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ing our readiness to implement ISBN-13 were under way, specifically with regard to the impact on our bibliographic systems and applications, we believed there would be sufficient time to make any necessary changes well in advance of the proposed date for full implementation (1/1/2007). Moreover, the International Organization of Standardization (ISO) working group charged with drafting the revised standard (ISO 2108) was not due to publish the final specifications until January 2005. However, in response to the publishers who wanted to implement ISBN-13 as early as 2003, and to preserve the integrity of our bibliographic data, we were compelled to respond quickly by drafting a comprehensive policy statement and developing a strategy to integrate the new format into our existing bibliographic systems and data.

January 2004

At ALA Midwinter, in San Diego, stakeholders from various divisions of the Library of Congress elected to pursue fact-finding activities, both informally and formally through their respective committees, prior to meeting as a group to formulate a strategic plan for implementation of ISBN-13. In addition, there was a NISO-sponsored conference meeting (“Size matters: Preparing for the Expanded ISBN”), scheduled to take place on Monday, January 12, 2004. From these sources, we expected to glean information on issues of importance for publishers, libraries, and bibliographic data systems.

Meanwhile, we gathered additional information on two fronts regarding:

1. Revisions that would need to be made to our bibliographic systems and software in order to provide publishers the capability to submit 13-digit ISBNs to the Library of Congress via the Cataloging In Publication program and the Pre-assigned Control Number (PCN) program, which assigns LCCNs and how long these changes would take to implement. After bibliographic systems and software experts studied the issue, it was determined that several applications would indeed need to be revised, including software to produce MARC21 records from application data in the Electronic CIP and Electronic PCN online systems. CIP data generator applications (i.e., to provide publishers with CIP data), and MARC21 record validation programs. However, the experts stated that the updates could be completed in a relatively short time.

2. The readiness of publishers to supply pairs of 13- and 10-digit ISBNs for forthcoming publications during the “interim” period from January 1, 2005 to January 1, 2007 (i.e., in advance of the full implementation date). The Library of Congress representative to the BISAC Metadata Committee of the Book Industry Study Group was asked about the topic at their monthly meeting and reported to us that several publishers were intent on phasing in 13-digit ISBNs beginning in Spring 2004. In addition, the committee requested an adjustment to the format of Cataloging-In-Publication data to conform to the International ISBN Agency guidelines (http://www.isbn-international.org/en/revision.html), which mandate that, during the interim period, the 13-digit ISBN and its 10-digit counterpart be printed on separate lines by manifestation (e.g., “hardcover,” “paperback”), for example:

ISBN-13: 978-1-873671-00-0 (hardcover)
ISBN-10: 1-873671-00-8 (hardcover)

February 2004

Stakeholders from the Library of Congress’ Bibliographic Access Divisions, including CIP and the Cataloging Policy and Support Office (CPSO); ILS Program Office; and the Network Development/MARC Standards Office met to discuss issues surrounding the proposed implementation of ISBN-13 in order to formulate a clear and timely response to our constituencies: the publishing and library communities. A consensus emerged: if publishers were ready to begin printing 13-digit ISBNs in forthcoming publications, the Library of Congress must be prepared to record the new number format as part of the descriptive cataloging process and incorporate it into the CIP data.

However, several technical questions remained to be addressed prior to implementation, including:

1. Could integrated library systems, including those used by the Library of Congress and bibliographic partner institutions (e.g., OCLC, RLG, the British Library, the Library and Archives of Canada), accommodate the 13-digit ISBN format?

The ILS Program Office and CPSO representatives held that the Library of Congress would have no problems accommodating 13-digit ISBNs, since the MARC21 020 field is of variable length and would be indexed as such.

Since we did not know whether or not the same would hold true for the diverse systems used by our partner institutions, we decided to survey each of them individually concerning the potential impact of 13-digit ISBNs on their software applications.

2. Would content designation in the MARC21 020 field need to be revised to accommodate linked pairs of ISBNs by manifestation as mandated by the IIA?

There was some discussion with regard to how the pairs of 13- and 10-digit ISBNs would be described in the MARC21 bibliographic record. Some believed that the pairs should be entered into the same 020 field delimited by two “a” subfields. Unfortunately, this would have required a lengthy process to change the MARC21 020 content designation, since the “a” subfield is currently not repeatable. In addition, this would have entailed additional revisions to our software applications. Consequently, we decided to record them in repeated 020 fields grouped by manifestation.

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