



**International Standard Book Number (ISBN) Users'  
Manual - Caribbean, Georgetown: CCS, 2012.**

**INTERNATIONAL STANDARD  
BOOK NUMBER (ISBN)  
USERS' MANUAL -  
CARIBBEAN**

**Tenth Edition**

**Regional ISBN Agency  
Caribbean Community Secretariat  
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# I                      **BACKGROUND**                      **&** **INTRODUCTION**

The International Standard Book Number (ISBN) system was first discussed at the Third International Conference on Book Market Research and Rationalization in the Book Trade, November 1966, Berlin. At that time, a number of publishers and booksellers in Europe were considering the use of computers for order processing and inventory control and it was felt that a prerequisite for an efficient machine system was a unique and simple identification number for a published item.

The Technical Committee on Documentation of the International Standards Organization (ISO/TC 46) set up a Working Party (with the British Standards Institution acting as Secretariat), to investigate the possibility of adapting for international use, a numbering system which had been introduced into the United Kingdom and the United States in 1967 and 1968 respectively.

After several meetings with ISO members and written suggestions from other countries, the International Standard was approved as ISO standard 2108 in 1970. The original standard has been revised as new forms of media have appeared.

The revised International Standard Book Number (ISBN) ISO 2108 which was adopted in 2005 establishes specifications for the International Standard Book Number (ISBN) as a unique international identification system for each product form or edition of a monographic publication published or produced by a specific publisher.

The standard specifies the construction of an ISBN, the rules for its assignment and use, the metadata to be associated with the ISBN allocation, and the administration of the ISBN system.

As early as 1978, there had been a regional initiative by CARICOM Member States to receive ISBNs for publications of the Caribbean. At the CARICOM Regional Bibliography Meeting held in Georgetown, Guyana in March 1978, it was agreed:

- (1) that it was advisable for the publications of the Caribbean to have ISBNs;
- (2) to recommend to the International ISBN Agency in Berlin that the ISBN System be extended to the English-speaking Caribbean.

Columbus Publishers of Trinidad and Tobago, represented at the meeting, accepted the nomination of the Meeting as Regional Agency. However, in 1980 this responsibility was passed over to the CARICOM Secretariat. The Group Agency now acts in the interest of the following countries/territories:

Antigua and Barbuda (AG), Bahamas (BS), Barbados (BB), Belize (BZ), Dominica (DM), Grenada (GD), Guyana (GY) Jamaica (JM), St. Kitts-Nevis (KN), Saint Lucia (LC), St. Vincent and the Grenadines (VC), Trinidad and Tobago (TT).

The functions of the Group Agency are outlined under **Section VIII - Administration of the ISBN System**.

This manual explains how the ISBN system works, and the procedures to be followed to ensure that International Standard Book Numbers are correctly assigned. It is periodically revised to reflect changes in policy. The manual is based on

- **The ISBN Users' Manual : International Edition. 6<sup>th</sup> ed.** - London : International ISBN Agency, 2012.

## II FUNCTION AND SCOPE OF THE ISBN

The International Standard Book Number (ISBN) is a unique international identifier assigned to text-based monographic publications (i.e. one-off publications rather than journals, newspapers, or other types of serials) and certain types of related products that are available to the public, whether those publications and related products are to be sold or made available on a gratis basis.

In addition, individual sections (such as chapters) of publications or issues or articles from journals, periodicals or serials that are made available separately may also use the ISBN as an identifier. Regardless of the physical form in which the content is documented and distributed, each product form should be identified separately.

The ISBN accompanies the publisher's product from production through distribution to sale. The main and original purpose of the ISBN is to facilitate the book trade supply chain, simplifying ordering, stock control, accounting, and export procedures in many branches of the book industry, thus saving time and money.

The ISBN also facilitates ordering, acquisition, cataloguing, and circulation procedures in libraries and documentation centres, across political borders. The ISBN system thus serves the flow and documentation of bibliographic information; provides economic bibliographic control of the regional book production; enables bookshops and libraries to use electronic ordering (EDI).

Some examples of publishers' products to which an ISBN shall be assigned are:

- Printed books and pamphlets
- Individual chapters or sections of a publication if these are made available separately
- Braille publications
- Publications which are not intended by the publisher to be regularly updated or continued indefinitely
- Individual articles<sup>1</sup> or issues of a particular continuing resource (but not the continuing resource in its entirety)
- Maps
- Educational/instructional films, videos and transparencies
- Audio books on cassettes or CD or DVD (talking books)
- Electronic publications either on physical carriers (such as machine-readable tapes, diskettes, CD-Roms) or on the Internet (for download or streaming)
- Digitised copies of print monographic publications
- Microform publications
- Educational or instructional software
- Mixed media publications (where the principal constituent is text-based).

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<sup>1</sup> Where individual articles are made available separately by a publisher, they qualify as monographic publications and shall be assigned an ISBN. This does not apply in the case of offprint copies, which are ordered by the author(s) of the article for their own distribution purposes.

Some examples of publishers' products<sup>2</sup> to which an ISBN shall **not** be assigned are:

- Journals, periodicals, serials, newspapers (Continuing resources<sup>3</sup>) in their entirety (although single issues or articles where these are made available separately may be assigned ISBN as well) (see <http://www.issn.org>)
- Abstract entities<sup>4</sup> such as textual works and other abstract creations of intellectual or artistic content (see <http://www.istc-international.org>)
- Ephemeral printed materials such as advertising matter and the like
- Printed music (see <http://www.ismn-international.org>)
- Music sound recordings
- Art prints and art folders without title page and text
- Personal documents (such as electronic curriculum vitae or personal profile)
- Software that is intended for any purpose other than educational or instructional
- Electronic bulletin boards
- Email and other electronic correspondence
- Greeting cards
- Games.

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<sup>2</sup> For information on Electronic publications, see Section V.

<sup>3</sup> Such publications are usually issued in successive or integrating issues which generally have numerical or chronological designations. These also include integrating resources such as updating loose-leaf publications and updating websites.

<sup>4</sup> For example, each separate product form of the novel "The Old Man and the Sea" is eligible for an ISBN but the novel itself, as an abstract textual work, shall not be assigned an ISBN.

For further information including clarification about whether or not a particular type of product may qualify, please contact your local ISBN registration agency (See **Appendix IV - National ISBN Agencies**).

### III STRUCTURE OF THE ISBN

The International Standard Book Number (ISBN) consists of thirteen (13) digits, preceded by the letters ISBN, whenever it is printed.

The ISBN is divided into five parts of various lengths, each part when printed being separated by a hyphen or space. Three of the elements are of variable length (registration group element, registrant element and publication element); the prefix element and the check digit are of fixed length.

The length of the registration group element and the registrant element is relative to the anticipated publishing output of the registration group or registrant. The number of digits in the group number and in the publisher identifier is determined by the quantity of titles produced by the publisher or publisher group. Publishers or publisher groups with large outputs are represented by fewer digits.

The ISBN comprises the following five elements:

- Prefix element
- Registration group element
- Registrant element
- Publication element
- Check digit.

The elements must each be clearly separated by hyphens or spaces (The use of hyphens or spaces is purely to enhance readability) when displayed in human readable form:

**Example:** ISBN 978 976 600 225 1  
ISBN 978-976-600-225-1.

Note: The use of hyphens or spaces has no lexical significance and is purely to enhance readability.

The five parts are as follows:

### 1. Prefix element

The first element of the ISBN is a three-digit number that is made available by GS1, formerly EAN International. Currently this can only be either 978 or 979, but there may be further prefix allocations made in the future as required to ensure the continued capacity of the ISBN System.

### 2. Registration group element

The registration group element – the second element of the ISBN identifies the country, geographical region or language area participating in the ISBN System. The length of this element varies and may comprise up to five (5) digits. The registration group number 976 identifies the Caribbean.

Registration group elements are allocated by the International ISBN Agency based in the United Kingdom.

**Example:** 978-976

### 3. Registrant element

The third element of the ISBN identifies a particular publisher or imprint within a registration group. The length of this element varies in direct relationship to the anticipated output of the publisher and may comprise up to seven digits.

Potential registrants will continue to apply to the ISBN Group Agency, (The CARICOM Secretariat) or to the National ISBN Agency, where one exists, in order to be assigned registrant elements. Publishers who have exhausted the allocation of ISBNs linked to their registrant element, may be assigned an additional registrant element.

**Example:** 978-976-600

### 4. Publication element

The fourth element of the ISBN identifies a specific edition and format of a specific title. The length of this element varies in direct relationship to the anticipated output of the publisher concerned and may comprise up to six digits.

**Example:** 978-976-600-258

### 5. Check digit

The fifth and final element of the ISBN is the check digit that mathematically validates the rest of the number. This is calculated using a modulus 10 algorithm with alternate weights of 1 and 3.

