

The Nigerian National Serial Data Centre

.....Being a paper read by Mrs. E. O. Igboisuah of the Nigerian Serial Data Centre at a Senior Staff Seminar of the National Library of Nigeria.

The Nigerian National Serial Data Centre (NNSDC) functions as part of an international network of operational centres jointly responsible for the creation and maintenance of computer-based data banks containing essential information for the identification of serials.

To understand and appreciate the work of the NNSDC therefore, it

ther with the vast growth in the world's publishing output has necessitated the development of a standard code for their identification.

Increasingly, libraries, as well as people involved in the publishing and distribution of printed materials, are turning to computers as the size and complexity of the output grow. This current trend in automation, and the

In 1971 a draft ISO standard for the creation of ISSN was therefore drawn up. The ISSN is a unique code for the identification of serial publications, which can be used wherever information on serials needs to be recorded or communicated. Control for assigning it and registering serials is vested in the International Serials Data System (ISDS) established within the framework of UNESCO'S World Science Information Programme (UNISIST).

In order to provide a basic foundation for ISDS a large number of serials published throughout the world were assigned ISSN by R. R. Bowker Co. in Ulrich's International Periodicals Directory; Irregular serials and Annuals; An International Directory and New Serial Titles 1950 - 1970 cumulation which lists the ISSN for about 220,000 titles. Thereafter the International Centre (IC) of ISDS in Paris took over.

Assignment and Construction of ISSN

An ISSN consists of eight (8) digits, made up of seven digits acting as a unique and unambiguous title number plus a check digit which is a device to guard against the computer accepting an incorrectly transcribed number. The ISSN is always quoted in two groups of four digits separated by a hyphen preceded by the letters ISSN. e.g. ISSN 1234 - 5679

It should be printed on all issues of a serial; preferably in the top right hand corner of the front cover or in the international bibliographic strip where used and quoted in all descriptive and promotional literature regarding the serial.

When an International Standard Book Number (ISBN) is also applicable (e.g. in monographic series) the two numbers should appear together, each preceded by its prefix,

E.g.: ISBN 0 - 8352 - 0824 - 9) for Ulrich's
ISSN 0000 - 0175) International
Periodicals Directory.



MRS. E. O. IGBOSUAH

is necessary to examine the operation of the International Serials Data System and the International Standard Serial Numbering which it controls.

An important clause in the agreement between the National Library of Nigeria and the ISDS International Centre for the establishment of the Nigerian Centre states: 'The National Centre shall carry out its functions in accordance with the operational policies of ISDS and adhere to the common procedures, rules and standard defined in "Guidelines for ISDS" and amendments thereto.'

Origin of the ISSN

Serials by their very nature, are often subject to changes in title, frequency and format. This fact toge-

ther with the vast growth in the world's publishing output has necessitated the development of a standard code for their identification.

In 1968 the United States American Standards Institution Z - 39 Committee established a sub-committee charged with developing a standard registration code for periodical and serial publications and later a draft working paper was issued.

Earlier on it was recognised that it was vital to achieve international agreement on a standard code and this led to the American draft standard being placed before the International Organisation for Standardisation Technical Committee (ISO/TC/46).

For the purposes of ISDS, a serial is a publication in print or in non-print form, issued in successive parts, usually having numerical or chronological designations, and intended to be continued indefinitely. Serials include periodicals, newspapers, annuals (reports, yearbooks, directories, etc) journals memoirs, proceedings, transactions etc. of societies, and monographic series.

This definition does not include works produced in successive parts for a period predetermined as finite, and it allows the inclusion of unnumbered series.

Advantages of ISSN

The ISSN of a serial will become as much as part of it as the title. The advantages are many:

- a) A single ISSN will identify a title in whatever language in whatever part of the world. This is possible because each serial is assigned a unique and unchangeable number according to a standard scheme, adopted internationally.
- b) It can provide an efficient and economical method of communication between publishers and suppliers making trade distribution systems faster and more efficient.
- c) ISSN can be used in libraries for identifying titles, ordering and acquisition of serials and claiming missing issues.
- d) It can simplify inter-library loan systems and union catalogue reporting and listing.
- e) ISSN has satisfied the need for a numeric code to be used for the international exchange of information about serials between different automated systems.

