

Janifer Gatenby

Janifer Gatenby is Program manager at OCLC in the Leiden office in the Netherlands where her main project is the ISNI database and system. She has been working in library automation since the late 1970s and has been working on standards since 1993 (SRU, openURL Request Transfer Message, ISO Holdings, ISO data elements, ISNI, ISCI, Z30.50 among others).

Title: ISNI International Standard Name Identifier; an international bridge identifier across multiple domains

Type of presentation proposed: Impact Contribution

Summary:

Identifiers for creators are the foundation stones of linking data and are crucial for works; maximizing their visibility, their understanding and relevance, quality assessment, conservation, sharing, and rights management. The ISNI-IA is a not for profit consortium registered in London and its database and system is managed in the Netherlands. ISNI complies with the EU commission's recommendations on authoritative, unique, persistent and trustful identifiers. It is already employed by the EU ARROW project and being rapidly adopted by large information networks. The presentation examines the database coverage and system components, the cross-domain benefits and strategic challenges, and outlines current projects to maximize inclusion, diffusion and quality.

Extended Abstract:

Identifiers are the foundation stones of linking data on the web. Identifiers for creators are crucial for works; maximizing their visibility, their understanding and relevance, quality assessment, conservation, sharing and rights management. The ISNI database started in November 2011 and includes currently more than 7 million assigned identities (and a further 10 million provisional records). It now serves as a freely re-usable, international cross domain identifier.

ISNI (ISO 27729) is an ISO certified global standard for identifying the millions of contributors to creative works and those active in their distribution, including writers, artists, creators, performers, researchers, producers, publishers, aggregators, and more. It is part of a family of international standard identifiers that includes identifiers of works, recordings, products and right holders in all repertoires, e.g. DOI, ISAN, ISBN, ISRC, ISSN, ISTC, and ISWC.

ISNI can be assigned to all individuals and organisations that create, perform, produce, manage, distribute or feature in creative content including natural, legal, or fictional identities.

Inter alia, ISNI is serving the following key purposes:

1. Act as a bridge-identifier across multiple domains, including but not limited to (in no specific sequence) academic institutions, archives, encyclopaedias, libraries, museums, research organisations, rights management organisations, trade publishers and aggregators, and emerging web-based services
2. Facilitate reliable royalty management services across all repertoires and throughout the value chain.
3. Allow for more accurate, complete and efficient discovery services spanning all domains (e.g. more by this author, more about this performer)
4. Provide an infrastructure for academics and researchers to establish their identity for the purpose of reputation management and communication of their output.
5. Provide an infrastructure for organization identification to smooth and improve the functioning of the information supply chain.

In 2010, the ISNI International agency (ISNI-IA) was formed to administer ISNI, as a cross domain public private partnership bringing together international organizations in long standing need of identifying creators and other contributors. Its members are the CENL, IFRRO, CISAC, SCAPR, OCLC and ProQuest. Early on, it was realised that a central database would be necessary for the maintenance of ISNI. ISNI, as a collocating identifier, cannot be administered in the same way as a resource identifier such as ISBN or DOI that is assigned at the point of publication by a publisher from an allocated batch of identifiers. ISNI would be launched by bringing together name authority records from libraries, principally from VIAF and files from various other sources with the idea to generate ISNIs, control and maintain them centrally, and then diffuse them as freely and widely as possible. Different processes and rules were devised to apply to online requests and batch file loading.

Linking across domains brings advantages but also poses challenges. The main advantages of establishing links among data from independent sources are quality based: enrichment, verification and anomaly identification with subsequent correction. But there is also economy in sharing the research workload that disambiguates and identifies. Linking disparate data made to different standards for different purposes in different jurisdictions with different disambiguating data elements is complicated.

Adding to the complication are issues of data privacy. Currently there are 28 sources in the ISNI database, some of which are composite sources such as VIAF presenting 40 major libraries and Wikipedia and TEL, representing 49 European national libraries. Of these 28 sources, 10 have contributed data without restrictions; the other 18 allow the name and link to be publicised but not the supporting metadata, particularly not dates and pseudonym / main name links. The agreements between rights management societies and their creators prohibit them from revealing this information. Trade sources have commercial reasons for limiting the diffusion of their metadata. However, the open data far outnumbers the restricted data on the database and it serves to assume the public facing role in the web interface, SRU enquiry API and in linked data. The ISNI-IA that manages the database seeks high quality open data that it can load to increase the quality and confidence of exposable ISNI data. This has led to the inclusion of such databases as MusicBrainz, the free music encyclopaedia, OpenLibrary, publishers of RePec and AuthorClaim, JISC Names and Zetoc among others.

Since launching the database in late 2011, there have been several projects to maximize the deployment of ISNI and the quality of ISNI metadata. Amongst these projects is a national project in Switzerland that will serve as a model for similar projects in Finland, France and Australia. Interoperation with ORCID started with the allocation of a range of ISNIs to ORCID to ensure that the same 16 character identifier is never attributed to more than one identity. ORCID will shortly access ISNI during the registration process via the SRU search API and a task force is working on closer agreement. Interoperation with VIAF is another task force.