**Example:** 978-976-600-258-9

## **IV APPLICATION OF ISBN**

### **1. General**

A separate ISBN shall be assigned to each separate monographic publication or separate edition of a monographic publication issued by a publisher. A separate ISBN shall be assigned to each different language edition of a monographic publication. Where a publication is made available to the public both individually and as part of a series, it shall be regarded as two separate publications, each of which shall be assigned a separate ISBN.

### **2. Changes to publications**

A separate ISBN shall be assigned if there have been significant changes to any part or parts of a publication. A separate ISBN shall be assigned if there has been a change to the title of a publication. A change to the cover design or colour or to the price of a monographic publication does not require a separate ISBN. Minor changes in an edition (e.g., corrections to misprints) do not require a separate ISBN.

### **3. Facsimile reprints**

A separate ISBN shall be assigned to a facsimile reprint when it is produced by another publisher or republished under the imprint of a different publisher. A separate ISBN shall also be assigned if the same publication is published under a different imprint name by the same publisher. If a book is scanned and digitised by an organisation other than the original publisher (e.g. by a library) then the scanned and digitised version shall be assigned a separate ISBN by the new producer provided that version is made available to the public (as opposed to being purely for archival purposes for example).

### **4. Publications in different product forms**

A separate ISBN must be assigned to the different product forms in which a particular title is published. For example, if a title is published either in hardback, paperback, Braille, audiobook or online electronic form, each is assigned a separate ISBN. Where electronic publications are made available in different formats (e.g. \*.lit, \*.pdf, \*.html, \*.pdb) each separately available format shall be assigned a unique ISBN.

### **5. Loose-leaf publications**

An ISBN should be assigned to a loose-leaf publication not intended to continue indefinitely. Neither a loose-leaf publication that is continually updated (integrating resource) nor the individual updated sections should be assigned an ISBN (see **Section XI - Other Complementary Title Identifiers - ISSN**).

## 6. Multi-volume works

An ISBN must be assigned to the whole set of volumes of a multi-volumed work. Where individual volumes of the set are available separately, each volume must be assigned a unique ISBN to identify it. The verso of the title page (or an equivalent position in a non-print version) in each case should clearly display the ISBN for the set as a whole as well as the ISBN for that particular volume.

Even if the multiple volume publication will only be available as a complete set, the assignment of a separate ISBN to each individual volume is still recommended. Doing so will facilitate various stages of transaction processing, including the handling of shipments when all volumes are not simultaneously published or distributed, and for the supply of replacements in the case of damaged copies.

## 7. Backlist

A publisher is required to number all backlist publications and publish the ISBNs in any catalogues that is produced whether these catalogues are in print or in electronic format. The ISBN must also appear in the first available reprint or reissue of a backlist title.

## 8. Collaborative publications

A publication issued as a joint imprint with other publishers is usually assigned an ISBN by the publisher(s) in charge of distribution. However, it is permissible for each of the co-publishers to assign its own ISBN and display each of them on the copyright page. In such cases, only one of these ISBNs shall be displayed as a bar code on the publication.

## 9. Publications sold or distributed by agents<sup>5</sup>

- (a) According to the ISBN standard, a particular edition, published by a particular publisher receives only one ISBN. This ISBN must be retained no matter where or by whom the book is distributed or sold.
- (b) A publication imported by an exclusive distributor or sole agent from an area not yet in the ISBN system and for which therefore no ISBN has been assigned, may be assigned an ISBN by the exclusive distributor.
- (c) A publication imported by an exclusive distributor or sole agent to which a new title page, bearing the imprint of the exclusive distributor, has been added in place of the title page of the original publisher, is to be given a new ISBN by the exclusive distributor or sole agent. The ISBN of the original publisher is also to be given.
- (d) A publication imported by several distributors from an area not yet in the ISBN system, and for which, therefore, no ISBN has been assigned, may be assigned an ISBN by the group agency responsible for those distributors.

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<sup>5</sup> Except for (a) and (c), this only applies to countries that are not yet participating in the system.

**10. Acquisition of a publishing house by another publisher**

A publisher acquiring another publishing house can continue to use the unassigned ISBNs from the originally assigned ISBN registrant element. The Regional/National ISBN agency responsible for that registrant element should be informed of the change of ownership of the registrant element.

**11. Acquisition of complete stock of and rights in publication**

A publisher acquiring the complete stock of and rights to a publication(s) of another company can continue to use the original publisher’s assigned ISBN until the new company reprints or reissues the publication under that company’s own ISBN registrant element.

**12. Publishers with more than one place of publication**

A publisher operating in a number of places which are listed together in the imprint of a publication must assign only one ISBN to that publication. A publisher operating separate and distinct offices or branches in different places may have a registrant element for each office or branch. Nevertheless, each publication is to be assigned only one ISBN by the office or branch responsible for publication.

**13. Register of ISBNs**

It is the responsibility of all publishers to inform their group agency or the organisation responsible for the maintenance of publication registration of the ISBNs that will be assigned to forthcoming publications. The information shall include some minimum metadata (descriptive) elements (example follows hereunder) and shall be compatible with the ONIX International product information standards maintained by EDItEUR and its associated organizations.

<b>Data element</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>ONIX 3 element(s)</b>
ISBN	In the 13 digit ISBN format, without spaces or hyphens	<ProductIdentifier>
Product form	Coding which indicates the medium and/or format of the product	<ProductComposition> <ProductForm> <ProductFormDetail> <ProductPart>
	<i>Although not mentioned explicitly in the ISBN User Manual, physical measurements may also differentiate between two physical products otherwise in the same binding and format.</i>	<Measure>
	<i>Similarly, for digital products, different licence terms (usage constraints) or operating system requirements may differentiate between two otherwise identical products.</i>	<ProductFormFeature> <EpubTechnicalProtection> <EpubUsageConstraint>

Data element	Comments	ONIX 3 element(s)
Title	The title of the publication, together with sub-title or other title elements where applicable	<TitleDetail> composite
Series	Series title and enumeration when applicable	<Collection> composite
Contributor	Contributor role code(s) and contributor name(s)	<Contributor> composite [Identifier (ISNI) optional]
Edition	Edition number (for editions after the first), type, and statement	<EditionTypeCode> <EditionNumber> <EditionStatement>
Language(s) of text	Using ISO 639-2/B language codes	<Language> composite
Imprint	The brand name under which the publication is published	<Imprint> composite [Identifier (ISNI) optional]
Publisher	The person or organization that owns the imprint at the date of publication	<Publisher> composite [Identifier (ISNI) optional]
	<i>For digital products, provision is also made for the possibility that the ISBN may be assigned by a downstream intermediary if the publisher has not done so.</i>	<RecordSource... elements
Country of publication	Using ISO 3166-1 country codes	<CountryOfPublication>
Publication	The date of first	<PublishingDate>

Data element	Comments	ONIX 3 element(s)
date	publication under this ISBN. In the ISO 8601 format (YYYY-MM-DD).	composite [ONIX uses a format based on ISO 8601, YYYYMMDD]
ISBN of parent publication	ISBN of the parent publication of which this publication is a part, when applicable <i>Used when an ISBN is registered for a chapter or part – see note on page 6</i>	<RelatedProduct> composite <RelatedWork> composite

**Note:** In some cases the ONIX representation of the ISBN metadata set uses a composite where at first sight it would seem that a simple data element would suffice, or it uses a coded value where only one code is valid. This approach ensures that the ISBN metadata can be specified in an ONIX for ISBN Registration message that is a true subset of current ONIX for Books (ONIX 3.0).

The International ISBN Agency will supply an XML schema on request.

Databases that link ISBNs with their metadata (such as books-in-print listings, national bibliography, etc.) should be made available and kept up to date. In instances where ISBN registration agencies do not provide such bibliographic listing services, they are nevertheless responsible for liaising with appropriate service providers to ensure that such services are accessible. Customers may be charged a fee by ISBN registration agencies and publishers of bibliographic databases to access this information.

#### 14. ISBN not to be reused under any circumstances

Once assigned to a monographic publication, an ISBN can never be reused to identify another monographic publication, even if the original ISBN is found to have been assigned in error. A registrant who discovers that an ISBN has been erroneously assigned must delete this number from the list of usable numbers. The registrant shall also report the erroneous ISBN to their ISBN agency.

## V ISBN FOR ELECTRONIC PUBLICATIONS AND EDUCATIONAL/ INSTRUCTIONAL SOFTWARE

### 1. ISBN for eligible electronic publications

Where a publication is available electronically (e.g. e-book, e-book app, CD-ROM, or publication available on the Internet) it will qualify for an ISBN provided that it contains text, is made available to the public, and that there is no intention for the publication to be a continuing resource.

Such publications may also include pictures and sounds but linked material (e.g. hypertext) would only be considered covered by the same ISBN if the related material was actually part of the publication.

