

# 13-DIGIT ISBN it's official!

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(This is an updated version of the article that appeared in the *CL*, January/February 2005).

The International Standard Book Number (ISBN) has been used since the 1970s as a means of uniquely identifying books. However, as the stock of 10-digit ISBNs has been rapidly diminishing due to the increase in publishing worldwide, it was decided internationally to start using ISBNs consisting of thirteen digits. The ISBN-13 has become the only official ISBN as from 1 January 2007. This 13-digit ISBN differs from the old 10-digit ISBN in that it has a prefix of 978 and a different check digit at the end of the number in most cases. Once the prefix 978 has been used up, the new prefix will be 979. It should be noted, however, that 13-digit ISBNs with the '979' prefix cannot be converted to ten-digit ISBNs because they have no ten-digit equivalent.

Well before 2007, some publishers already started preparing for the changeover to ISBN-13, by including both the 10- and 13-digit ISBNs on their books. However, after 1 January 2007, publishers had to delete the 10-digit ISBNs from reprints, and all new books published will only have a 13-digit ISBN. All publishers will have to convert any unused 10-digit ISBNs to 13-digit ISBNs before these numbers can be allocated to new books.

## ISBN Conversion

From 23-31 December 2006, cataloguers were not able to work on bibliographic records on PALS, in order that the once-off ISBN conversion program could be run.

The conversion program had to cater for two cases:

Firstly, according to international practice, new books catalogued on PALS in 2005-2006 had been input with the 10-digit ISBN in the 020 \$a field and the ISBN-13 temporarily in the 024 \$a field (first indicator 3, second indicator blank). The ISBN conversion program then just moved these existing ISBN-13s to the first 020 \$a field, and left the ISBN-10 in the 020 \$a field below.

In the second case (mainly older book-stock), if no ISBN-13 existed on bibliographic records, the conversion program identified ISBNs that consisted of 10 digits in the 020 \$a field and used these to generate ISBN-13s (that is, all catalogue records that had a 10-digit ISBN will now have a 13-digit ISBN as well; these appear in two separate 020 fields, with the ISBN-13 on top and the original ISBN-10 below).

However, if ISBNs had for instance been originally incorrectly typed in the 020 \$a field with less than 10 digits, or if words such as a publisher's name had been typed



in the 020 \$a field instead of into the correct 260 MARC field, then these incorrect 020 fields were ignored in the ISBN conversion process. Similarly, 020 \$z (invalid ISBNs) were unaffected by the conversion process.

Once the programmatic conversion of ISBNs was finished, the PALS database was re-indexed to enable ISBN (IS) searches to be done on either 10- or 13-digit ISBNs as from the start of 2007.

## Cataloguing as from 2007

As from 1 January 2007, cataloguing could again be done on PALS, using the ISBN as it appears on the book in hand. If the book being catalogued has only a 13-digit ISBN, then only this one ISBN is to be entered in the 020 field (that is, a 10-digit ISBN does not need to be added as well).

Example:

020 9781841012469 (pbk.) : \$c R84.00



If the new book has both a 10- and 13-digit ISBN, these ISBNs should be entered in **two separate 020 fields**, with the **13-digit ISBN on top** and the **10-digit ISBN below** this. The 024 MARC field should no longer be used.

Example:

020 9780712666503 (pbk.) : \$c R81.60

020 0712666508 (pbk.)



If an **old** book being catalogued only has a 10-digit ISBN, then the Convert ISBN (CISB) command should be used to obtain the equivalent 13-digit ISBN. These ISBNs should be entered in **two separate 020 fields**, with the **13-digit ISBN on top** and the **10-digit ISBN below** this.

Example:

020 9780297846161 : \$c R165.00

020 0297846167

## Other PALS modules from 2007

Changes also had to be made to the PALSTAC program (Acquisitions (ACQ) and Inter-Library-Loan (ILL) modules) to accommodate the extra ISBN digits. (The ISBN field on the ACQ record and ILL borrowing record had previously been a fixed length that allowed for a maximum of 10 digits). The new version of PALSTAC had to be installed by all PALS Acquisitions and ILL users as from 1 January 2007.

The only problem encountered thus far is in the ACQ module where the ISBN is no longer automatically pulled over from the bibliographic record when loading an Acquisition record. This will impact on the Ordering Section as they have to enter the ISBN manually, which could lead to errors as there is no means of verifying the check digit of the ISBN. Hopefully this can be sorted out in the near future.

In conclusion, preparing for the changeover to ISBN-13 has been an ongoing saga for the past three years. The changeover appears to have gone relatively smoothly, but if there are any cataloguing queries, please contact the Cataloguing Section at the Western Cape Provincial Library Service, telephone (021) 483-2418. Bradley Meyer can be contacted for any ILL queries at (021) 483-2309.

## References

[www.oclc.org/support/documentation/worldcat/tb/253](http://www.oclc.org/support/documentation/worldcat/tb/253)

**OCLC Technical Bulletin** 253: ISBN and OCLC number changes.

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