



ISSN is for Serials

Serials Defined

Serials are print or non-print publications issued in successive parts, usually bearing issue numbers and/or dates. A serial is expected to continue indefinitely. Serials include magazines, newspapers, annuals (such as reports, yearbooks, and directories), journals, memoirs, proceedings, transactions of societies, and monographic series. Also eligible for ISSN are those publications issued in successive parts which bear numbering and also bear other characteristics of serials but whose duration is limited, e.g., the newsletter of an event.

International Standard Serial Numbering

The various and constant changes to which serials are subject, combined with the large growth in the world's publishing output in the 1970's, prompted the development of a standard (now ISO 3297-2007; ANSI/NISO Z39.9-1992) for the identification of serials: the International Standard Serial Number (ISSN).

A single ISSN uniquely identifies a title regardless of language or country in which published, without the burden of a complex bibliographic description. The ISSN itself has no significance other than the unique identification of a serial.

An ISSN is eight digits long and is always displayed this way: ISSN 1234-5679. The first seven digits serve as the title number and the eighth is a check digit which provides an efficient means for discovering transcription errors. The system used for calculating the check digit sometimes requires a check number of 10, in which case, to prevent a nine-digit ISSN, the roman numeral "X" is substituted.

For each serial with an ISSN there is a corresponding "key title"—a unique form of the title established at the time of ISSN assignment. The key title provides a benchmark which serves to regulate the assignment of ISSN: if the key title of a serial changes in a way defined by the ISSN Network as "major," a new ISSN must be assigned.

Administration of ISSN

The coordination of the ISSN is international, and ISSN centers are located in over 80 countries of the world. Registration is initiated at the ISSN Center of the country where the serial is published. The U.S. ISSN Center within the Library of Congress is responsible for assigning ISSN to serials published in the United States and promoting use of the ISSN. The ISSN International Centre located in Paris coordinates the ISSN Network, including publication of the ISSN Manual, which contains rules for the scope and assignment of ISSN, for displaying ISSN, and for determining when a new ISSN is needed.

Advantages of Use

The ISSN should be as basic a part of a serial as the title. The ISSN can be thought of as the “social security number of the serials world,” providing unique identification of titles that can often be the same as, or similar to other titles. However, just as your social security number does not provide you with any exclusive rights to your name, so, too, the ISSN does not confer any exclusive rights to a title. The advantages of using the ISSN are abundant and the more the number is used the more benefits will accrue.

1. ISSN provides a useful and economical method of communication throughout the serials chain of trade, making ordering and distribution systems faster and more efficient.
2. The ISSN results in accurate citing of serials by scholars, researchers, abstracters, and librarians.
3. ISSN is used in libraries in multiple ways, including searching databases, identifying titles, ordering (especially in electronic order systems), check-in, and claiming of serials.
4. As a standard numeric identification code, the ISSN is widely used in automated systems for database update and linkage, retrieval, file matching, and transmittal of data.
5. ISSN is a key component of OpenURL systems that connect library users to the article content to which their institution subscribes.
6. ISSN is a key identifier in library ERMS (Electronic Resource Management Systems) used to manage subscriptions and access to online content.
7. ISSN simplifies interlibrary loan systems and union catalog reporting and listing.
8. The U.S. Postal Service uses the ISSN to identify certain publications mailed at periodicals rates.
9. The ISSN is an integral component of the journal article citation used to monitor payments to the Copyright Clearance Center Inc.
10. ISSN is a component of the EAN and SISAC bar codes.
11. All ISSN registrations are maintained in an international data base (the ISSN Register) that is made available via the ISSN Portal and other products described on the web site of the ISSN International Centre: www.issn.org.

How to Obtain ISSN

Instructions for U.S. Publishers (for serials published outside the U.S, see the ISSN International Centre web site: www.issn.org):

A U.S. ISSN application form can be found on the U.S. ISSN Center's web site: www.loc.gov/issn. Application forms must be accompanied by a representation of the publication: a sample issue, mock-up, surrogate, or URL for the publication, depending on the format and publication status as described below. ISSN can be assigned prior to the publication of the first issue of the serial (prepublication) or after issues have been published.