The following types of electronic publications **shall not** be assigned an ISBN:

- Publications that are subject to frequent update and where access is possible to these, changes occur constantly such as online databases
- Websites
- Promotional or advertising material
- Electronic bulletin boards
- Email and other electronic correspondence
- Search engines
- Computer games

- Software that is intended for purposes other than educational or instructional
- Personal documents (such as electronic curriculum vitae or personal profiles)
- Schedulers/diaries.

**Note:** An ISBN may be used to identify a specific software product that is intended for educational and/or instructional purposes, such as a computer-based training product, provided that it is not customisable nor requires data in order to function.

## 2. Principles for assignment of ISBN to electronic publications and eligible software products

The ISBN also applies to electronic publications. It should neither be used to identify files that only pass between publishers and typesetters or e-book conversion services, nor should it identify abstract entities such as textual works (content).

Publications need separate ISBNs if **anyone** in the supply chain needs to identify them separately. End users need to know:

- (a) whether the e-book that they are purchasing will work on their device or software and;
- (b) what they will be able to do with it (e.g. copy, print, lend etc.). This is normally defined by a combination of file format and Digital Rights Management (DRM) which controls, by technical means, the use that can be made of the e-book. Separate ISBNs will facilitate management, dissemination and discovery of that information as well as delivery of the appropriate version of an e-book.

Where a specific qualifying e-book is available in different file formats, each different format that is published and made separately available should be given a separate ISBN.

***N.B.** A file format is a particular way that information is encoded for storage in a digital file. In the case of e-books, the file format is often a combination of an underlying file type (such as epub, pdf etc) and digital rights management software (such as Adobe's ACS4, Apple's Fairplay etc.).*

Where proprietary DRM is used that ties a version to a specific platform, device or software, separate ISBNs should be used for each such version.

Where digital publications are being supplied by a retailer that is the sole provider of e-books in a proprietary format that can only be bought through their own websites (e.g. Amazon Kindle, Apple i-books) and that retailer does not require ISBNs, it is not necessary to assign ISBNs to those versions, although it may be useful to do so for tracking sales or having publications listed in third-party databases of available e-books. If ISBNs are assigned, they should be unique to that version.

A new ISBN may be assigned when a book is digitised by a library or other organisation and that electronic version is made available to the public, regardless of whether or not there is a charge for access to the digital version.

Where a publication is available in a supply chain with *more than one specific type of DRM*, whether offered by the original publisher or by a vendor later in the chain, then each of these are unique products that need to be identified by unique ISBNs.

**Example 1:** *A publisher produces two EPUB versions of the same book, each with different DRMs and then distributes them through the supply chain, through different intermediaries. An ISBN is required for each of the specific DRM versions of the product.*

**Example 2:** *A publisher produces a file in EPUB format and releases this to a vendor who applies two different types of DRM to the EPUB and makes the two versions available separately, as two distinct products. An ISBN is required for each of the specific DRM versions of the product (the ISBN may be assigned by the publisher or by the vendor if the publisher does not do so).*

**Example 3:** *A vendor offers to the public the possibility to buy an e-book and to customise on demand the type of DRM to be applied. In this case, the DRM is applied at transaction level and there is no need to assign different ISBNs, since there is no ambiguity in the dialogue between the vendor and the buyer.*

If a publication is made available with different usage rights (e.g. adjusting the usage settings so that printing is allowed in one, but not in another), each version must be assigned a unique ISBN. In almost all cases usage rights are controlled using settings within the DRM software.

**Example 4:** *A publisher releases a publication — one version of the publication is available with accessibility features such as text to speech (controlled through the DRM software) and one without. Each of the versions must have unique ISBNs in order that the particular attributes are clear to potential buyers and users (especially those looking for accessible publications) and so that the versions are separately identified.*

However, also in this case, when the usage rights are defined during the transaction between the vendor and the user, there is no need to assign separate ISBNs.

**Example 5:** *A publisher releases a publication in one format with one ISBN and then offers to customers a service to acquire different usage rights on demand. Similarly to example 3 above, separate ISBNs are not required to identify the individual customised transactions.*

If publishers are using intermediaries to generate different formats of their e-books, then they should provide separate ISBNs for the intermediaries to assign to each format.

If a publisher will not provide ISBNs to intermediaries for this purpose then intermediaries may assign their own ISBNs. ISBN agencies will provide ISBN prefixes to intermediaries for this purpose. In this case ISBNs and related metadata should be reported back to the publisher and to the national ISBN agency and other bibliographic agencies. (N.B. This is not the recommended solution and should only be used if a publisher refuses to assign ISBNs).

A number of applications is in the development stages that will rely heavily on unambiguous identification. Though not yet fully operational, they will depend on clear identification of individual products and highly granular metadata for their success. An example of this is a platform dedicated to providing information about accessible versions. In order to meet the precise needs and wants of the user, it is essential that the different publications with their individual accessibility features are very clearly identified and differentiated. With unambiguous identification through separate ISBN, the user will be accurately directed to the most suitable

version that meets their exact needs every time. It is also possible to envisage other types of applications and services that would also depend on this granular approach.

If an online publication is available under different operating systems and/or command languages, each “format” would require a separate ISBN. Neither operating systems nor reading devices themselves shall, however, be assigned an ISBN.

When a publication or product is updated, revised or amended and the changes are sufficiently substantial for the product to be called a new edition, a separate ISBN must be assigned.

A relaunch of an existing publication or product, even in new packaging, where there is no significant difference in the performance of the new from the old product, does not merit a new ISBN, and **the original ISBN must be used.**

A single ISBN may cover two or more items in a package consisting of the software product and its accompanying user and technical manuals if the manuals are necessary in order to operate the software and are useful only as an adjunct to the software.

If the package consists of two or more items that will be made available separately and can be used independently, then the entire package should have a distinct ISBN, as must each separate component.

An ISBN should be assigned to a software product independently of its physical form (e.g. if software that must be downloaded to the customer from a remote database).

As well as identifying the product itself, an ISBN identifies the publisher; it should not be used to identify a distributor or wholesaler of the product.

## **VI ISBN FOR PRINT-ON-DEMAND PUBLICATIONS**

For the purposes of ISBN assignment, print on demand is simply a form of print technology.

A “print on demand” publication is printed and bound in response to a specific order from a customer. Such orders are often for single copies of publications that would otherwise be declared “out of print” as large print runs would not be economical.

Print-on-demand should not be confused with short-run printing, in which small quantities of books may be manufactured and then stored for fulfilling customer orders as and when they are received. With short-run printing, stock is warehoused, even if in small quantities, but with on-demand printing, there is no stock.

If the on-demand version of a publication is in a different product form from the previously-published non-on-demand version (e.g. if a hardback becomes a paperback when it shifts to being on-demand), a new ISBN is required, just as for any other changes of product form. Minor changes to trim sizes in order to comply with the specifications of on-demand printing machines shall not require a new ISBN.

A publication shall receive a separate ISBN when reproduced on demand by a publisher that has bought print on demand rights for the publication from another publisher.

A copy that is produced by an organization other than the publisher on behalf of that publisher (i.e. no rights have changed hands) and where the on-demand edition is in a different product form, shall receive a separate ISBN.

A “customised” or “personalised” version of a print-on-demand book, where the customer, not the publisher, dictates the content of the book, and which has a limited availability, shall not be assigned an ISBN.

## VII LOCATION AND DISPLAY OF THE ISBN

The ISBN must appear on the item itself (see **Appendix I**). This is essential for the efficient running of the system.

**In the case of printed publications, the ISBN must appear on the:**

- verso of the title page (copyright page)
- lower section of the outside back cover
- foot of the title page, if there is no space on the verso of the title
- foot of the back of the dust jacket, or any other protective case, or wrapper.

**In the case of electronic publications, the ISBN must appear on the:**

- title display, or the first display (compact discs, online publications) or on the screen that displays the title or its equivalent (e.g. the initial screen displayed when the content is first accessed and/or on the screen that carries the copyright notice)

**In the case of educational/instructional films, videos and transparencies, the ISBN must appear on the:**

- credit titles.

If the publication is issued in a container that is an integral part of the publication (e.g. a compact disc, cassette or diskette), the ISBN shall be displayed on any labels included with that container. If it is not possible to display the ISBN on the container or its label, then the ISBN shall be displayed at the bottom of the back of any permanent packaging for that container (e.g. the box, sleeve or frame).

The different formats of an electronic publication shall be given an individual ISBN if they are made available separately. If the publication is made available in two formats that are always bundled together for sale, then only one ISBN is required. Where formats are made separately available, all the ISBNs should be listed one below the other on all versions and the abbreviated format should be included in parentheses, at the end of its ISBN.

**Examples:**

**ISBN 978-951-45-9693-3 (hardback)**  
**ISBN 978-951-45-9694-0 (paperback)**  
**ISBN 978-951-45-9695-7 (PDF)**  
**ISBN 978-951-45-9696-4 (epub without DRM)**  
**ISBN 978-951-45-9999-5 (epub with ACS4 DRM)**

The ISBN should always be printed in type large enough to be easily legible (i.e. 9 point or larger).