International Serials Data System (ISDS)

Historical Background

The ISDS is a result of resolutions adopted by the general conference of UNESCO at its fourteenth (1966) and fifteenth (1968) sessions. These resolutions authorised a feasibility study to be undertaken with the International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU) into the establishment of a World Scientific information system UNISIST.

Within this framework, the working

group on Bibliographic Description recognized the need for an internationally acceptable coding system for periodical titles, supported by an effective machinery for capturing, recording and disseminating accurate information of the serial literature.

Consequently, a study was carried out, which resulted in the "Report on the feasibility of an International Serials Data System, and preliminary design". This report was approved by the UNISIST Central Committee and recommended to UNESCO for implementation. The French government declared its willingness to establish the International Centre for ISDS.

Meanwhile, ISO/TC/46 had developed a proposal for the ISSN. It was agreed that sole responsibility for controlling the assignment of ISSN should rest with the International Centre.

In 1971, the present director of the IC, Mme Rosenbaum was appointed to carry out further study of the system. Her report was approved by UNISIST and in November 1972 the Director-General of UNESCO announced that the International Centre for ISDS has been created, as a result of negotiations between the government of France and UNESCO. He implored all member states to establish National Centres.

Objectives of the System

(a) The aim of the ISDS is to provide a reliable registry of world serial publications, covering the full range of recorded knowledge and containing essential information for the identification and bibliographic control of serials.

(b) ISDS has the responsibility to construct national, regional and international data banks containing unique and unambiguous identification of each serial title. It is responsible for making the information contained in its data banks available to all participating countries organizations and individual users.

(c) ISDS has the potential to provide internationally acceptable standards for the identification of serial publications. It offers a solution to problems inherent in the different identification conventions libraries, abstracting and indexing services and publishers and distributors.

Organisational Structure

ISDS is a two-tier system, consisting of an International Centre, and National and Regional Centres. There are now thirty-nine (39) National and two (2) Regional Centres whose activities are coordinated by the International Centre in Paris. It is hoped more centres will be established in the developing countries before the end of this year especially in Africa where only three (3) countries (Nigeria, Libya and Morocco) have centres.

The General Assembly of UNESCO elects members of the ISDS Governing Board which defines the general operating policy of ISDS; controls the programme and the budget of the IC; and examines the annual reports submitted by its Director. At the first meeting of the Governing Board in October 1976, the Director of the National Library of Nigeria, Mr. S.B. Aje, was elected its President for a two-year term.

The International Centre is assisted by a Technical Advisory Committee appointed by the Director of the IC in consultation with the Director General of UNESCO. The TAC consist of experts acting in their personal capacity, and working in the field of serial publications, design or management of automated information systems. It advises the IC on the full range of technical matters of concern to ISDS.

Operational Policies

ISDS Centres develop and maintain national, regional and international registers of serial publications. All records introduced into the data banks contain a basic set of data elements (twenty six in all) required for the unique and unambiguous identification of each serial, the main identifying elements being the ISSN and key-title. The registered information is currently available to users in all participating countries.

In developing the registers, emphasis is placed on new titles, current serials, and response to user demands. Systematic comprehensive registration starts with serials published after January 1971 and those which have changed their titles after that date. Retrospective registration carried out in response to user demand is usually in accord with the following priorities:

- a) Requests from publishers
- b) Maintenance requests from existing users.

c) Requests from new users.

The IC has sole responsibility for the allocation of blocks of ISSN to National and Regional Centres while these in turn are responsible for the assignment of ISSN to serials published in their territories. These ISSN will be assigned to key-titles as established by ISDS Centres in accordance with the rules defined in section 4 of Guidelines for ISDS. The ISSN assigned by R. R. Bowker to serials published prior to 1970 are regarded as provisional until validated by ISDS Centres.

Usually before a centre goes into operation, it signs a bilateral agreement with the IC. The agreement defines the centre's area of jurisdiction and its activities.

