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The Book Industry Study Group, Inc.

ISBN-13

FOR DUMMIES[®]

Special Edition

Everything you need
to know about the
ISBN-13 transition

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for the
Rest of Us!**[®]

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FOR
DUMMIES®
SPECIAL EDITION

Edited by Zoë Wykes



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We're proud of this book; please send us your comments through our online registration form located at www.dummies.com/register/.

Some of the people who helped bring this book to market include the following:

Acquisitions, Editorial, and Media Development

Senior Project Editor: Zoë Wykes

Editorial Manager: Rev Mengle

Composition Services

Project Coordinator: Ryan Steffen

Layout and Graphics: Denny Hager

Proofreaders: Laura Albert

Special Help from BISG: Angela Bole, Tom Clarkson, Laura Dawson, Rachel Rushefsky

Publishing and Editorial for Technology Dummies

Richard Swadley, Vice President and Executive Group Publisher

Andy Cummings, Vice President and Publisher

Mary Bednarek, Executive Acquisitions Director

Mary C. Corder, Editorial Director

Publishing for Consumer Dummies

Diane Graves Steele, Vice President and Publisher

Joyce Pepple, Acquisitions Director

Composition Services

Gerry Fahey, Vice President of Production Services

Debbie Stailey, Director of Composition Services

Introduction

On January 1, 2007, the ISBN agency will begin issuing 13-digit ISBNs — giving the book industry less than two years to transition from 10-digit to 13-digit ISBNs. After January 1, 2007, publishers must assign only 13-digit ISBNs to their books, and retailers must accept 13-digit ISBNs in their sales systems.

In this document, we discuss the issues you need to be aware of during the transition. The information we provide is important to know — whether you're a beginner or an advanced ISBN user.

Icons Used in This Book

Throughout this document, you see four different icons. Here's what they mean to you.



Think of these nuggets of information as information to tattoo on your brain.



This little guy alerts you to information that not everyone will want to know. It's okay to skip this part if you're so inclined.



When you see this icon, you'll find an extra valuable tidbit that is bound to be worthwhile.



Heads up when you see this icon. This is where we tell you mistakes you can make that will guarantee you'll have problems down the road if you don't pay attention.

Where to Go from Here

What are ya waitin' for? Simply move to the next page and start reading.

ISBN-13: Everything You Need to Know

In This Document

- ▶ Defining an ISBN
 - ▶ Understanding the components of an ISBN
 - ▶ Changing the ISBN from 10 to 13 digits
 - ▶ Getting it: ISBN-13s *are* EANs
 - ▶ Working with ISBN-13
 - ▶ Transitioning to ISBN-13
 - ▶ Becoming fully ISBN-13 compliant
 - ▶ Using ISBNs and bar codes
 - ▶ Knowing what to do when the ISBN on your book is printed wrong
 - ▶ Discovering nifty Web sites to reference for ISBN information
-

In this document, you find out what an ISBN is, how an ISBN is used, and what the components of an ISBN are. *ISBN-13 For Dummies* also explains the January 2007 transition of the ISBN from a 10-digit number to a 13-digit number. The purpose of this document is to help you understand how to work with ISBNs during and after the ISBN-13 transition, what things about ISBNs aren't going to change, and how to handle the changes that are coming.

What Is an ISBN?

ISBN stands for International Standard Book Number — a unique identifier assigned to each edition of every published book and book-like product. Think of ISBNs as catalog numbers for books. Just as any business needs to distinguish between its catalog items, so do *trading partners* (the people you do business with) in the book industry need to distinguish, for example, between the hardcover edition of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* and the paperback edition. The ISBN allows you to make this distinction.



The U.S. ISBN agency Web site (www.isbn.org) defines an ISBN as follows: “The International Standard Book Number (ISBN) is a 10-digit number that uniquely identifies books and book-like products published internationally. The purpose of the ISBN is to establish and identify one title or edition of a title from one specific publisher and it is unique to that edition, allowing for more efficient marketing of products by booksellers, libraries, universities, wholesalers and distributors.”

In general, national ISBN agencies allocate ISBNs to publishers, who in turn assign them to books and book-like products.