### 1. ISBN in bar-coded form

An agreement between GS1 (formerly EAN International and the Uniform Code Council (UCC)) and the International ISBN and International ISMN Agency allows the ISBN to be encoded into an EAN-13 bar code. This makes the ISBN an international identifier compatible with the worldwide bar coding scheme.

Representing the ISBN in an EAN-13 bar code symbology must be done in accordance with ISO/IEC 15420 (Bar code symbology specification EAN/UPC) that requires the usage of EAN-13 symbols to be in line with the recommendations of GS1. An EAN bar code consists of 13 digits. An example of an ISBN encoded in an EAN-13 bar code symbol is shown below:

ISBN 978-976-637-393-1

When used in a bar code, the ISBN must be displayed in human readable form immediately above the EAN-13 bar code symbol, preceded by ISBN.

Example of printing the ISBN in EAN-13 bar code symbology.



Further information on the introduction and use of the EAN-13 bar code symbol is provided by the ISBN group agencies and the International ISBN Agency. Group agencies are encouraged to cooperate directly with the GS1 organizations on a national or regional level.

The recommended location of the EAN-13 bar code symbol for publications is the lower right quadrant of the back, near the spine.

## 2. Five-digit add-on code

In the United States and Canada, a five-digit add-on to the bar code is used in the book trade to indicate the price. For further information on bar codes in the US and Canada visit the Book Industry Study Group website [www.bisg.org](http://www.bisg.org).

The five-digit add-on code should not be used for price information in other countries although it may be used with a "9" prefix for publisher's own in-house use (e.g. for handling returns). These supplementary codes always start with "9" within the range "900000-98999".

Publishers who may wish to use EAN Bar codes are advised to contact film master suppliers for bar code information. These suppliers print out lists with EANs including the appropriate check digits. You may wish to contact the Regional Agency for a list of Bookland EAN Bar code suppliers.

With regard to the creation of EAN bar codes for printed music and also for serials, please contact the ISMN Agency or the ISSN International Centre in Paris for further information.

Further information on the introduction and use of EAN codes is provided by the International ISBN Agency.

### 3. Providing the EAN.UCC bar code for ISBN - instructions for film master suppliers

Film master suppliers providing ISBN EAN bar codes to publishers to print on products should observe the following procedures:

- Validate the ISBN provided by the publisher, using the ISBN check digit validation algorithm, to avoid any transcription or transposition errors;
- Hyphenate the ISBN according to the rules;
- Print the following:

#### Mandatory

- ISBN in 9-point type or larger; ISBN EAN in bar code; ISBN EAN in human-readable form

#### Optional (at the publisher's discretion)

- Five-digit add-on in bar code and human-readable format

All these procedures should be done through computer programming. EAN technical requirements for bar code printing should be observed.

## VIII ADMINISTRATION OF THE ISBN SYSTEM

The administration of the ISBN system is carried out on three levels: international, group and publisher levels.

### 1. International Administration

The international administration and co-ordination of the ISBN system is done through the:

#### International ISBN Agency

c/o EDItEUR

39-41 North Road

London N7 9DP

United Kingdom

Tel: (+44) (0)20 7503 6418

Fax: (+44) (0)20 7503 6418

E-mail: [stella@isbn-international.org](mailto:stella@isbn-international.org)

URL: <http://isbn-international.org>

Executive Director: Stella Griffiths

The principal functions and responsibilities of the International ISBN Agency are:

- To promote, coordinate, and supervise the worldwide use of the ISBN system
- To represent the interests of the ISBN community to other relevant organisations
- To appoint appropriate organisations as ISBN registration agencies and revoke such appointments as necessary

- To define registration groups and their areas of responsibility and allocate them to appropriate ISBN registration agencies
- To determine the definition of registration group rules that govern the length of available registrant elements within each group and ensure that an accurate and comprehensive register of these rules is available publicly at all times
- To allocate ranges of unique registrant elements within the appropriate registration group to ISBN registration agencies and to maintain a complete and accurate register of the registrant elements that have been assigned
- To secure the maintenance of ISBNs and their associated ISBN metadata through ISBN registration agency registers
- To develop, monitor, and enforce policies and procedures governing the operations of ISBN agencies and the process of ISBN registration by those agencies, including any fees associated with that process
- To facilitate the review and resolution of duplicate assignments of an ISBN
- To review and decide on any appeals relating to decisions made by registration agencies

- To develop, maintain, and make publicly available documentation for users of the ISBN system
- To implement and maintain funding arrangements as necessary to support the operations of the International ISBN Agency, including, but not limited to, financial contributions from ISBN registration agencies.

## 2. Group Administration

The administration of the ISBN system within a registration group is the responsibility of the ISBN registration agency. The ISBN registration agency may operate on a national, regional, linguistic or other reasonable division of responsibility according to the basis of the group allocation.

Within a group there may be several national agencies, e.g. the Regional Agency currently identified by ISBN Group Identifier 976 has national agencies in the Bahamas, Belize, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago.

The functions and responsibilities of an ISBN Group agency are:

- To ensure that continuous service is provided
- To issue notification of the assignment of an ISBN or of an ISBN registrant element to the registrant of that monographic publication or publisher name

- To create, manage and maintain registers of ISBN, ISBN metadata and administrative data in accordance with the policies set out by the International ISBN Agency. (Tasks involving ISBN metadata may be delegated to a designated bibliographic agency provided that compliance is made with these specifications)
- To correct inaccurate ISBNs and ISBN metadata if proof of such inaccuracy is provided
- To make ISBN and associated metadata available to other registration agencies and to users of the ISBN system in compliance with policies set out by the International ISBN Agency
- To collate and maintain statistical data on its ISBN-related operations and report these at the stipulated intervals to the International ISBN Agency
- To promote, educate and train others in the use of the ISBN system in compliance with the specifications of the applicable edition of the ISBN standard in force at the time
- To adhere to the ISBN policies and procedures established by the International ISBN Agency in compliance with the specifications of the applicable edition of the ISBN standard in force at the time

- To decide in consultation with publishers and their representative agencies, which publishers will assign numbers to their own titles, and which will have numbers assigned to their titles by the ISBN Group or National Agency.

### **I. Assignment Procedure**

Block of 10 ISBNs - Publishers able to name 1, 2, or 3 definite titles

Block of 100 ISBNs - Publishers able to name between 4 and 70 definite titles

Block of 1000 ISBNs - Publishers able to name more than 70 definite titles.

### **II. Occasional Publishers**

In the case of publishers who only publish an occasional title and who are never likely to be in the position of assuming the responsibility themselves for numbering, this class of publishers will continue to receive their ISBNs from an occasional block reserved by the Agency for this purpose.

### **3. Publisher Administration**

The Publishers who wish to assign their own ISBNs should ensure that the ISBN Registration Agency has as much information as possible about all available backlists and advise on all present and future publications so that an appropriate registrant element can be allocated.

The ISBN registration agency will determine the range of publication elements that will be available to the publisher. The range assigned will be determined based on current and anticipated future publication output and is directly related to the length of the registrant element allocated.

Publishers who qualify for a Registrant Element Identifier will be assigned one by the ISBN Registration Agency together with a printout or electronic file of the permissible ISBNs that are available to them within the allocated Registrant Element Identifier. Publishers are required to pay for these services.

Procedures to be observed by the publisher numbering his own publications are as follows:

- A publisher must ensure that a competent person is responsible for the assignment of publication elements to the individual items they publish and for ensuring the application of the pertinent regulations.
- A publisher is encouraged to maintain a listing of publications and ISBNs assigned to titles.
- A publisher must not incorporate numbers which cause the resulting ISBN to be longer or shorter than thirteen digits.
- A publisher must obtain ISBNs from the National/Regional ISBN Agency. A publisher must on no account borrow, buy or sell ISBNs.

- The publisher should supply the ISBN registration agency (or its designated local bibliographic agency) with a specified amount of metadata about the publication to which the ISBN is assigned. The specifications concerning the type and format of the metadata is established by the International ISBN Agency in cooperation with the ISBN registration agencies.
- The Publisher who is self-assigning ISBNs should provide the Regional Agency or National ISBN Agency on a **monthly basis** with metadata regarding titles to which ISBNs have been allocated.

#### 4. Non-participating Publishers

In the case of the non-participation of a publisher in the ISBN scheme, the group agency or National ISBN Agency should contact the publisher and advise them of the importance and value of assigning ISBN to all qualifying publications and supply them with full details about how to adopt the standard.

## IX GUIDELINES FOR THE PROCESSING OF ISBN REQUESTS

Based on recommendations emanating from meetings of Executive Management and also the CCS Information Policy Committee, The Regional Agency provides a fee-based service which requires new publishers (i.e. those who are requesting participation in the Regional ISBN System for the first time) to pay a non-refundable registration fee and also for each block of ISBNs which is allocated. The registration fee does not apply to persons who have been previously allocated ISBNs by the Regional/National Agency.

