Short Communication

Significance of ISSN and ISBN in Publications.

R. A. Achalare*, S. V. Patil, S. S. Patil
Ashokrao Mane College of Pharmacy, Peth-Vadgaon, Tal. Hatkanangale, Dist. Kolhapur-416112, Maharashtra, India.
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Abstract

"ISSN" is “International Standard Serial Number” and “ISBN” is “International Standard Book Number". One of the main differences between the ISBN and ISSN is that the former one identifies the publisher whereas the latter one does not identify the publisher. International Standard Book Number is given for monographs or books whereas International Standard Serial number is given to a series of monographs or books. In the case of the ISSN, it is only optional, which means that the publisher is not legally bound to use it. On the other hand, the ISBN is obligatory if the book falls under the ISBN application. In simple words, the ISBN is assigned for a single or separate book, and ISSN is assigned for a series of books. When ISBN identifies the specific volume or issue, the ISSN only identifies the series of the volume or issue.


1. Introduction

An ISSN is an international standard serial number which is unique international identifier for serial publications. ISSN are assigned since the 1970s and universally accepted within the print publishing world as a means of identifying the serials. Consequently, and from the end of the 1990s, ISSN are also assigned to electronic serials (online, CD-ROM, DVD etc.) and to electronic “ongoing integrating resources” like websites and databases. The ISSN is an eight-digit number which identifies periodical publications as such including electronic serials. The ISSN is a numeric code which is used as an identifier. The ISSN text the form of acronym ISSN followed by two groups of four digits separated by a hyphen. The eight character is a control digit calculated according to a modulo eleven algorithm on the basis of this seven preceding digits. This eighth control character may be an “X” if the result of the computing is equal to “10”, in order to avoid any ambiguity (figure 1). The ISSN is linked to a standardized form of the title of the identified serial, known as the “key title”, which repeats the title of the publication, qualifying it with additional elements in order to distinguish it from other publications having identical titles. If the title of the publication changes in any significant way, a new ISSN must be assigned in order to correspond to this new form of title. To avoid any confusion, a serial publication whose title is modified several times in the course of its existences will be assigned each time a new ISSN, thus allowing precise identification of each form of the title. In fact it is then considered that they are different publications even if there is a logical link between them. Contrary to other types of publications, the world of serial publications is particularly changeable and complex. The life time of the title may be extremely short. Thus as many publications may be a part of the complex set of relationship which had necessitated the introduction of the ISSN.1

*Corresponding author.
E-mail address: rachalare@gmail.com
(R.A. Achalare)
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Significance of ISSN

There is no any connection between the ISSN and the copyright. The procedure of the both is different with different significance as the later is an identifier of serial publications. ISSN is generally printed in prominent place, such as at the top right hand corner of the front cover, near the title on every issue. The number of copies produced is not relevant to the ISSN assignment. Publications that are intended to be continued indefinitely on either a regular or irregular basis require an ISSN for example Annual reports, Quarterly reports, Biannual reports, Bulletins, Newsletters, Journals, proceedings etc. The ISSN identifies the title of the serial publications. As long as the title remains the same you can use the name ISSN. There will be change in ISSN only if name is changed of the publication. One ISSN is assigned to all internet formats and qualified with 'online'. However, other types of electronic formats, such as DVD’s and CD-ROM’s are assigned their own ISSN. Separate ISSN is required for the same publication in different language; means one ISSN to each language. There is no expiry date for ISSN. If title is changed it is mandatory to inform ISSN office for the same. Also it is applicable for the case if you are not going to publish the upcoming issues.2

How to get ISSN

ISSN numbers can be issued in advance of publication via the application form which can be completed and sent online, or print and faxed / posted to the ISSN international authority for international publication and ISSN national authority of the respective country. The website for all details is http://www.issn.org. The form is also available in PDF format which can be emailed to the concerned authority. It is not possible to assign ISSN over the telephone. The basic information required is,

1. Proposed title (working titles / project titles are not sufficient)
2. Frequency of publication
3. Proposed start date (month / year)
4. Publisher name and address.

The Centre will also need to receive a copy of the first issue on publication in order to validate the records. This copy will be passed through to the Legal Deposit Office and subsequent issues can be sent directly to them. In the case of ISSN requests made for existing serials, authority will need to receive an application form completed with the information as above, together with,

1. For print publications, a copy of a recent issue;
2. For on-line journals, either the URL or any passwords required (as requested on the form); or a printout of the title screen, and any screens giving publisher information (company name and the place of publication).
3. For CD-ROM or diskette journals, a sample copy or a printout of the title screen together with copies of the labelling, documentation and packaging.3

Sample ISSN numbers of the publications

ISSN 0027-9633 (online)
ISSN 0027-9634 (print)

ISBN (International Standard Book Number)