Unlike books and book-like products, music and videos — products primarily for entertainment — are usually assigned a number called a *UPC* (Universal Product Code) or an *EAN*, not an ISBN. (See the section “ISBN-13s Are EANs” later in this document for a definition of EAN.) However, audio book cassettes and CDs that are primarily narrations of stories and poems or instructional material are eligible for ISBNs. These media can contain music, but in order to have an ISBN assigned, the music must be secondary to the spoken word.



To get an ISBN for your book or book-like product, you must go to your national ISBN agency. In the U.S., the national ISBN agency is R. R. Bowker, and you can find its Web site at www.isbn.org. There, you’ll not only get an ISBN application to complete, but the directions about how to use ISBNs as well.

Any time you change the binding or format, introduce new material, or change existing material, you must get (or assign) a new ISBN for your book. You do not, however, need to assign a new ISBN if you’re simply changing the cover price.



When you order your ISBNs from R. R. Bowker, you won’t actually get *an* ISBN; the ISBN agency allocates ISBNs in batches of 10, 100, 1,000, and 10,000. You then assign one of the ISBNs in the batch to the book you’re preparing to publish, banking the rest for future use.

The Components of an ISBN

Until the change from 10- to 13-digit ISBNs takes place in January 2007, an ISBN is a 10-digit number that’s divided by hyphens into four parts:

- ✓ **Part I:** Identifies the country in which the ISBN is assigned.
- ✓ **Part II:** Identifies the publisher to whom the ISBN was originally allocated. Keep in mind, however, that as publishers buy and sell various *imprints* (subsidiaries of a publishing house) or parts of imprints, this part of the ISBN becomes less and less reliable as a way to identify the

publisher of the title. If one publishing house sells an imprint to another publishing house, this part of the ISBN doesn't change. Therefore, Part II of an ISBN can become meaningless in terms of identifying a book's current publisher.

- ✓ **Part III:** Identifies the title.
- ✓ **Part IV:** The *check digit* (the last digit in an ISBN). The check digit ensures that each ISBN is *valid*, meaning that the number is correct. The concept of a check digit will become clearer as you move through this document. **Note:** The “X” that you see at the end of some ISBNs is a Roman numeral, a way of putting the number “10” into a single digit.



Parts II and III of an ISBN-10 vary in length as to how the numbers are grouped, but the total number of digits in an ISBN-10 is always 10.

Transitioning the ISBN from 10 to 13 Digits

The ISBN was originally developed as a 10-digit number, which for more than three decades has performed extremely well as a catalog number for books. However, the International ISBN Agency has determined that sometime in the not-too-distant future they will begin to run out of 10-digit numbers for publishers. Accordingly, in January 2007, the ISBN will be redefined from a 10-digit to a 13-digit number.



By industry agreement, the 10-digit ISBN is referred to as “ISBN-10” and the 13-digit ISBN is referred to as “ISBN-13.”

So many ISBNs, so little time . . .

Recently, increased demand for phone numbers within the borough of Manhattan led to the adoption of a second area code. As a result, people placing phone calls within Manhattan are now required to include the area code—which

means dialing ten digits instead of just seven—so that each phone number remains unique. In much the same way, the book industry is expanding the ISBN from 10 to 13 digits so that it too remains unique.

ISBN-13s Are EANs

The goal of obtaining additional numbers for books could have been reached by changing the ISBN-10 to an 11-digit number rather than a 13-digit one. The 13-digit number was chosen, however, because by redefining the ISBN in this way, the number can become part of a larger system of identifiers called EAN. EANs are 13-digit identifiers assigned to all products available for retail sale worldwide. In short, using the 13-digit ISBN will make it easier to distribute and sell books worldwide. **Note:** In the beginning, EAN stood for European Article Number. Although the identifier is now officially named the *International Article Number*, it maintains the shortened moniker EAN.



You may have heard of something called a “Bookland EAN.” A number called the “Bookland EAN” has been used in the bar code on books since the early 1980s. This number incorporated all ISBN-10s worldwide into products sold by the fictitious country of “Bookland.” The new ISBN-13 is identical to the Bookland EAN.



Some of the following information may get a bit confusing. However, the most important thing to remember when reading it is that when someone talks about a Bookland EAN, think “ISBN-13” and you’ll be fine. As stated before, the new ISBN-13 is identical to the Bookland EAN.