All records entered into national or regional files must be forwarded without delay, to the IC for incorporation into its data files, and dissemination to other ISDS Centres. The data transmittal sheets should be forwarded to the IC at least once a month.

To answer IC's requests as quickly as desirable and also to keep it informed of newly assigned ISSN and key-titles, centres could send photo copies of cover and title page bearing the ISSN and the key-title before forwarding the worksheet. The IC on its part keeps the centres informed of all additions, corrections and deletions to records in the IC files. The exchange of information between the ISDS Centres is free of charge.

The International Centre (IC)

As already stated the IC was established in Paris in 1972 by the French government and UNESCO who have been financing it since then. The Governing Board now has plans to increase IC's resources with contributions from UNESCO member states.

As the central operational agency for ISDS, the IC has the following responsibilities:

a) Establishment and maintenance of the ISDS international file which presently contains over 50,000 records. The IC handles about 3,500 worksheets and 450 requests per month

b) Dissemination of information from this file to ISDS Centres and other users through the publication of the bi-monthly ISDS Bulletin and the ISDS Register, etc. It supplies to all ISDS Centres on request

(i) a complete copy of the current master file in ISSN order

(ii) regular updating tapes, also in ISSN order.

Subsets of the ISDS file have been provided to organisations like ICSU AB which contributed data bases towards the establishment of the Base File

c) Promotion of the establishment of National and Regional Centres and coordination of the work. It publishes the Guidelines which is in six languages viz. English, French, Hungarian, Japanese, Russian and Spanish. Work on the ISDS Manual is nearing completion and the IC hopes to publish it this year. The IC is responsible for signing agreements with national organisations that establish centres and for assuring that such centres operate with the spirit of ISDS. It also registers serials originating from countries which have not established centres.

d) Communication and coordination of activities between ISDS and other International Organisation such as ICSU AB, IFLA, FID, ISO in all areas connected with ISDS. At least one member of the IC staff or its TAC serves as liaison representative to each of these organisations. The IFLA UBC office considers ISDS as the key organisation for the universal bibliographic control of serials. The IC director is a member of the UBC Advisory Committee and participates in the IFLA work on bibliographic description of serials.

The IC implements and maintains two ISO standards (the ISSN Standard List of Title word Abbreviations) and also participates in ISO/TC46 activities closely connected with ISDS. Members of the IC staff take part in working groups concerned with bibliographic description, romanization of written languages, presentation of serials, computer formats and character sets. The IC also submits to ISO proposals for needed standards and for the amendment of existing standards.

e) The IC convenes ISDS directors meetings annually and maintains constant communication with all centres.

f) It organises training for staff members from newly established centres and hopes to organise seminars for the staff of ISDS Centres in the near future.

The Nigerian National Serials

Data Centre

"The responsibility for the establishment of National and Regional Centres belongs to the respective governments which participate in the UNISIST Programme". Accordingly the invitation to the National Library of Nigeria to set up an ISDS Centre came from the Federal Ministry of Education (Nigerian National Commission for UNESCO) as far back as January 1973. It was realised that the NLN satisfied all the criteria for the choice of an institution to establish the centre viz:

- a) access to serials and working documents.
- b) professional involvement in information work on serials
- c) potential for establishing contacts with serials producers and users.

Although a prompt reply was sent, it was not until May 1974 that the Commission wrote to inform the National Library of Nigeria that it had been designated a National Centre. The National Library then wrote to the IC requesting for a block of ISSN for Nigerian serials. A block of 1,000 ISSN, photocopies of worksheets of Nigerian serials registered by the IC, a subset of the base file and a computer print out of Nigerian serials in the 15th ed of Ulrich's International Periodicals Directory were received in January 1976.

Three months later the IC wrote to say that it would no longer be responsible for assigning ISSN to Nigeria serials. Thereafter, background work commenced on the establishment of the Nigerian National Serials Data Centre. Owing to staffing problems, the centre did not start registration of serials until October 1976.

Functions and Responsibilities

of the NNSDC

As a member of the ISDS network, the work of the NNSDC involves:

- a) The assignment of ISSN to serials published in Nigeria and responding to demand from users within the country and from other ISDS Centres