

eBooks

identifying digital content

Michael Holdsworth



identifiers – what are they good for?

- discovery
 - knowing what's what
 - availability, metadata, description



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 - royalties, rights management
 - EPOS, cross-industry statistics (Nielsen)
 - national lending rights schemes, copyright clearance



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where E differs from P

- many business models: which this time?
 - at least twenty: purchase or subscribe or rent
 - tethered online or downloaded offline or both
- DRM: what can I do with what I've bought?
 - printing, copying, sharing: all or some or none
- will it work with the technology I've got?
 - devices and format wars
 - library platforms (preferred vendors)



ISBN – a faithful servant since the 1970s

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ISBN – a proven identifier, keeping pace

- revision 2005
 - dealt with capacity (running out)
 - explicitly embraced electronic publication
 - allowed for chapters and fragments
 - allowed for free-standing journal articles
- extension 2008
 - registrant prefixes available to eBook resellers
 - to allocate ISBNs to individual eBook formats if the publisher has not provided these or has used a composite identifier to cover many formats.

ISBN – the Standard defined

- *“applicable to monographic publications (or their individual sections or chapters where these are made separately available).”*

or in other words

- *not applicable for ‘continuous publications’, serials, journals, websites, licences, vouchers, rentals.*

ISBN – the Standard redefined

- *“Different product forms (e.g. hardcover, paperback, Braille, audio-book, video, online electronic publication) shall be assigned separate ISBNs.”*
- *“Each different format of an electronic publication (e.g. ‘.lit’, ‘.pdf’, ‘.html’, ‘.aav’) that is published and made separately available shall be given a separate ISBN.”*



composite ISBNs and “eISBNs”

- a perfectly understandable expedient, but:
 - the standard does not permit this, for good reasons
 - there is no such thing as an “eISBN”, only ISBNs
 - industry systems will not cope with composite ISBNs
 - using ‘umbrella’ composite ISBNs
(or home-made ISBN-like 13-digit identifiers)
 - may look like a good internal solution for publishers
 - but they will inevitably leak from internal systems
 - and they won’t be permitted by Nielsen and Bowker
 - and they won’t work in any public supply chain context
 - and they won’t work for wholesalers, booksellers, partners



no real choice for publishers

- allocate individual ISBNs to all formats
 - if the product needs to be discovered, traded, reported on
 - if it is out in the supply chain and needs Bowker listing
- or allow booksellers, resellers to allocate ISBNs
 - now permissible with their own prefixes
 - resellers will do /are doing this now
 - they have no alternative but to differentiate
 - who's the publisher? a new secondary right?
- no way around bloat and complexity
 - computers made for this



other contenders

- Digital Object Identifier (DOI)?
- International Standard Text Identifier (ISTC)?
- OEB – now the IDPF's .epub?



DOI – an actionable label

- persistent, dynamic, updatable, managed
- links and facilitates
- navigates the user
 - to an online landing page or pages
 - to an e-commerce offer
 - to the resource itself
 - to multiple options
- no requirement for the object to be digital



DOI – a brilliant new identifier

- BUT not a substitute for ISBN
 - to describe DOI as the ISBN of digital content is misleading and unhelpful
 - the two identifiers serve entirely different purposes
 - the two identifiers are not interchangeable.
 - DOI was never intended as a supply chain identifier
 - ISBN-based commercial, invoicing and accounting systems won't recognise DOIs



ISTC – another brilliant new identifier

- up a level to the ‘work’; piloting 2008-9
- BUT not a substitute for ISBN
 - potentially the most important book industry standard since the ISBN
 - for consolidation
 - for collocation
 - for archiving
 - an attribute (qualifier) for an ISBNable product
 - (not the other way around!)



“ISTC” only precedes the code for display purposes

4-digit
“year element”

Hyphens or spaces are for display purposes

ISTC 0A9-2008-00000007-C

3-hexadecimal
“registration agency element”

8-hexadecimal
“work element”

Hexadecimal
check digit

- 4,096 available registration agencies
- each can register up to 4,294,967,296 annually
- capacity 17,592,186,044,416 ISTCs annually...

Moby-Dick

one 'work' or many 'works'

978-0-1234567- 7-X	Penguin Popular Classics
978-0-1234567- 8-X	Wordsworth Classics
978-0-1234567- 9-X	Norton Critical Editions
978-0-1234567- 0-X	Oxford World's Classics
978-0-1234568- 1-X	Barnes & Noble Classics
978-0-1234568- 2-X	Dover Giant Thrift Edition
978-0-1234568- 3-X	Sterling Pop-Up Edition
978-0-1234568- 4-X	Penguin Classics Deluxe
978-0-1234568- 5-X	Longman Critical Editions
978-0-1234568- 6-X	Wiley CliffsNotes
978-0-1234568- 7-X	In Half the Time Compact Editions
978-0-1234568- 8-X	Modern Library Classics



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Oxford World Classics Moby-Dick

ISTC 0A1-2007-12B4A105-7

has these identical text ‘manifestations’
print

978-0-1234567- 1-X hardback

978-0-1234567- 2-X paperback

978-0-1234567- 3-X large-print

downloadable eBook *available from multiple retailers*

978-0-1234567- 4-X Adobe eBook Reader

978-0-1234567- 5-X Mobipocket

downloadable audiobook *available from multiple retailers*

978-0-1234567- 6-X Windows Media

the ISTC is in the metadata (ONIX) for each of these ISBNs, enabling linking and collocation



eBook/audiobook *vendor-specific*

978-0-1234567- 7-X	Sony eReader
978-0-1234567- 8-X	Amazon Kindle
978-0-1234567- 9-X	perpetual online Amazon
978-0-1234567- 0-X	perpetual online Publisher's own site
978-0-1234568- 1-X	print/online Amazon Upgrade
978-0-1234568- 2-X	downloadable audible.com
978-0-1234568- 3-X	downloadable iTunes

library eBook *vendor-specific; 'tethered' access/downloadable*

978-0-1234568- 4-X	Overdrive DL Reserve
978-0-1234568- 5-X	netLibrary
978-0-1234568- 6-X	Ingram MyiLibrary
978-0-1234568- 7-X	ebrary
978-0-1234568- 8-X	Dawsonera
978-0-1234568- 9-X	BlackwellECHO



.epub – a critical breakthrough

- a new standard to rationalise format wars
- **but** a real source of confusion
 - .epub as a single distribution/carrier/production file
 - nothing to do with the supply-chain universe of discovery, trading, reporting
 - simplifies life for publishers and resellers
 - but does not remove the requirement for granular identification at the product level
 - ineligible for ISBN since it's a file which no-one can buy, sell, invoice or catalogue



to summarise

- ISBN is fit for purpose for eBooks
- ISBN isn't appropriate for serials, websites, licences
- each separate digital product needs its own ISBN
- composite “eISBNs” are simply not allowed
- DOI and ISTC are great, but no substitutes for ISBN
- publishers need to accept that resellers will allocate ISBNs, unless they themselves take control and pre-issue ISBNs for individual eBook formats



and finally

- what identifiers for eBook copyright pages?
 - must uniquely identify the digital format
 - ideally:
 - all format ISBNs: print and eBook
 - second-best
 - just this eBook format ISBN
 - better-than-nothing
 - just the print ISBNs for reference;
no eBook format ISBNs
 - never a composite “ISBN” covering all eBook formats





thank you

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