Okay, here goes: Two “prefixes,” 978 and 979, are assigned to “Bookland.” All EANs *currently* assigned to book products (Bookland EANs) begin with 978 and are constructed in the same way as the ISBN-10 (refer to the section, “The Components of an ISBN,” earlier in this document). Although only 978 prefixes have been used so far, as the supply of 978 numbers is exhausted, the 979 prefix will be issued to many new ISBN-13s.



The final digit of an ISBN-13, just like the final digit of an ISBN-10, is called the *check digit*. Because check digits are calculated based on the numbers contained within the ISBN (and the numbers contained within an ISBN-10 and an ISBN-13 are slightly different) the check digits of each will almost always differ. **Note:** Although we won’t go into detail here, it’s important to note that the formulas for calculating the check digit for an ISBN-10 and an ISBN-13 are also different.



The *difference* between a Bookland EAN and an ISBN-13 is strictly that of terminology. The book industry concluded that using the term “ISBN-13” — rather than “Bookland EAN” — would be less confusing to booksellers because rather than being the introduction of a new system, the ISBN-13 is really an extension of the existing ISBN system.

Working with ISBN-13

Until January 1, 2007, when you order ISBNs from the ISBN agency, you'll be allocated blocks of ISBN-10s. After January 2007, the ISBN agency will allocate only blocks of ISBN-13s.

Handling the full ISBN-13

Because many of the new ISBN-13s will eventually begin with 979 instead of 978, your systems must be able to accommodate the 13-digit numbers *in their entirety*. Be aware that sometimes designers of both internal and external computer systems will take shortcuts by storing a common prefix separately from the core number. In the case of the ISBN, for example, system designers could choose to store a common 978 prefix separately from a constantly changing 10-digit core number; This approach will *not* work for ISBN-13s because, as previously noted, the prefix for these numbers could be *either* 978 or 979: a common prefix simply won't apply.



You will need to modify any paper form or computer system that uses the ISBN-10 so that it will accept the full ISBN-13.



Your computer systems will have to accept ISBNs with prefixes of both 978 and 979. To be safe, however, retailers and distributors should build their systems to accept any valid 13-digit EAN, because these organizations frequently handle non-book product (such as note paper and greeting cards) as well as books.

Banking your ISBN-10s

You may have some unassigned ISBN-10s remaining after January 2007. Don't worry! You won't need to throw out or trade in your bank of ISBN-10s after the transition occurs: you can convert them into ISBN-13s yourself. To find out how, see the steps in the following section, "Converting your ISBN-10s to ISBN-13s" — and hold on to your ISBN-10s for future use.

Converting your ISBN-10s to ISBN-13s

To change an ISBN-10 to an ISBN-13, follow these three basic steps:

1. Drop the check digit (the last digit) from your existing ISBN-10.

For example, your ISBN-10 is 0-940016-73-7. By dropping the check digit (7), you get a 9-digit number, 0-940016-73.

2. Add the prefix “978” to the beginning of your 9-digit number.

Your 9-digit 0-940016-73 now becomes 12 digits, 978-0-940016-73.

3. Recalculate your check digit using the modulus 10 check digit routine.

Note: The modulus 10 check digit routine is the current routine used to calculate the check digit for the Bookland EAN.

Here’s how, using the calculations shown in Table 1-1.

ISBN =	9	7	8	0	9	4	0	0	1	6	7	3
Weighting Factors	1	3	1	3	1	3	1	3	1	3	1	3
Values (product)	9+	21+	8+	0+	9+	12+	0+	0+	1+	18+	7+	9 = 94

a. Using the 12-digit number from Step 2, shown in Table 1-1, multiply each digit by the weighting factor shown beneath it in the table.

In this example, you have $(9 \times 1) + (7 \times 3) + (8 \times 1) + (0 \times 3) \dots$ and so on.

b. Add the resulting values together.

The sum of the values equals 94.

c. Divide the sum by the modulus (which is 10).

Divide 94 by 10. Your result is 9, with a remainder of 4.

d. Using the standard modulus (10), subtract the remainder from 10 to get the check digit (last digit).

In this example, 10 minus 4 equals the check digit of 6. $(10 - 4 = 6)$.

