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ENCHANCING ISSN DATA AND ISSN SERVICES TO PUBLISHERS AND LIBRARIES

POBOLJŠANJE ISSN PODATAKA I ISSN USLUGA IZDAVAČIMA I BIBLIOTEKAMA

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Abstract

The ISSN International Centre, located in Paris, France, is the Registration Authority appointed by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) to implement ISO 3297, the International Standard Serial Number (ISSN) which identifies print and online serials and continuing resources all around the globe. The ISSN International Centre is also the coordinating body of the ISSN network, the organization which brings together 90 ISSN National Centres and that has been thriving for more than 40 years. In 2018, the ISSN International Centre has been involved in two key projects that will have a crucial impact on its activities, i.e. the new ISSN Portal and the revision of the ISSN standard.

Key words: ISO standards, International Standard Serial Number, serial identification, international information identifiers, linked open data technologies, services to libraries and publishers

Sažetak

Međunarodni ISSN centar, smješten u Parizu, u Francuskoj, registracijsko je tijelo koje je imenovala Međunarodna organizacija za standardizaciju (ISO) da implementira ISO 3297, međunarodni standardni serijski broj (ISSN) koji identifikuje štampane i online serijske publikacije i kontinuirane izvore širom svijeta.

Međunarodni ISSN centar također je koordinacijsko tijelo ISSN mreže, organizacije koja okuplja 90 ISSN nacionalnih centara i koje se razvija više od 40 godina. U 2018. Međunarodni ISSN centar bio je uključen u dva ključna projekta koja će imati presudan utjecaj na njegove aktivnosti, tj. novi ISSN portal i reviziju ISSN standarda.

Ključne riječi: ISO standardi, Međunarodni standardni serijski broj, identifikacija serijskih publikacija, međunarodni informacijski identifikatori, tehnologije povezanih otvorenih podataka, usluge za biblioteke i izdavače

The new ISSN Portal

In January 2018, the ISSN International Centre launched the ISSN Portal (<https://portal.issn.org>), the reference database for publishers, vendors, and librarians working with serials. The opening of this portal was the culmination of a process that had started in 2015 with the development of the new ISSN International Centre's strategy whose most ambitious objective was to share ISSN data with a wider community. A call

for tender was eventually circulated in September 2016 and the company Progilone, a French medium-sized enterprise specializing in the design and development of software solutions, started to work with the ISSN International Centre in November 2016.

In this new ISSN portal, non-registered users can now browse freely through a subset of ISSN data – including ISSN, key title, title proper, country of publication, and medium – available

under a CC-BY-NC-SA license. Logged-in subscribers have access to the complete ISSN data which holds provisional and definitive ISSN records, i.e. over 2 million records identifying serials and continuing resources comprising more than 260,000 digital serials.

Logged-in publishers have access to a specific service to request ISSN assignment to their serial publications by using their personal accounts and buying ISSN credits. Since January 2018, the ISSN International Centre has been charging a fee for ISSN assignment upon special authorization granted by ISO and according to a pricing scheme voted by its Governing Board. ISSN are assigned to publications issued by international organizations and by publishers located in countries with no ISSN National Centre and they can select in the interface the number of ISSN they need.

To free and registered users, the ISSN portal offers a cartographic search interface to find serial titles by country or city of publication. Further search options are available on subscription like basic, advanced and expert queries which combine data elements such as ISSN + title or ISSN + medium + publisher or publisher + UDC subject.

The revision of the ISSN standard

In 2018, the ISSN International Centre has also been involved with the revision of ISO 3297 – International Standard Serial Number.

In 2016, after the adoption of the new strategy that endorsed the possibility for the ISSN International Centre to charge for ISSN assignment, the latter took action towards the U.S. National Information Standards Organisation (NISO), which acts as secretariat to ISO TC46/SC9 Identification and description, to launch a ballot about a minor revision to ISO 3297 standard. The objective of this ballot was to confirm the deletion of a paragraph in the standard that stated that ISSN was assigned free of charge. The international vote was positive and the fifth version of ISO 3297 standard was consequently published by ISO in 2017. The fifth version of the standard came eventually under revision in 2018 and an ISO working group was set up to this purpose. Its convenor is the Director of the ISSN International Centre and the working group has convened monthly to discuss devel-

opment routes for the standard. Experts sitting on this group represent various stakeholders including libraries, publishers, information providers and content platforms.

In December 2017, the working group decided to launch an opinion survey so as to get feedback from users on a series of proposals. The survey was made available in 7 languages and triggered 1,491 responses, among which 800 from libraries, 400 from publishers, and 150 from scholarly societies. Survey respondents were supportive of the need for other types of publications to be identified with an ISSN but they seemed more reluctant when it came to identifying the various digital formats under which the same content is disseminated. Broadly speaking, respondents did not want ISSN to proliferate and this could explain why the ISSN-L, which groups the print and digital version of a same title, is not that well-known nor used. The findings of this survey were discussed within the working group and experts eventually agreed in October 2018 to submit a draft for ballot. The public enquiry will start in December 2018 in countries whose standardization bodies are affiliated with ISO TC46/SC9. Comments will be fed back to the working group that will resolve them before proceeding with a second ballot.

The revision process can take up to three years and it is expected that the sixth version of ISO 3297 will be ready by early 2020.

Conclusion

In 2018, the ISSN International Centre updated the ISSN Portal and promoted it widely by participating in various professional events such as the Libraries in the Digital Age Conference (Zadar, Croatia), the American Library Association Annual Conference (New Orleans, U.S.A.), and the IFLA World Library Conference (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia). The ISSN International Centre also trained colleagues from the ISSN National Centres to use the new services by organizing and recording several webinars for English-, French- and Spanish-speaking audiences.

The revision of ISO 3297 – ISSN has taken momentum and stays on track with ISO regulated deadlines. The working group will carry on its activities in 2019.

The next challenge on ISSN International Centre's agenda is the implementation of a new system for the ISSN production database that should be operational by April 2020 when the next General Assembly of ISSN Member Countries takes place in Paris. Exciting times are ahead for the ISSN Network and ISSN users!

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