Introduction

In 1965, W. H. Smith (the largest single book retailer in Great Britain) announced its plans to move to a computerized warehouse in 1967 and wanted a standard numbering system for books it carried. They hired consultants to work on behalf of their interest, the British Publishers Association’s Distribution and Methods Committee and other experts in the U.K. book trade. They devised the Standard Book Numbering (SBN) system in 1966 and it was implemented in 1967. At the same time, the
International Organization for Standardization (ISO) Technical Committee on Documentation (TC 46) set up a working party to investigate the possibility of adapting the British SBN for international use. A meeting was held in London in 1968 with representatives from Denmark, France, Germany, Eire, Netherlands, Norway, United Kingdom, United States of America and an observer from UNESCO. Other countries contributed written suggestions and expressions of interest. A report of the meeting was circulated to all ISO member countries. Comments on this report and subsequent proposals were considered at meetings of the working party held in Berlin and Stockholm in 1969. As a result of the thinking at all of these meetings, the International Standard Book Number (ISBN) was approved as an ISO standard in 1970, and became ISO 2108. That original standard has been revised as book and book-like content appeared in new forms of media, but the basic structure of the ISBN as defined in that standard has not changed and is in use today in more than 150 countries. Today the ISBN Agencies around the world are administered by the International ISBN Agency, located in London, UK.

The International Standard Book Number (ISBN) is a 13-digit number that uniquely identifies books and book-like products published internationally. The purpose of the ISBN is to establish and identify one title or edition of a title from one specific publisher and is unique to that edition, allowing for more efficient marketing of products by booksellers, libraries, universities, wholesalers and distributors. Every ISBN consists of thirteen digits and whenever it is printed it is preceded by the letters ISBN. The thirteen-digit number is divided into four parts of variable length, each part separated by a hyphen (figure 2). The four parts of an ISBN are as follows,

1. Group or country identifier which identifies a national or geographic grouping of publishers;
2. Publisher identifier which identifies a particular publisher within a group;
3. Title identifier which identifies a particular title or edition of a title;
4. Check digit is the single digit at the end of the ISBN which validates the ISBN.

Significance of ISBN
The ISBN is a unique international identifier for monographic publications assigning a number replaces the handling of long bibliographic descriptive records, thereby saving time and staff costs and reducing copying errors. Correct use of the ISBN allows different product forms and editions of a book, whether printed or digital, to be clearly differentiated, ensuring that customers receive the version that they require. The ISBN facilitates compilation and updating of book-trade directories and bibliographic databases, such as catalogues of books-in-print. Information on available books can be found easily. Ordering and distribution of books is mainly executed by ISBN. This is a fast and efficient method which avoids mistakes. The ISBN is machine-readable in the form of a 13-digit EAN-13 bar code. The ISBN is required for the running of electronic point-of-sale systems in bookshops. Many publishing and supply chain systems are based on ISBN. The accumulation of sales data is done by the ISBN. This enables the varying successes of different product forms and editions of publications to be monitored, as well as enabling comparisons between different subject areas and even different publishing houses. The national lending right in some countries is based on the ISBN. Such schemes enable authors and illustrators to receive payments proportionate to the number of times that their books are lent out by public libraries.

Fig. 2. ISBN Number.

How to get ISBN
ISBN numbers issued by ISBN international authority for international publication and ISBN national authority of the respective country in advance of publication via the application form
which can be completed and sent online, or print and faxed / posted to the ISBN international authority for international publication and ISBN national authority of the respective country. The website for all details is http://www.isbn-international.org. The form is also available in PDF format which can be emailed to the concerned authority. It is not possible to assign ISSN over the telephone. The basic information required is,
1. Proposed title (working titles / project titles are not sufficient);
2. Proposed start date (month / year);
3. Publisher name and address.\(^6\)

**Sample ISBN numbers as examples**
- ISBN 978-951-45-9694-0 (paperback)
- ISBN 978-951-45-9695-7 (PDF)

**Difference between ISSN and ISBN**

The ISSN identifies the title of a serial and stays the same from issue to issue unless the title changes, at which point a new ISSN needs to be assigned. The ISBN (International Standard Book Number) represents a single volume such as a novel, a monograph, a specific title within a monographic series or a specific issue of an annual or yearbook. ISBN is issued by the UK ISBN Agency. The two systems are complementary and can be used together on the same publication. On an annual, for example, the ISBN will identify a specific volume (e.g. 1996 edition, 1997 edition) whilst the ISSN identifies the title and stays the same each year. ISBN should not be assigned to specific issues of periodicals and should not usually be assigned to any title published more frequently than once a year. A fundamental difference between the two systems / numbers is that the stem of the ISBN identifies the publisher whereas the ISSN contains no publisher identifier. The ISSN is a purely arbitrary number that remains linked to the serial even when the responsibility for the serial passes from one publisher to another.\(^6\)

**Conclusion**

An ISSN is an international standard serial number which is unique international identifier for serial publications. Publications that are intended to be continued indefinitely on either a regular or irregular basis require an ISSN for example Annual reports, Quarterly reports, Biannual reports, Bulletins, Newsletters, Journals, proceedings etc. The International Standard Book Number (ISBN) is a 13-digit number that uniquely identifies books and book-like products published internationally. The ISBN is assigned for a single or separate book, and ISSN is assigned for a series of books.

**References**

1. ISSN International Centre "Cataloging Part", ISSN Manual, ISSN International Centre, (2012).
2. ISSN in Canada, Library and Archives Canada, (2004).

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