Note: This formula does have one exception: Whenever the remainder is zero (0), the check digit is always zero (0) as well.

e. Add the check digit to the end of the 12-digit number created in Step 2. The conversion from an ISBN-10 to an ISBN-13 is complete.

The ISBN-13 becomes 978-0-940016-73-6.

Converting ISBN-13s back to ISBN-10s

During the transition period until January 2007, some trading partners may be moving faster into ISBN-13 usage than others. Because not everyone will be ready at the same time, until January 2007 you may need to convert some of your ISBN-13s to ISBN-10s. During this time, all ISBNs stated as ISBN-13s will have a prefix of 978. ISBN-13s with a prefix of 978 can be converted back to their ISBN-10 equivalents if necessary.

Converting 979 ISBN-13s to ISBN-10s: Stop! Don't Do It!

As previously stated, after January 2007, more and more ISBN-13s will begin to be distributed with a 979 prefix. **Note:** These “979” ISBN-13s *do not* have ISBN-10 equivalents. To illustrate why this point is important, think about this example: Sometime in 2007, Publisher A may have a novel with a 978 ISBN-13 and Publisher B may have a computer book with a 979 ISBN-13, with both numbers calculating back to the same 10-digit ISBN. But, because no two books can have the same ISBN, one of the 10-digit numbers would obviously be wrong. And, because the two ISBNs would be duplicates, they would no longer serve as unique identifiers. This duplication could cause extreme complications within the supply chain.



Never attempt to convert an ISBN-13 beginning with 979 to an ISBN-10. The ISBN-10 has no equivalent to an ISBN-13 beginning with 979.

Transitioning to ISBN-13

During the transition period leading up to January 2007, issues related to both the physical appearance of the ISBN on your publication and the way you communicate the ISBN within your database systems need to be addressed. This section deals with the concepts of dual numbering, database reconfiguration, and the potential for future 14-digit communications down the line.

Dual numbering

The Book Industry Study Group (BISG) decided early in the process that the move to ISBN-13 should be a phased transition rather than an abrupt cut-over. Thus, organizations in the book industry are urged to proceed with the

change — but somewhat at their own pace. During the transition period, for example, one of the primary recommendations is that both human-readable ISBN-10s and ISBN-13s be used whenever possible. We call this practice *dual numbering*.

Dual numbering is applicable for the following:

- ✓ A book's copyright page
- ✓ A book's back cover
- ✓ Catalogs
- ✓ Printed invoices
- ✓ Printed statements

For BISG timeframe recommendations and examples of dual numbering, check out the following Web site:

bisg.org/pi/bisac_overall_considerations.html



All book industry members must be able to accept and use the ISBN-13 by January 2007, but not all will be ready at the same time — which is why dual numbering is so advantageous during this transition period.

Reconfiguring databases

Although the ISBN itself is changing to 13 digits, the Book Industry Study Group recommends that the product identifier in all databases be expanded to 14 digits, rather than to only 13. Organizations that do not expand their database fields to 14 digits may find themselves at a disadvantage down the line. Here's why.

The reason for expanding the product identifiers within databases to 14 digits is to provide for the future implementation of something called the *Global Trade Identification Number (GTIN)*. The GTIN is a family of numbers that encompasses the entire range of product identifiers, expressed in a 14-digit field. In the future, it may become necessary to express the product identifier in 14-digit GTIN format rather than as a 13-digit ISBN. Although the GTIN may not be fully utilized by all trading partners, BISG is concerned that some organizations may unknowingly restrict their future options if they do not arrange to communicate in 14 digits now.



For the book industry, the ISBN-13 will be expressed as a GTIN with the addition of a leading digit designating the packaging level (individual items, case quantity, pallet quantity, and so on). Defining exactly how the GTIN will be used is yet to come, but the Book Industry Study Group advocates planning for it now so that you won't have to deal with major changes within database systems again.

You can find additional information about the GTIN at:

- ✓ www.ean-int.org/gtinrules/
- ✓ www.gtin.info/
- ✓ www.uc-council.org/ean_ucc_system/pdf/GTIN.pdf

Communicating electronically in 14 digits

Just as with databases, the Book Industry Study Group urges all trading partners in the book industry to use 14-digit fields for product identification in electronic communications (except for bibliographic data).