The fees for ISBN blocks can however be waived if the publications are intended for free distribution. Proof must however be provided for a waiver to be granted by the Regional Agency.

The processing fees are as follows:

ISBN REGISTRANT ELEMENT	REGULAR PROCESSING FEE (US\$)	REGISTRATION FEE (US\$)
1 ISBN	20.00	20.00
10 ISBNs	50.00	20.00
100 ISBNs	300.00	20.00
1,000 ISBNs	700.00	20.00
10,000 ISBNs	1,500.00	20.00

Once publishers are allowed to allocate their own ISBNs, they must submit monthly returns to the Regional/National ISBN Agency of ISBNs they have assigned, to facilitate updating of our database.

### PROCESSING INFORMATION

The completed 'Application for an ISBN Registrant Element' form will be processed only if the publisher satisfies the necessary criteria for eligibility as outlined under heading 'Eligibility of Publishers'. Payment should be sent only after the Regional Agency has accepted the application and notified the publisher of the relevant fees through the provision of an invoice.

The Regional ISBN Agency will not provide ISBNs via telephone. The processing time for ISBN requests is 14 working days from receipt of the correctly completed form. This excludes Saturdays, Sundays and holidays and is from the date the correctly completed form is received in the Agency and, not the day on which it was posted or emailed.

Please note that proof of posting is not proof of delivery and the Agency can accept no responsibility for applications which do not arrive.

### PRIORITY PROCESSING

A priority fee of US\$25.00 is payable for each single ISBN and applies **only** to single ISBN requests, while US\$50.00 is payable for all other requests. Priority service includes return of the ISBN Registrant Element and numbers within 72 business hours of receipt, provided there are no problems with the application. **Please note that priority service is by courier service.**

## ELIGIBILITY OF PUBLISHERS

The Regional ISBN Agency will be responsible for the assignment of the ISBN Registrant Element to eligible publishers with a residence or office in the Caribbean and who are publishing their titles within the Caribbean.

Regional/National Agencies will not assign ISBNs to publishers based outside of the Caribbean Region. All communication will be between the Agency and the Caribbean-based company.

## PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS

The one-off non-refundable registration fee is payable by all **new** publishers requesting ISBNs regardless of the size of the output. However, the ISBN application must first be approved before any fees are sent. **All remittances must be drawn on a U.S. Bank.** You may choose any of the following methods of payment:

Cheque or Bank Draft made payable to the  
**Caribbean Community Secretariat**  
Wire transfer (all transaction fees are payable by the publisher).

## **X BENEFITS**

The ISBN is used in all branches of the book supply chain.

In **Publishing Houses**, the ISBN is used for:

- identifying publication projects, from receipt of author's manuscript to delivery of final publication
- publication identification in publishers' catalogues and advertisements
- listing in printed and electronic directories and on Internet sites
- stock control
- ordering
- accounting and billing
- handling of returns
- monitoring sales data
- producing statistics
- rights and royalty management.

In **Bibliographic Data Services, Distribution Centres, Wholesalers**, the ISBN is used for:

- building databases of publications both in- and out-of-print
- generating bibliographic products and catalogues from these databases of publications for the book trade
- ordering services based on electronic communication systems such as EDI (electronic data interchange) or via the Internet
- stock control
- monitoring internal logistic processes
- accounting and billing
- producing sales data
- returns administration
- producing subject lists and catalogues

In **Centralised Service Organisations for Libraries** (producing ready-to-borrow copies), the ISBN is used for:

- ordering from the publishers or wholesalers
- processing orders from libraries
- stock control

- monitoring internal logistic processes
- accounting and billing
- administration of rebinding processes

In **Bookshops**, the ISBN is used for:

- bibliographic searches
- tracing addresses of publishers or distributors
- ordering and reordering processes based on electronic communication systems such as EDI (electronic data interchange) or via the Internet
- stock administration
- accounting and billing the end consumer
- electronic point-of-sale system (EPOS)

In **Libraries**, the ISBN is used for:

- ordering
- information retrieval
- copy-cataloguing
- lending statistics
- national lending rights
- inter-library loans.

## ISBN and GS1

In 1997 an agreement was concluded between the EAN International (EAN), the Uniform Code Council (UCC), the International ISBN Agency, and the International ISMN Agency to foster mutual cooperation. It provides an observer status to respective representatives at one another's general assemblies, suggests consultations, and regulates the numbering of non-printed book material. In February 2005, EAN International and the Uniform Code Council (UCC) came together under the name of GS1.

Contact details:

GS1 Global Office  
Blue Tower  
Avenue Louise 326  
B-1050 Brussels  
Belgium  
Tel: (+32 2) 788 7800  
Fax: (+32 2) 788 7899  
Email: [contactus@gs1.org](mailto:contactus@gs1.org)  
URL: <http://www.gs1.org>

Contact details for national GS1 organisations:

<http://www.gs1.org/contact>

## XI ISBN AND OTHER IDENTIFIERS

### 1. DOI

The Digital Object Identifier (DOI®) System is for identifying content objects in the digital environment. DOI® names are assigned to any entity for use on digital networks. They are used to provide current information, including where they (or information about them) can be found on the Internet. Information about a digital object may change over time, including where to find it, but its DOI name will not change.

International DOI Foundation  
Tel: +44 (0)1865 559070.  
Email: [n.paskin@doi.org](mailto:n.paskin@doi.org)  
URL: <http://www.doi.org>

### **ISBN-A**

The Actionable ISBN (ISBN-A) is a syntax and service provided by some ISBN agencies and powered by DOI® in which an existing ISBN is expressed in the DOI System, providing the ability to link an ISBN to one or more URLs.

International ISBN Agency  
United House  
North Road  
London N7 9DP  
United Kingdom  
Tel: +44 (0)20 7503 6418  
Email: [info@isbn-international.org](mailto:info@isbn-international.org)  
URL: <http://www.doi.org/factsheets/ISBN-A.html>

## **GTIN**

The GTIN (Global Trade Item Number) is a generic term for all the EAN.UCC product identifiers including the EAN-13 representation of the ISBN.

GS1 Global Office  
Blue Tower  
Avenue Louise 326  
B-1050 Brussels  
Belgium  
Tel: (+32 2) 788 7800  
Fax: (+32 2) 788 7899  
Email: [contactus@gs1.org](mailto:contactus@gs1.org)  
URL: <http://www.gs1.org/barcodes/technical/idkeys/gtin>

## **2. ISAN**

The International Standard Audiovisual Number (ISAN) is a voluntary numbering system and metadata schema enabling the identification of any audiovisual work, including films, shorts, documentaries, television programs, sports events, advertising and also their related versions.

ISAN is registered as ISO:15706-1 and 15706-2.

The Registration Authority for ISAN is:

ISAN International Agency  
1A, rue du Beulet  
CH-1203 Geneva  
Switzerland  
Tel: (+41) 22 545 10 00  
Fax: (+41) 22 545 10 40  
Email: [info@isan.org](mailto:info@isan.org)  
URL: <http://www.isan.org>

## **ISMN**

The International Standard Music Number (ISMN) identifies all printed sheet music publications, whether available for sale, or hire, or gratis.

The ISMN can be integrated into the international 13-digit bar code, using the prefix 979-0. "M" is assigned the numeric value of zero (0) for bar code purposes only.

The ISMN is not used for books on music, which receive an ISBN, nor is it used for music tapes, CDs, or videos.

The ISMN is administered by the International ISMN Agency:

International ISMN Agency  
Schlossstr. 50  
12165 Berlin  
Germany  
Tel.: (+49 30) 7974 5002  
Fax: (+49 30) 7974 5254  
Email: [ismn@ismn-international.org](mailto:ismn@ismn-international.org)  
URL: <http://ismn-international.org>

## **ISNI**

The International Standard Name Identifier (ISNI) is a draft ISO Standard (ISO 27729) whose scope is the identification of Public Identities of parties: that is, the identities used publicly by parties involved throughout the media content industries in the creation, production, management, and content distribution chains. The ISNI system uniquely identifies Public Identities across multiple fields of creative activity. The ISNI provides a tool for

disambiguating Public Identities that might otherwise be confused. ISNI is not intended to provide direct access to comprehensive information about a Public Identity but can provide links to other systems where such information is held.

Further information is available from:

ISNI International Agency Ltd  
c/o ALCS The Writers' House  
13 Haydon Street  
London EC3N 1DB  
United Kingdom  
Email: [info@isni.org](mailto:info@isni.org)  
URL: <http://www.isni.org>

#### 4. ISRC

The International Standard Recording Code (ISRC) is the standard international identifier for sound recordings and music videos (ISO 3901). It numbers each recording of a piece (not the physical item), regardless of the context or carrier on which it is issued. Encoded ISRC provide the means to automatically identify recordings for royalty payments.