Except for microform reproductions, separate ISSN are generally required for serials issued in different physical formats (e.g., print, CD-ROM, online, etc.). Separate ISSN are also required for serials issued in different language, geographic, or audience editions. Please complete a separate application form for each edition and note the other editions in the "Additional information, comments, questions" section of the application form.

The Application Package

In addition to the application form, the follow materials are needed, depending on the publication status (prepublication or published) and format (print, online, etc.):

- **Published serials in print or in other tangible form such as CD-ROM:** Provide a complete issue whenever possible; also acceptable are photocopies or screen shots of the cover, title page, masthead, and other pages showing publishing information. Complete issues result in fuller and more accurate catalog records, and only complete issues are considered for inclusion in the Library's permanent collections.
- **Published online serials:** Provide a URL where-- at a minimum-- the title, table of contents, and publishing information can be accessed freely. If this information is not freely accessible, provide screen shots showing the above information or provide a temporary password where staff can view this information.
- **Prepublication (no issues yet published) serials in all formats:** provide drafts or mock-ups of the cover, title page, masthead, title screen (if applicable) or other pages or screens showing publishing information for forthcoming serials. For online serials, provide access to an online page where draft information can be viewed if such a page exists. If this is not possible, provide some indication of how the title and publishing information will appear online. Sample issues of serials in tangible form, or URLs for online serials are required after publication.
- **Completion of registration for prepublication ISSN:** after publication of the first issue, provide sample issues of serials in tangible formats (print, CD-ROM, etc) or provide a URL where the serial can be accessed online as described above for published online serials.

Sending the Application Package:

- **Prepublication requests and all requests for online serials:** email or fax the application form, together with the requested draft, mock-up, or URL. Requests can also be sent by post or private carrier. In the interest of conserving resources and access to our fax machine, please limit faxes to 5 pages.
- **Postpublication requests and completion of registration for prepublication ISSN for tangible (print, CD-ROM, etc.) formats:** send requested materials by post or private carrier. In cases where this is not possible, send a representation as described above by fax or as an email attachment, keeping in mind that the resulting catalog record may not be as complete as it would be if a full issue were sent, and that the publication will not be considered for inclusion in the Library's permanent collections. In the interest of conserving resources and access to our fax machine, please limit faxes to 5 pages.

Display of ISSN

To fulfill its purpose, the ISSN should be displayed prominently on every issue, preferably in the top right corner of the cover of printed serials and on the home page, title screen, or other prominent locations for non-print serials. It is acceptable, however, for the number to appear elsewhere on the publication (usually in the masthead area). Various user groups--particularly the U.S. Postal Service--have specific printing regulations which must be adhered to.

If the serial has an International Standard Book Number (ISBN) for the individual volumes within a series, in addition to the ISSN for the series as a whole, the two numbers should appear together, each with its own prefix. The ISSN should be printed right after the title of the series, both in books and in advertising pieces.

It is appropriate for both ISBN and ISSN to be assigned to certain other types of publications, most notably annuals and other directories or reference publications. The ISBN identifies the particular year or edition, the ISSN identifies the ongoing serial.

ISSN should appear on publisher's advertisements (both direct mail and space ads) and catalogs, on the serials themselves, and in all other places where details of books and serials normally appear.

Changes Affecting ISSN

When the title of a serial changes, a new ISSN is generally required. The earlier ISSN remains valid, however, because it is a permanent attribute of the serial when it was issued under the earlier title. To avoid printing an incorrect ISSN, publishers should apply for a new ISSN in advance of a planned title change, especially any change affecting the cover (which is often the source of the key title). In case of any doubt as to whether a new ISSN is required, please contact the ISSN Publisher Liaison Section. Other situations where a new ISSN is needed are addition of a new format (e.g., adding

an online version); changing format (e.g., replacing a print version with an online version); adding a new language, geographic, or audience edition. Changes in publisher, place, or frequency do not require new ISSN.

Careful display and use of the ISSN will help the ISSN to fulfill its role in the world-wide effort to register and identify serials.

Contact Information

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