The reason (again) is to provide for the future expression of the product identifier in GTIN format. Although the GTIN may not be utilized by all trading partners, BISG is concerned that some organizations may unknowingly restrict their future options if they do not arrange to communicate in 14 digits now.

Becoming ISBN-13 Compliant

Here's a brief checklist of the things you need to do to become compliant with the ISBN-13 by 2007:

- ✓ Inform all relevant parties within your company: IT departments, operations management, data management, sales/promotional coordinators, any employee who communicates with others in the book industry.
- ✓ Examine all company hardware and software containing product identifiers, make necessary upgrades, and thoroughly test each upgrade.
- ✓ Contact all third parties — printers, bar code suppliers, trading partners — to alert them to the move to ISBN-13.

Working with ISBNs and Bar Codes

Because ISBNs tell retailers which books they're selling, the ISBNs need to be encoded onto books as bar codes easily scannable at the retail point of sale. As retailers scan bar codes (with the ISBN encoded) at the cash register, their inventories are directly affected. This inventory relationship is why bar codes are critical to retailers. Most reorders occur as a direct result of scanning and selling a book; accurate identification of books through bar code scanning at point of sale is critical to retailers when generating reorders.



If your books aren't bar coded, retailers might refuse to sell them, or they might sticker them with a bar code and charge you for doing so.

Some particular points to keep in mind about the bar code follow:

- ✓ The ISBN, preceded by the letters *ISBN*, is to appear in human-readable font (as opposed to scan-readable) above the bar code.
- ✓ The Bookland EAN bar code is to be positioned at the bottom of the back cover or jacket.
- ✓ The Bookland EAN bar code — without the human-readable ISBN above it — is also to appear on *Cover 2* (the inside front cover) of *strippable* paperback books (the front cover is “stripped,” or removed, from the overall book and returned by retailers and/or distributors to publishers for credit).
- ✓ As requested by some retailers, a supplemental 5-digit add-on symbol may be used to encode cover prices.



BISG recommends that any book with a U.S. cover price have that price encoded in the Bookland EAN price add-on.

Bar coding can get pretty technical. For more information on bar coding, go to www.bisg.org/pi/barcode_considerations.html.

ISBN-13 bar codes contain no changes

Although the ISBN is changing from ISBN-10 to ISBN-13, the *Bookland EAN bar code* (the number encoded in the bar code) won't be changing at all. All books that are presently marked with the Bookland EAN are correctly bar coded, both for the present and the future. No changes to the symbology used in bar codes for books will occur.



You may be wondering whether you have to reprint all your backlist titles to reflect the ISBN-13. If you have a Bookland EAN bar code on your backlist titles, the answer is, no. The Bookland EAN bar code already carries the number that will be the ISBN-13.

ISBNs and UPCs

The UPC bar code system has been the standard *machine-readable code* (the code picked up by scanners at cash registers) for general retail points of sale in the United States and Canada for more than 30 years. This bar code is also used at many other points in the supply chain (warehousing, returns, and so on). The UPC comes in two flavors: the Item-Specific UPC and the Price-Point UPC.



Because many general retailers haven't been able to process the 13-digit Bookland EAN bar code in the past, many books that sell in general retail outlets and traditional bookstores have both the Bookland EAN *and* the UPC bar codes on the back cover — also known as *Cover 4*. However, now that general retailers are becoming able to read, process, and store 13-digit bar codes, BISG policy recommends that the book industry move toward putting the Bookland EAN bar code — and only the Bookland EAN — on Cover 4.

For additional details, check out these documents:

- ✓ Book Industry Study Group's "FAQ — ISBN-13 and the Removal of UPC":
www.bisg.org/barcoding/isbn13_changes.html
- ✓ "What's Happening When? — The Timelines":
www.bisg.org/pi/bisac_overall_considerations.html
- ✓ A presentation at a BISG special session that addresses ISBN-13 issues in detail: www.bisg.org/docs/BISG_Special_Session_09-23-04.pdf
- ✓ BISG's official ISBN-13 policy:
www.bisg.org/docs/BISG_policy_001.pdf

Argh, I can't deal with all of this! Can someone else create the bar code for me?

Absolutely! Most small presses prefer to go to a bar code supplier to get their bar codes created. You can find a list of bar code suppliers at www.bisg.org/barcoding/bc_suppliers.html or www.isbn.org/standards/home/isbn/us/barcode.asp.

