



Countdown to ISBN-13: Top Five Most Common Mistakes

As part of our ongoing efforts to facilitate the transition to ISBN-13, the BISG Office has identified five common mistakes to avoid:



1. **Confusing the '979' and '978' ISBN prefixes.** When converting a 10-digit ISBN to 13-digits, use only the 978 ISBN prefix. No ISBNs that currently exist in 10-digit form will ever have the 979 prefix. There is no 10-digit equivalent for ISBNs beginning with 979. (For the complete BISG report on Erroneous Bookland EAN Bar Codes visit http://www.bisg.org/docs/erroneous_barcodes.pdf.)
2. **Not recalculating the check digit.** When a 10-digit ISBN is converted to 13-digits, the check digit must be recalculated; 978 cannot simply be added to the front of the 10-digit number. If the check digit is not recalculated, the result will be an invalid ISBN. For more information on ISBN conversion rules visit <http://www.bisg.org/isbn-13/converters.html>.
3. **Acquiring ISBNs from any source besides the U.S. ISBN Agency.** Several independently operated websites offering to sell ISBNs have popped up online recently. The "ISBNs" these sites sell are not valid. Publishers requiring ISBNs for their publications must contact the U.S. ISBN Agency at www.isbn.org. No other source can assign legitimate ISBNs to US publishers. Only ISBNs assigned by the US ISBN Agency will be supported in the supply chain.
4. **Maintaining internal system work-arounds.** Sometime after January 1, 2007, the U.S. ISBN Agency will begin distributing valid 13-digit ISBNs beginning with the new 979 prefix. Because there is no 10-digit equivalent for ISBN-13s beginning with 979, systems must be able to accommodate the full 13-digit numbers in their entirety. Be aware that designers of both internal and external computer systems sometimes take shortcuts by storing a common prefix separately from the core number. In the case of currently existing ISBNs, for example, system designers might choose to store the 978 prefix separately from the constantly changing 10-digit core. For obvious reasons, this approach will not work when there are two ISBN prefixes to consider.
5. **Configuring EDI systems with rigid identifier location requirements.** Flexibility is essential when structuring EDI transactions so that an organization can seamlessly cross over to ISBN-13 independently of the status of its various trading partners. ASC X12 EDI mapping that requires data always to be present and sent in fixed field positions can be limiting and inefficient. It is the recommendation of BISG's ISBN-13 Task Force and Supply Chain EDI committees that EDI systems be configured to receive and transmit all three major identifiers (ISBN-10, ISBN-13, GTIN-14), with their unique qualifiers, in any order. For more information about recommended EDI strategies for the book industry and the 13-digit ISBN, visit <http://www.bisg.org/documents/edi.html>.

For comprehensive information about the ISBN-13 transition visit
www.bisg.org/isbn-13