The ISRC system is administered by IFPI, the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry:

International ISRC Agency  
IFPI Secretariat  
10 Piccadilly  
London W1J 0DD  
United Kingdom  
Tel: +44 (0)20 7878 7900  
Fax: +44 (0)20 7878 7950  
Email: [info@ifpi.org](mailto:info@ifpi.org)  
URL: <http://www.ifpi.org/isrc>

#### 5. ISSN

The International Standard Serial Number (ISSN), ISO 3297, is the standard international identifier for serial publications (i.e. publications that are issued over time with no predetermined conclusion). Such publications are usually issued in successive or integrating issues that generally have numerical and/or chronological designations. Typical examples include serials such as newspapers, periodicals, journals, magazines, etc., and ongoing integrating resources such as loose-leaf publications that are continually updated.

The ISSN is administered by the ISSN International Centre:

ISSN International Centre  
5 rue de Turbigo  
75003 PARIS  
FRANCE  
Tel: (+33) 1 44 88 22 20  
Fax: (+33) 1 40 26 32 43  
Email: [issnic@issn.org](mailto:issnic@issn.org)  
URL: <http://www.issn.org>

**Note:** Certain publications, such as yearbooks, annuals, monographic series, etc., should be assigned an ISSN for the serial title (which will remain the same for all the parts or individual volumes of the serial) and an ISBN for each individual volume. If ISBN and ISSN are assigned to a publication they must be both clearly identified.

## 6. ISTC

The International Standard Text Code (ISTC), ISO 21047, is a numbering system for the unique identification of text-based works; the term “work” can refer to any content appearing in conventional printed books, audio-books, static e-books or enhanced digital books, as well as content which might appear in a newspaper or journal.

The ISTC is not assigned to physical products or other manifestations of a work. Such physical products (i.e. a printed book, a talking book, or the electronic versions of such products) shall be assigned an ISBN.

Further information is available from:

EDITEUR  
United House  
North Road  
London N7 9DP  
UK  
Tel: +44 (0)20 7503 6418  
Fax: +44 (0)20 7503 6418  
Email: [info@editeur.org](mailto:info@editeur.org)  
URL: [www.istc-international.org](http://www.istc-international.org)

## 7. ISWC

The International Standard Musical Work Code (ISWC) identifies musical works as intangible creations. It is not used to identify manifestations of, or objects related to, musical works. Such manifestations and objects are the subject of separate identification systems, such as ISRC and ISMN, (see descriptions of each of these identifiers elsewhere in this section).

**Example:** Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte (The Magic Flute)* would be eligible for an ISWC to identify the work. The many printed scores would each qualify for ISMNs, the libretti and their translations for ISTCs (and ISBNs for the publications thereof), a video of a performance would receive an ISAN, and a sound recording of the opera an ISRC.

Further information is available from the registration authority:

CISAC  
20-26 Boulevard du Parc  
92200 Neuilly sur Seine  
France  
Tel.: (+ 33 1) 55 62 08 50  
Fax: (+ 33 1) 55 62 08 60  
Email: [cisac@cisac.org](mailto:cisac@cisac.org)  
URL: <http://www.cisac.org>

## XII ONIX FOR BOOKS

The ONIX for Books Product Information Message is the international standard for representing and communicating book industry product information in electronic form.

ONIX for Books was developed by EDItEUR jointly with the Book Industry Study Group (USA), and Book Industry Communication (UK), and is now used widely across the globe. Continued development of ONIX is now managed by a network of National Groups and an International Steering Committee coordinated by EDItEUR. The latest version at the time of writing is Release 3.0.

For publishers, experience has shown that ONIX for Books brings two important business benefits. As a communications format, it makes it possible to deliver rich product information into the supply chain in a standard form, to wholesalers and distributors, to larger retailers, to data aggregators, and to affiliate companies. And by providing a template for the content and structure of a product record, ONIX has helped to stimulate the introduction of better internal information systems, capable of bringing together all the "metadata" needed for the description and promotion of new and backlist titles. The same core data can also be used to produce advance information sheets, catalogues and other promotional material.

For "downstream" supply chain partners, ONIX for Books means more efficient and rapid loading of up-to-date product information into customer-facing systems, with less need for manual intervention and much lower risk of error.

ONIX for Books has been mapped to MARC21 by the Library of Congress and to UNIMARC by The British Library. It is being used by some national libraries to receive product information from publishers for Cataloguing-in-Publication (CIP) purposes or to enhance Online Public Access Catalogues (OPACs).

A specification for a subset of ONIX for Books is available, aimed specifically at carrying the metadata required for ISBN registration. This can be used by publishers to inform Registration Agencies about ISBNs they have allocated to their products, when a full ONIX for Books message is unnecessary.

Further information on ONIX is available from:

EDItEUR  
United House  
North Road  
London N7 9DP  
UK  
Tel: +44 (0)20 7503 6418  
Fax: +44 (0)20 7503 6418  
Email: [info@editeur.org](mailto:info@editeur.org)  
URL: <http://www.editeur.org/8/ONIX/>

### International Publications

#### Publishers' International ISBN Directory (PIID)

The Publishers' International ISBN Directory (PIID) comprises all assigned publisher prefixes and corresponding publisher contact details. It is currently published both in a printed and online version.

Further information at URL:

<http://isbn-international.org/page/directory>

## **XIII REGIONAL PUBLICATIONS**

### **Directory of Caribbean Publishers**

The Directory comprises a List of all publishers assigned ISBN Publisher Prefixes by the Regional ISBN Agency (Documentation Centre). It is arranged in two sequences: in alphabetical order by country, and by publisher. The directory also includes an appendix which lists those publishers who have ceased operations.

### **International Standard Book Number (ISBN) Users' Manual – Caribbean**

This Manual is prepared utilising data from the ISBN Users' Manual: International Edition. It aims to assist and guide national ISBN Agencies and publishers in the Caribbean in the principles governing ISBN assignment.

### **Listing of Caribbean Titles**

This publication provides information on titles which were assigned ISBNs. Data can be accessed by Title, Author and Publisher.

## **XIV FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE ISBN SYSTEM**

### **What is an ISBN?**

An ISBN is an International Standard Book Number. ISBNs consist of 13 digits. The number is calculated using a specific mathematical formula and includes a check digit to validate it.

### **What is an ISBN used for?**

An ISBN is essentially a product identifier used by publishers, booksellers, libraries and internet retailers and other supply chain participants for ordering, listing, sales records and stock control purposes. The ISBN identifies the registrant as well as the specific title, edition and format.

### **Why should I use an ISBN?**

If you are a publisher or bookseller it may be in your own interest as you want to sell books. If your books cannot be ordered and distributed by ISBN and if they are not listed in Books in Print type listings you may find that your books do not sell. People will assume your books do not exist, and even if they do know they exist they may consider it too much of a bother to handle them since they will need to do so using full title, manual ordering.

### **Do I have to have an ISBN?**

From the point of view of the international ISBN system there is no legal requirement to have an ISBN, and it conveys no legal or copyright protection. In a number of countries, though, the use of ISBN is prescribed by law.

**Do books need an ISBN if they are not going to be sold?**

It is desirable that all books are identified by ISBNs.

**Who assigns ISBN registrant elements?**

Only a registration agency appointed by the International ISBN Agency can assign ISBN registrant elements to individual publishers. Neither these registrant elements, nor any of the corresponding ISBNs, can be sold or given to any other publisher.

**If I change the price of my book, should I assign a new ISBN?**

No.

**Does a change of format require a new ISBN?**

Yes, different formats need different ISBNs.

**I am publishing a book in a foreign language. Should it have an ISBN of the country in whose language the book is written?**

No. It is the country where the publisher is based that determines the group identifier, not the language of the text itself.

**I am revising a book. Does it require a new ISBN?**

A significant change of text requires a new ISBN. If revisions have been made it should state on the verso of the title page that the book is a revised edition and the new ISBN should be printed there.

**Does a reprint without change of text or binding require a new ISBN?**

No. The original number must be retained, provided the publisher and imprint remain the same.

**I would like to issue a new ISBN for marketing reasons. Is this permissible?**

No, not if there is no change of text, format, or binding that would justify a new ISBN.

**I am reprinting a book and changing the price at which it is available. Is a new ISBN required?**

No. A reprint, whether or not the price has been changed, does not require a new ISBN.

**I am publishing a book with another publisher. Whose ISBN should appear on the book?**

In the case of a joint publication, both publishers are entitled to have an ISBN on the book. It should be made clear which number identifies which publisher. However, if only one publisher is to hold stock and distribute the publication, then it is recommended that the ISBN of the publisher who is responsible for distribution should appear in bar coded form on the back cover of the book.

**Is it possible to reassign ISBNs when the books to which they were allocated are out-of-print?**

No. An ISBN identifies a given title, and its edition and binding, for all time. Even if out-of-print, it will still exist in some shops and will certainly still exist in libraries.