Help! The ISBN Printed on My Book Is Wrong!

Scanning a copy of the cover when it returns from the printer — to make sure that the bar code gives the proper ISBN — is always a good idea. If it doesn't have the proper ISBN and reprinting is not an option, the product must be *restickered*. **Note:** Restickering entails printing the correct bar code on a sticker and manually placing this sticker over the incorrect bar code on each book. Sometimes, however, books make it all the way out into the marketplace before anyone notices that the ISBN or the bar code is incorrect. This, of course, is bad.



If the book has already left your warehouse with an incorrect bar code, your trading partners must be notified of the problem and given the correct ISBN. Some companies resticker all products as a matter of policy; others require that the publisher fix any mistakes in the ISBN or the bar code, and may make chargebacks if they have to provide that service.

Ten (Okay, Thirteen) Book Industry Web Sites

In keeping with all *For Dummies* books, the following list provides you with ten or more elements of useful information. In this case, we give you thirteen Web sites that you'll find extremely useful for all things ISBN related.

✓ Applying for ISBNs:

www.isbn.org

✓ Reading up on Bookland EAN and bar coding:

www.bisg.org/BISG_annual_meeting.html;

www.bisg.org/barcoding/isbn13_changes.html;

www.bisg.org/pi/barcode_considerations.html;

www.bisg.org/docs/BISG_Special_Session_09-23-04.pdf;

www.bisg.org/docs/BISG_policy_001.pdf

✓ Discovering bar code suppliers:

www.isbn.org/standards/home/isbn/us/barcode.asp;

www.bisg.org/barcoding/bc_suppliers.html

✔ Getting up to speed on ISBN-13 implementation:

www.bisg.org/pi/bisac_overall_considerations.html

✔ Going forward with the GTIN:

www.ean-int.org/gtinrules/;

www.gtin.info/

✔ Getting up to speed on electronic communications:

www.bisg.org/docs/BISG_Policy_003.pdf;

bisg.org/docs/BISG_EDI_Roadmap.pdf

Appendix A

Glossary



bar code: A form of technology that allows information about products to be collected quickly and efficiently. Data is coded into parallel black bars and white spaces of varying widths, which are read by moving a scanning device from one side of the code to the other. The pattern is then analyzed by a decoder, and the data is recovered from a computer and appears on the screen. The system is mainly used in supermarkets and other retail outlets.

book products: Products produced by the book industry and given a product identifier, or number, that falls within the range of identifiers assigned to the book industry (such as calendars, audio products, and gift products, all of which carry an ISBN).

Bookland EAN: A Bookland EAN refers to the EANs that are assigned to book and book-like products only.

EAN: The ISBN is a subset of a larger identifier called EAN, which is a 13-digit identifier assigned to all products available for retail sale.

GTIN: The Global Trade Identification Number, a 14-digit number that encompasses the entire realm of product identifiers. For the book industry, the GTIN is the ISBN-13, with a leading digit that represents the quantity in which the product is shipped.

ISBN: An ISBN is a unique identifier assigned to each edition of every published book. All ISBNs convert to a 13-digit number. When an ISBN-10 is converted to an ISBN-13, “978” is added to the beginning as a prefix.

ISBN-13: Beginning in January 2007, the ISBN agencies will begin issuing ISBNs with a prefix of “979,” requiring that the ISBN-10 be discontinued and the full 13-digit number be used.

Item-Specific UPC: A UPC whose numbering system identifies the product, rather than the price of the item. *See also* Price-Point UPC

nonstrippable: Either a non-returnable product, or a product that requires the whole copy be returned to the publisher for credit. *See also* strippable

Price-Point UPC: A UPC whose numbering system identifies the price, rather than the product. *See also* Item-Specific UPC

strippable: A book (usually a mass-market paperback) whose front cover can be returned to the publisher for credit. *See also* nonstrippable

trading partners: Two or more companies who transact business together.

UPC: The Universal Product Code. A numbering system that traditionally has been the standard machine-readable code; in the United States and Canada, the UPC has consisted of 12 digits. As more and more retailers become able to scan Bookland EAN bar codes as a result of the ISBN-13 transition, the use of UPC on books and book-like products will be discontinued.