arisen about SICI, particularly as they are created in anticipation of publication from publication patterns created by automated systems.

For instance, journal ABC is a semi-monthly publication. The last issue received was March 1, 1993, Volume 10, Number 3. If a library automation system were to predict the next issue expected, it would identify it as March 16, 1993, Volume 10 (unless the volume year usually changes at that point in the year, in which case that would be 11), Number 4 (or number 1, if... you get the picture). In fact, SISAC has invested a large number of hours developing a series of electronic data interchange (EDI) formats that provide for claims to be made for missing issues. Such systems would, logically, create the SICI based on this type of publication pattern prognosis.

But, the ANSI/NISO SICI is based on a serial being published in some form — print on paper or electronically are both accommodated. So, we really don’t know what the SICI of the next issue of ABC will be until it is published. Let’s say that the publisher decides for reasons only known to him/herself that the next issue will carry a cover date of March 30 — after all it is being published twice a month! You see the problem with claiming using a SICI showing the ABC ISSN, a date of March 16, 1993, Volume 10, Number 4. And you can start to see the world of library automation suddenly filled with Quasi-SICIs and Might-Have-Been SICIs. The same argument holds for very rational publishers who would like to alert libraries to articles they plan to publish in the future and allow for the purchase of pre-prints. Until the specific item in which that contribution will appear is known, the publisher cannot assign a REAL SICI to it.

So, we now have a new problem that, I hope, will find a realistic solution. We all know that the SICI is the most appropriate identifier for published information, insofar as it can be created from the bibliographic reference to the article. It was carefully crafted and we don’t want to lose its many benefits. Therefore, the answer seems to be create a PCI — a Pre-publication Contribution Identifier. If this identifier incorporates the ISSN, as the SICI does, and if it follows easy-to-understand rules, as the SICI does, and is easy to create, as the SICI is, then it’s bound to work. SISAC has just begun looking at various alternatives for such an identifier and welcomes the input of all Against the Grain readers.

WHAT ABOUT IMPLEMENTING EDI?

BISAC has a unique problem when it comes to moving to what we all think of as EDI — ANSI X12 transaction sets. Its ten year history of workable EDI formats that called primarily for communication-broadcasting-tapes-of-80-column-card-layouts-through-the-mail may not have been sophisticated, but it worked. In fact, the electronic transmission of these same formats, either through direct dial or the Association of American Publishers’ PUBNET service, is also working so well for so many of the publishers and their major customers, the incentive to move to ANSI X12 is hard to find. This is confounded by several Value Added Networks (VANS) which are offering not only store-and-forward capability, but the ability to take in the old BISAC formats, convert them to X12 for transmission and then re-format them at the other end. The problem is that at least two of these organizations have DIFFERENT interpretations of what should come in or out of their systems!

Organizations in both BISAC and SISAC put up a minor smoke screen when it was announced that X12 will be moving to EDIFACT in 1997; they said I’ll just wait till then. Since X12 formats migrate to new versions every year, the concept of waiting to get started until then is like saying I won’t buy a computer now — I won’t learn or benefit from the technology because there will be better ones in the future. The formats in use TODAY require the basic data elements for any business transaction. Those data elements won’t change over time, so we might as well start using them right now.

Which brings us to another common problem for both BISAC and SISAC — how do we get LIBRARIES to implement EDI? The base of experience tells us that more libraries have bought automated systems than developed their own. Therefore, we think that if we can convince the Integrated Library Systems (ILS) vendors to modify their systems to incorporate EDI, the libraries that use those systems will rush to implement this time and error saving technique. However, most ILS vendors have not been provided with information about the alternatives open to them. Do they have to actually create an EDI transmission and the ability to accept an EDI response within their library...
Acquiring Minds
continued from page 24

the end of this column is a bibliography of sources which may help illuminate
the problem of the paradigm.
Read a few and then ask these questions of yourself:

*** Can we reconcile Kuhn’s vision

Chaos
continued from page 32

system? Do they have to build
interfaces to the various VANs with
their mixed bag of requests? Or, can
they simply provide the basic business
data elements that work with any one
of the many off-the-shelf translation
software packages libraries can buy?

Realizing that the ILS vendors, book
wholesalers and serials subscription
agents are the key to implementing
EDI — BISAC and SISAC are holding
a hands-on, invitation-only workshop
for those folks at 2:30 p.m. on Friday,
June 25th in New Orleans. Invitations
are going out to those on our lists; if
you are in one of these categories and
don’t receive one, please call me at
212-929-1393. We hope that this frank
discussion of alternatives will provide
a better understanding of the
possibilities and expedite the
implementation of EDI in the library
community as a whole.

CONCLUSION

In the ever-chaotic world of
standards, I hope that this article
provided you with some insights into
the problems so that you may help find
the solutions. If you have ideas or
suggestions stimulated by the Chaos
described here, and want to air your
concerns publicly, send a letter to
Katina. Or, you can call me at 212-
675-7804 or fax me at 212-989-7542.
If you want to participate in a listserve
devoted to the Quasi-SICI and other
implications of publication patterns,
contact Joyce McDonough, Chair of
SISAC’s Great Expectations
Subcommittee at Internet —
jm86@cunixx.c.columbia.edu. Bitnet
— jm86@cunixx. Voice (if you have
a problem getting through) —
212-854-4764. As always, it won’t
work without your participation!
Thanks.

On The Road
continued from page 11

up and people are waiting for you to
arrive.”
Maybe I gulped. Maybe I sweated.
Maybe my voice went up an octave. I
don’t remember. What I do remember
is that then and there I had a problem.
I had to go to the meeting as scheduled
and I had no shoes. Talk about caught
between a bare foot and a library.
So what happened? What did I do?
The final result was (to my best
guess) the first ever extensive
Approval Plan Profile review done by
a salesperson wearing a blue pin-stripe
suit, white button-down shirt, burgundy
tie, blue sox, and — flip/flops. True
story. No kidding. You heard it here.

There are hundreds (nay thousands;
what? millions) of stories to be shared
by the readers of Against the Grain. If
I don’t receive any I’ll have to either
continue telling tales on myself or
resort to sharing something else.
Readers, you really don’t want that to
happen. Write me . . . .

our power of explanation has been
magnified or diminished.

Bibliography

Kuhn, Thomas.

1962. The Structure of Scientific
Revolutions. Chicago: University of
Chicago Press.

1972. The Structure of Scientific
Revolutions. 2d. ed. enl. Chicago:
University of Chicago Press.

1978. The Essential Tension:
Selected Studies in Scientific
Tradition and Change. Chicago:
University of Chicago Press.

Mastermann, Margaret.

1970. The Nature of a Paradigm,
in Criticism and the Growth of
Knowledge. Edited by Imre Lakatos
and Alan Musgrave. Cambridge:
Cambridge University Press, pp. 59-89.

Shapere, Dudley.

1971. The Paradigm Concept.

Book Pricing Update
continued from page 13

press title. A true bargain, though, must
be wanted or needed, and at most
academic libraries, these books are
neither.

If titles don’t sell, publishers cannot
afford to produce them. In the February
24, 1993, Chronicle of Higher
Education, Harald Bakken and Mischa
Richter have a cartoon depicting the
rejection of a manuscript. Says the
publisher to the hapless author,
“Basically, we feel that it’s too popular
a treatment for the university presses
and too scholarly a treatment for the
mainstream presses. Our suggestion is
that you add a little sex and violence
and try Hollywood.” Failing that,
university presses may swing back
toward the traditional scholarly
monograph, for the traditional scholarly
market.