

INTERNATIONAL STANDARD BOOK NUMBER

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Background

A standard book number (SBN) is a unique number given to a book to identify its publisher, the individual title, or editor of it, if there is more than one, or a volume of a multi-volumed book. The purpose of this numbering system is to coordinate and standardize nationally and internationally, the use of a Unique Code number for book. As a matter of fact individual publishers had been making use of this idea and had introduced a numbering system of their own. In order to develop a standardized system, a national book numbering system was thought of by the British and the American book trade for their respective countries in the later part of 1960. The British publisher W H Smith, took the initiative and sought the assistance of Prof. F G Foster, then at the London School of Economics, to find out the feasibility of introducing such a system. Thus, the System of Standard and Book Number originated to deal more effectively with the book trade, particularly, in the context of the computer being utilised in the various operations. Even for manual operations, either in book trade or in libraries it is apparent that the use of such numbers greatly simplify billing, inventory control, warehouse management, royalty accounting, etc.

In 1967, Great Britain developed its system of Book Numbering followed by the United States in 1968. In the subsequent years, standard book numbering was adopted by Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Netherlands, New Zealand and Norway. The Soviet Union was also interested in this. Thus with the introduction of national standard book numbering by many countries the need for an International Standard was felt. This was discussed at the eleventh plenary meeting of the ISO/TC/46 1968. The recommendations of

the special working group constituted for this purpose, were approved at the twelfth plenary sessions of the ISO/TC/46 in 1969.

Construction of an International Standard Book Number (ISBN)

An ISBN consists of 10 digits made up of the following components.

1. Group identifier (national, geographical, language or other convenient group.)
2. Publisher identifier.
3. Title identifier.
4. Check digit.

Each of the components are separated by a Space or hyphen preceded by the letters ISBN. For example:

ISBN 0 356 03172 1 Cloth bound edition.

ISBN 0 356 03046 6 Paper " "

1. Group Identifier : Group Identifier will be allocated by an International Standard Book Numbering Agency. It will vary in length from group to group according to the title output of the group concerned.

2. Publisher Identifier: The publisher identifier will be allocated by the National Standard Book Numbering Agency of a country and will vary in length from publisher to publisher according to the title output of the publisher concerned.

3. Title Identifier: The length of the title identifier will be determined by the length

of the group and publisher identifiers which precede it.

4. Check Digit: The check digit which is the fourth component is calculated on a modulus 11 with weights 10-2, using X in lieu

of 10 where 10 would occur as a check digit. The function of the check digit is to guard against errors resulting from incorrect data transcription. As an example the procedure for the calculation of check digit is given below.

	Publisher	Title number
1. Write the digits of the basic number	0 8 5 1 5 7	1 1 8
2. Write the constant weights associated with each position of the basic book number	10 9 8 7 6 5	4 3 2
3. Multiply each digit by its associated weight	0 72 40 7 30 35	4 3 16
4. Add the product of the multiplications	$0+72+40+7+30+35+4+3+16 = 207$	
5. Divide the sum by modulus 11 to find the remainder	$207 \div 11 = 18$ plus a remainder of 9	
6. Subtract the remainder from modulus 11 to find the required digit	$11 - 9 = 2$	
7. Append the check digit to make the standard ten-digit ISBN	0 8 5 1 5 7	1 1 8 2

Advantages of the Standard Book Numbers

Advantages of ISBN are several. The libraries, booksellers and publishers will have the benefit of developing a system to deal effectively with their respective responsibilities.

Libraries

For the librarian the immediate advantage is in the ordering work. As the ISBN

becomes very much part of a book, as the name of the author and title of a book, the ordering procedure could be very much simplified without any loss of efficiency. In fact ISBN will increase speed and will result in better service to the clientele.

In centralised cataloguing systems which include a supply of printed catalogue cards, ISBN would naturally be used for obtaining the cards by the libraries. As against the LC numbers which presently do not identify the

different editions of the same title, the ISBN would uniquely represent an item and therefore will have an edge over LC numbers. The MARC Projects are utilising the ISBN very successfully. In countries where computers have been used by booksellers, publishers and libraries, it is possible to envisage far reaching changes and improvements in the ordering processes of books. The booksellers' computer could be linked to computers of the publishers and libraries through the ISBN without the need of putting the order on paper. Standard machine readable forms could be developed to save a great deal of time for all concerned, resulting in much faster and more efficient service to the libraries. ISBN system has great potentialities in Inter Library loan schemes especially in a computer based system. All essential details about items for inter library loan could be programmed into the computer memory and retrieved by the ISBN.

Booksellers

For the booksellers the ISBN offers a scheme for arranging their stock for easy and efficient supply of items when ordered. Those who are using Telex or other telecommunication systems for ordering their stock the ISBN will increase the speed with which such orders can be transmitted.

Publishers

For the publishers the new numbering system provides the basis for efficient procedures in stock control order fulfillment, book keeping and sales analysis.

In computerised systems both the billing and accounting procedure could be very effectively and speedily handled by this new system.

Organisation and Control

An International agency will be required for the allocation and control of group identifiers and also for ensuring proper application of this system. The functions of such an agency would be

"1. To ensure the definition of groups: Where a proposal arises for a number of countries or other convenient publishing groups to have the same identifier, or the same block of

identifiers (i. e. a composite group such as the Anglo/American group), the International Agency will be required to endorse the definition of the group, to recognize the appropriate group agency, and to put this formally on record.