### **How are ISBNs allocated to multi-format/multi-volume works?**

An ISBN must be allocated to the whole set of volumes of a multi-volume work; also, if the individual volumes of the set are sold separately, each volume must have its own ISBN. Even when each volume is not sold separately, the allocation of an ISBN to each volume is advisable. It facilitates the handling of returns (damaged volumes), and eliminates the possibility of confusion over specific publications. Each volume should list all ISBNs.

Similar rules apply to kits (e.g., a CD-ROM with an accompanying booklet). If any part is available separately, a separate ISBN must be allocated to each part, and to the kit as a whole.

### **I am publishing a series of publications. Do I need an ISBN or an ISSN?**

The series should receive an ISSN while the individual publications should receive ISBNs.

### **Do I need a new ISBN when I am reprinting a book with a new title?**

Yes, a new title requires a new ISBN.

### **I am taking over another firm, which already has an ISBN registrant element. All future books will be published under my name. Can I renumber all the other firm's titles?**

When the publications are reprinted under your own imprint thus carrying your own name, you may assign new ISBNs from your own registrant element.

### **What information should be included in the metadata element <Publisher>?**

It is the responsibility of publishers to inform their group agency, or the organisation responsible for the maintenance of publication registration, of the ISBNs that will be assigned to forthcoming publications. The data element <Publisher> refers to the name of the entity associated with the publishing of a publication – for example, Reed International Books.

It is a mandatory element in each occurrence of the <Publisher> composite and is non-repeating. The length of the field is variable, but there is a suggested maximum length of 100 characters. Although the element stipulates only that the name of the publisher is included within the metadata, it is the responsibility of all agencies to maintain up-to-date publisher addresses and other contact details for their own records.

### **What information should be included in the metadata element <Publication Date>?**

This element holds the date of first publication of the publication in the country of publication (that is, under the current ISBN, as distinct from the date of first publication of the work). Although the date should be given as accurately as possible, for advance notifications the month and year are sufficient, and for backlist publications the year of publication is sufficient. This is a mandatory element and the following formats are allowable:

4 digits (YYYY)  
6 digits (YYYYMM)  
8 digits (YYYYMMDD)

If the date is being supplied by the publisher in advance of publication, then this will be an expected date, which should be replaced by the actual date of publication once known.

It is not anticipated that all local agencies will want to receive advance information, but where they do choose to do so then this element should be updated with the correct data at the time of publication.

**I am not a publisher – can I still obtain an ISBN?**

Yes. For our purposes, a publisher is the group, organisation, company, or individual who is responsible for originating the production of a publication. It is also the person or body who bears the cost/financial risk in making a product available — it is not normally the printer.

Please remember that in a number of countries there is detailed legislation regarding publishing.

**In our country the book trade works mostly without computers. Do I still need ISBNs?**

You do not need to have computers to make use of an ISBN. The ISBN saves you and other people the bother of copying bibliographic records. In addition, if you want to export your books, without an ISBN they cannot be included in bibliographic data products.

**I sell books but also stationery, toys, and many other items. As the ISBN only identifies books, what can I do about the rest?**

This material can be numbered by other numbering systems, such as EANs. Modern scanning equipment reads and processes different kinds of bar coded numbers.

**GS1 (the global organisation responsible for product identification systems such as bar coding which is used to improve the efficiency of the supply chain) asked me to become a member. Is this mandatory?**

No. If you only want to use the ISBN in bar-coded form, you do not have to become a member. However, as GS1 provides other trade-related services, such as electronic address numbers (location codes), EDI (electronic data interchange) formats, etc., you may want to become a member. Check with [GS1](#) for information on their services and for details of current member organisations.

**What happens if I have used all the numbers under my registrant element?**

An additional registrant element can be assigned, allowing for a larger output if necessary. This is an additional registrant element, not a replacement.

**Do print-on-demand publications get an ISBN?**

Yes. If the print-on-demand publication is taking the place of the original version and is in the same format, then it may use the original ISBN. If there have been changes in content or format sufficient to constitute a new edition, then a separate ISBN is required.

**Do customised print-on-demand publications get an ISBN?**

No. Publications that are available only on a limited basis, such as customised print-on-demand publications with content tailored to a user's request, shall not be assigned an ISBN.

**Does the International ISBN Agency determine the fee of ISBNs? Is the fee for ISBNs the same everywhere?**

The International ISBN Agency does not influence or determine the fee to provide ISBNs, since it is not directly responsible for their allocation beyond a group/national agency level. Hence this task falls to the group/national agencies, and due to varying economic factors the fees charged by each agency are likely to be different.

**What if I only want one ISBN?**

In some countries ISBNs are available as single numbers (for author publishers). In these cases neither the registrant element nor an individual ISBN from that allocation will uniquely identify a particular publisher. In other countries the ISBNs can only be obtained in blocks, and the minimum assignment is therefore ten ISBNs.

Please refer to the national ISBN agency that is responsible for your language area, geographical region or other appropriate grouping.

**My country does not have an ISBN agency responsible for it, what should I do?**

ISBN is a mature standard that has been implemented in over 160 countries and has revolutionised approaches to the storage, retrieval, and use of bibliographic data and has helped to optimise retailer efficiency and enhance distribution.

We recommend that you contact the ministry of culture or any associations that are responsible for, or have influence on, the book trade to let them know of the desire to implement the ISBN system in your country. You should encourage them to contact the International ISBN Agency for advice on the requirements for establishing an

agency. If this approach does not prove fruitful, further guidance from the International ISBN Agency may be sought.

As a short-term measure in order that your publications may still be assigned ISBNs and handled internationally, you may wish to contact a distributor based in another country that is willing to handle your stock and assign ISBNs on your behalf (see also **Section IV. 9 – Publications sold or distributed by agents**).

**Will people in other countries be able to search for my books in search engines in those countries? If not, then how can I make this possible?**

No. In order to make this possible you will have to contact the respective ISBN agency and ask them for details of how to be entered into their national catalogue for books in circulation (i.e., books-in-print). Sometimes you will have to obtain a distributor from that country or have an address in that country before this is possible. In some circumstances the book will also have to be in the language of that country (see **Section IV. 9 (b) & (c)**).

**Can the ISBN be represented as a bar code?**

Yes. The ISBN is already in 13-digit format and can be represented easily as a bar code. Bar coded ISBNs may assist distributors and retailers in stocking and selling your publication. Your [local ISBN agency](#) should be able to provide advice on bar code suppliers to help you show your ISBN as a bar code graphic. To maximise the benefits of bar code recognition and scanning speed it is recommended to print the bar code on the lower right of the outside back cover of the publication.

## **XV GUIDELINES FOR THE ASSIGNMENT OF ISBNs TO E-BOOKS AND E-BOOK “APPS”**

**If I publish in two or more different file formats (e.g. epub, PDF) should I assign separate ISBNs?**

Yes. Each different format of an electronic publication that is published and made separately available should be given a separate ISBN.

**Should different versions of the e-book that use the same file format (e.g. epub) have different ISBNs?**

If the different versions use the same DRM software (e.g. Adobe ACS4) with substantially the same settings and are interoperable on different devices or software, then a single ISBN should be used. If, however, the same DRM software is used on two versions but with significantly different settings (e.g. one allows printing but the other does not) then each version should have its own separate ISBNs.

If proprietary DRM is used that ties a version to a specific platform, device or software then, if ISBNs are assigned (see 6 below), separate ISBNs should be used for each such version.

**Assuming the same content, what are the features that distinguish different e-book products and determine whether separate ISBNs are required?**

The key features are whether any specific device or software is required to read the e-book and what user functionality is provided (e.g. copy, print, lend etc.). As mentioned above, this is normally defined by a combination of file format and Digital Rights Management software.

**Is there a standard way of describing different product forms and DRM features?**

ONIX for Books is the international standard for representing and communicating book industry product information in electronic form. The latest release, 3.0, has improved handling of digital publications and provides structures for describing product form detail and DRM usage constraints. Even if you do not use ONIX, you can use the standard codes to describe product form and usage constraints listed in the relevant sections of code lists version 12 (DRM-related codes, lists 144-147; product content type, list 81; product form detail, list 175).

Further information on ONIX for Books 3.0 and code lists is available at <http://www.editeur.org/93/Release-3.0-Downloads/>

**If I provide a single master file to a conversion service and am not controlling the different combinations of file format and DRM provided by that service to retailers, should I assign an ISBN to that master file?**

No, unless it is also being made available to the public in exactly the same form as your master file (i.e. unchanged file format and without DRM applied). You should assign separate ISBNs to each version generated by the conversion service (see also question 6 below). If

your legacy computer system requires an ISBN to identify a master file, then this should be kept as a purely internal identifier to avoid the possibility of several different versions carrying the same ISBN.