2. To allocate identifiers to groups: In consultation with the group concerned, and in accordance with the guidelines set out by ISO, the International Agency will allocate identifiers to groups. It will maintain records of allocated group identifiers, which it will communicate to all interested bodies, such as the group agencies.

3. To advise groups on the setting up and functioning of group agencies: The International Agency will provide advice to groups on the setting up and functioning of their own agencies, drawing upon the experience of existing agencies.

4. To advise group agencies on the allocation of publisher identifiers: Once an identifier has been assigned to a group, it then becomes the responsibility of the group agency to make arrangements for allocating publisher identifiers to publishers within the group. The desirable range of identifiers will vary from group to group. The International Agency may be required to advise on the general principles involved in calculating the ranges and assigning identifiers according to the title output of the publishers concerned.

5. Generally to promote the world-wide use of the system: The International Agency will produce and make available a definitive document on the system and generally provide promotional material. In addition it will take active measures to ensure that the system is made known in all countries.

6. To supervise the use of the system: The International Agency will be responsible for ensuring that the system is used correctly, and that any deviation from it is reported to all those likely to be affected [2]."

The International organisations such Unesco and the other sister organizations have accepted responsibilities to assign ISBN to their publications.

National Level

The responsibilities of allocation of group and title identifiers will rest with the National Standard Book Numbering Agency of a country. In the United Kingdom the Standard Book Numbering Agency Ltd., London has this responsibility. The Standard Book Numbering Agency, R R Bowker Co., New York is responsible for allocation of SBN's for the United States. In Australia the National Library has been operating as the Australian Standard Book Numbering Agency by allocating the SBN's to Australian books. In other countries, which have adopted the ISBN appropriate bodies have been formed to take up this responsibility.

International Standard Serial Number

An interesting and important development is reported in Bowker's News about the preparation for developing an International Standard Serial Number (ISSN) for periodicals. The International Standards Organisation have approved the implementation of ISSN. In the United States the Standard Book Numbering Agency has begun work on assigning ISSN's to 70,000 international periodicals, representing 45,000 publishers. The 3rd volume of the Ulrich periodicals directory entitled Irregular Serials' and Annuals to be brought out in 1972 will contain a combined A-Z index with ISSN for every entry in Volumes I, II and III of the directory. Publishers will be required to print the ISSN on the cover page of each issue.

Emery Koltay the present Director of the American Standard Book Numbering Agency has stated that the ISSN will do for serials what ISBN's do for books [5]. The ISSN will provide the serials publisher, the subscription agency and the librarian, a tool for communicating basic information with a minimum of error [5]. The ISSN will greatly aid in ordering, shipping, issue claiming, and billing. The cataloguing of serial publications will be much facilitated and circulation and inter library loan system will be much better organised. This system has far reaching implications in the present context of the activities at coordination by the UNISIST.

Indian Scene

The implications for India, are to link ourselves with the international trend in the

system of book numbering. Those publishers predominantly producing books in the English language, who have their branches in the English speaking countries have already fallen in line with the international trend. For example;

Allied Publishers, Bombay, Delhi, London

Asia, Publishing House, Bombay, London.

VIKAS Publications, Delhi, Bombay, London.

To take care of publications brought out by

1. Private publishers producing books only in English and not having any branch outside the country;
2. Private publishers bringing out books only in the Modern Indian languages;
3. The Government including all autonomous and public sector organisations, (e.g.) National Book Trust, publishing in both Modern Indian languages and in English, a National Standard Book Numbering Agency will have to be formed.

The functions of this National Body will be to allocate the Group identifier (language in this case) in collaboration with the International Standard Book Agency i.e. ISO and the SBN's for the country. The allocation of various identifiers forming part of SBN will have to be done in accordance with the prescribed method developed by the International Agency. The allocation will depend on the titles published by each publisher in the country.

The National Standard Numbering Agency of each country will give publicity through normal trade communication media, the publisher's identifiers, allocated to the publishers in the country. In the United States Publishers' Weekly and Forthcoming Books will carry the publishers identifiers for U S publishers. Similar publicity of publishers identifiers for the Indian publishers will have to be given through suitable trade channels like, Indian Book Industry, a periodical brought out by Indian Publishers and Book-sellers' Association and the Indian National Bibliography.

All the book trade catalogues, national bibliographies, book announcements, library catalogues, etc. will widely publicize the ISBN to give adequate currency and usage.

It is perhaps appropriate that the Indian Standards Institution should organize a meeting inviting representatives from the Federation of Booksellers and Publishers Association of India, Indian National Bibliography, Library Associations in India, National Book Trust, Manager of Publications, Government of India, INSDOC and such other organisations to discuss the feasibility of developing national standard book numbers for books published in the modern Indian languages and English and also finding a suitable agency for the purpose of allocation and control of SBN's

It is also necessary to bring out a standard on SBN for the guidance of publishers. This may be taken up by the Documentation Sub-Committee of the Indian Standards Institution.

In the present context of international cooperation and coordination for communication of information initiated by UNISIST and the UNESCO declaring 1972 as an International Book Year, no effort should be spared to participate in such undertakings which would promote the objectives of the World Organisations.

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