**If my e-books are being supplied by a retailer that is the sole provider of e-books in a proprietary format that can only be bought its own website (e.g. Amazon Kindle) and that retailer does not require ISBNs, should I assign ISBNs to those versions?**

It is not necessary to do so, unless it is useful for your own purposes or you want that version to be listed in third-party databases of available e-books. However, since these platforms are generally not interoperable, if you do assign ISBNs, make sure that they are unique to each version to avoid problems if those versions should later become available through third parties.

**I provide an e-book conversion service to publishers but they are not providing separate ISBNs for each version that I generate. What should I do?**

If a publisher will not provide ISBNs to intermediaries for this purpose then, as a last resort, intermediaries may assign their own ISBNs. ISBN agencies will provide ISBN prefixes to intermediaries for this purpose. In this case ISBNs and related metadata should be provided back to the publisher and to the national ISBN agency and other bibliographic agencies.

Note that the assignment of an ISBN has no implications for rights ownership.

**E-book devices offer different features such as type size, text to speech, bookmarking, colour etc. Even if my content, file format and DRM are the same, the user experience varies according to the device used. How does this affect assignment of ISBNs?**

Not at all. If the content, file format, DRM and settings are unchanged, then any variation that depends on the device or software used to read the e-book does not impact on the ISBN.

Note that provision of mono or colour images in separate e-publications intended respectively for mono or colour devices constitutes a change of content – and therefore of ISBN. However if colour images only are provided, but a particular device has only a mono display, that is simply a device limitation and does not imply a second ISBN.

**Should an enhanced e-book that includes audio, video or other additional content have a different ISBN from the standard e-book?**

Yes. Since there is extra content included in the enhanced e-book it is clearly a different product and should therefore have a separate ISBN.

**Can e-book “apps” (e.g. applications for iPhone, Android etc.) have ISBNs?**

Yes, provided that there is significant textual content. An e-book app is simply a combination of textual and other content and software. If the software element is different (e.g. targeted on different operating systems), then each version should have a separate ISBN. However, please see question 6 above. If the app is only being made available through a single source, then ISBNs may not be necessary.

**I am publishing two versions of an e-book, one without DRM and one with 'social' DRM that does not enforce any restrictions on the user (e.g. watermarking). Do I need two separate ISBNs?**

No. If the social DRM does not enforce any restrictions or intrude significantly on the users' experience, it is transparent to them and need not be given a separate ISBN.

**How can all the different versions of an e-book be linked together?**

The ISTC (International Standard Text Code) is a new ISO identifier that identifies the underlying textual content of the book and is therefore shared by all digital and physical manifestations of the same title. The assignment of ISTCs would facilitate the linking of all versions and, with the addition of a filtering element such as product form, could also be used to link all e-book versions. Some systems already use an internal work identifier to provide this functionality but this cannot be used in the supply chain.

Note that the implementation of ISTC also facilitates the "inheritance" of metadata from work level to manifestation level and can save rekeying.

Further information on ISTC is available at <http://www.istc-international.org>.

**How do I identify individual chapters or other parts of a book that I plan to make available separately?**

If you are making chapters or other parts of a book separately available through the normal supply chain and want to have them listed in trade databases then you should regard them as individual publications and assign ISBNs to them. If they will only be available through a single source, such as the publisher's website, then proprietary internal identifiers will be adequate.

## APPENDIX I

### Example of the data and ISBN printed on the verso of the title page

Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat  
Turkeyen  
P.O. Box 10827  
Georgetown  
Guyana  
Tel: (592) 222 0001-0075  
Fax: (592) 222 0170/71  
E-mail: [doccentre@caricom.org](mailto:doccentre@caricom.org)  
URL: <http://www.caricom.org>

ISBN 978-976-600-  
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Printed in Guyana

## APPENDIX II

### ISBN REQUEST FORM

This application should be submitted to the Regional Agency at least one (1) month prior to the intended date of publication.

Author.....

Title.....

Name of Series (if any).....

Date of publication.....

Number of pages.....

Number of volumes (if applicable).....

Edition (new/revised/reprint).....

If reprint, state original date of publication.....

Binding/format ( hardcover / paperback / CD / DVD)

E-book (e.g. '.lit', '.pdf', '.html', '.pdb')

Number of copies to be printed.....

Publisher's Name and Address.....

Tel.....  
 Cell.....  
 Fax.....  
 E-mail.....  
 Website.....  
 Signature of Publisher.....

**FOR AGENCY USE ONLY**

Amount paid.....  
 Cheque information.....  
 Fees paid for       Registration       Processing  
 ISBN assigned.....  
 Date assigned.....  
 Assigning Officer.....

**Caribbean Community Secretariat  
 Turkeyen  
 P. O. Box 10827  
 Georgetown  
 Guyana  
 Tel: 592 222 0001-0075  
 Fax: 592 222 0170/71  
 E-mail: [doccentre@caricom.org](mailto:doccentre@caricom.org)  
 Website: <http://www.caricom.org>**

**APPENDIX III**

**ISBN REGISTRANT ELEMENT APPLICATION FORM**

**PLEASE USE BLOCK CAPITALS**

Publisher's / Company's Name.....  
 .....  
 Address.....  
 .....

If P.O. Box indicated, local street address is required

Tel.....  
 Cell.....  
 Fax.....  
 E-mail.....  
 Website.....

Indicate year you started publishing

Estimated no. of titles per year.....

Are you a subsidiary of another company...  Yes.....  
 No.....

Indicate what type of products you produce (Books / CDs /  
 DVDs / Software / Mixed Media / E-books)

Other, please specify.....

Readership Level (Children / Primary / Secondary / Tertiary / General / Professional) .....

Other, please specify.....

**Kindly indicate of number of ISBNs required:**

**N.B. Publishers should state an approximate output in order to be allocated specific ISBN blocks, i.e. 1-3 titles – block of ten ISBNs, 4-70 titles – block of 100 ISBNs, more than 70 titles – block of 1,000 titles. Publishers may also apply for a single ISBN from an element reserved for occasional publishers. The element does NOT identify any one particular publisher, and cannot be claimed to be owned by any one publisher. Publishers who are already registered are only required to pay the processing fee.**

- |  |   |           |
|--|---|-----------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Registration fee      | – | US\$20    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Single ISBN           | – | US\$20    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Block of 10 ISBNs     | – | US\$50    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Block of 100 ISBNs    | – | US\$300   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Block of 1,000 ISBNs  | – | US\$700   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Block of 10,000 ISBNs | – | US\$1,500 |

Name of Contact Person.....

Signature of Publisher.....

**FOR AGENCY USE ONLY**

Amount paid.....

Cheque information.....

Fees paid for             Registration             Processing

Element assigned.....

Date assigned.....

Assigning Officer.....

---

**Caribbean Community Secretariat  
Turkeyen  
P. O. Box 10827  
Georgetown  
Guyana  
Tel: 592 222 0001-0075  
Fax: 592 222 0170/71  
E-mail: [doccentre@caricom.org](mailto:doccentre@caricom.org)  
Website: <http://www.caricom.org>**

## APPENDIX IV

### NATIONAL ISBN AGENCIES

#### THE BAHAMAS

Mrs. Rosemary Munroe-Whyly  
Library Associate  
National ISBN Agency  
The College of the Bahamas  
P.O. Box N-4912  
Nassau

Tel: (242) 302-4552/4554/4517  
Fax: (242) 326-7834  
E-mail: [rmunroewhyly@yahoo.com](mailto:rmunroewhyly@yahoo.com)

#### BELIZE

Mrs. Precillia Thomas  
Belize National Library Service and Information System  
(BNLSIS)  
Turton Library Centre  
P.O. Box 287  
Belize City

Tel: (501) 227-3401  
Fax: (501) 223-4246  
E-mail: [preciliarivas@hotmail.com](mailto:preciliarivas@hotmail.com)  
URL: [www.nlsbze.org](http://www.nlsbze.org)

### JAMAICA

Ms. Valerie Francis  
Acquisitions Librarian  
National Library of Jamaica  
12 East Street, P.O. Box 823  
Kingston

Tel: (876) 967-2494/2496  
Fax: (876) 922-5567  
E-mail: [nljacq@hotmail.com](mailto:nljacq@hotmail.com)  
[nljacq@cwjamaica.com](mailto:nljacq@cwjamaica.com)  
URL: [www.nlj.org.jm](http://www.nlj.org.jm)

### TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Mrs. Sonelle Lewis-Archibald  
Clerk II (ag.)  
Technical Services Division  
National Library and Information System Authority (NALIS)  
TT ISBN Agency  
Cor. Abercromby and Hart Streets  
Port of Spain

Tel: (868) 623-6962/7278/9673  
(868) 624-4466 ext. 2018  
Fax: (868) 625-6096  
E-mail: [archibalds@nalis.gov.tt](mailto:archibalds@nalis.gov.tt)  
[nails@nalis.gov.tt](mailto:nails@nalis.gov.tt)  
URL: <http://www.nalis2.gov.tt/nationallibrary.htm>