

ISSN STRATEGIC PLAN 2006-2014

Background

Introduction

The ISSN adopted in 2006 a new strategic plan for the years 2006-2012.

A working group made of members of the ISSN Governing Board¹ was established to lead the preliminary work. Input was collected from experts representing different communities interested in the ISSN system (publishers, subscription agents, other standards in relation with ISSN, libraries, identification and access systems) and from the ISSN network (Governing Board, General Assembly, Directors of ISSN national Centres, ISSN International Centre)². The work benefited from the help of an external consultant³.

The version adopted in 2006 reflects the discussions which were held during the Governing Board and General Assembly meetings and the comments received from the network that same year.

During the ISSN General Assembly meeting held in Paris in April 2012, the ISSN Member Countries identified four new strategic topics, and decided that the present Strategic Plan should remain valid until 2014, so as to enable a full analysis and integration of those topics into a future ISSN strategic plan.

Those four new topics are:

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² We are most grateful to all contributors : Sonia Bosc, Danièle Duclos-Faure, Brian Green, René Lloret, Liz McKeen, Cliff Morgan, Paul Mostert, Glenn Patton, Regina Reynolds, David Thomas, Rollo Turner, Jasenka Zajec, the ISSN Governing Board and General Assembly, the Directors of ISSN National Centres, and the ISSN IC staff, with special thanks to Pierre Godefroy, Alain Roucolle and Sophie Vincent.

³ Alain Elkaim (PlumE)

- Analysis of the changes in publishing and consequences of those changes for the ISSN system.
- Development of the Linked data technology and bibliographic framework changes, consequences for the ISSN system.
- Definition and implementation of new and innovative products and services.
- Definition and implementation of the future new computer system of the ISSN International Centre.

Four working groups were established; they are made of members of the ISSN Governing Board and of the ISSN International Centre. Those working groups may be helped and supported by external experts and consultants, according to the needs.

Once the results of the analysis are known, and the strategic decisions made by the ISSN General Assembly and Governing Board, the present economic model of ISSN will be reviewed so as to assess that it adequately supports the strategic orientations of the ISSN system, and adapted if necessary.

Finally, a new draft strategic plan should be submitted to the ISSN General Assembly to be held in 2014.

Mission and vision

The mission of the ISSN system is to uniquely identify serials and other continuing resources, regardless of the medium of publication, through the assignment of persistent identifiers : International Standard Serial numbers. This mission is achieved through an organization, the ISSN Network, which assigns the ISSN numbers and establishes identification metadata, and through a set of common rules and tools – among which the ISSN Register, a database which gathers all ISSN assigned by the Network.

Identification was already a stake in the print world : there is no reliable transaction without reliable identification, there is no access to information without previous reliable identification.

In the electronic world, those stakes have become even more fundamental, and public identification systems such as ISSN have an even more important role to play.

To fulfil its mission in an era of continuous changes, ISSN has fundamental strengths, which have to be developed and fully exploited. It also has to resolutely move forward, to anticipate changes in its environment, and to evolve so as to accommodate those changes.

Our vision of the ISSN system in 2012 is that ISSN is the main identifier for serials and continuing resources in both the print and digital environments. It facilitates services and interactions in the publication, access and use chain, and is a significant part of the information chain management.

It is used for many different purposes, by many different users, in many different systems, all of them having a need for reliable identification of serials and continuing resources.

Its users have a significant role in the decision-making process, and contribute to the definition of the new tools, products and services, which reach new users outside the present user-base.

Strengths

The main strengths of the ISSN system are known : it is a well established, well known, broadly used system (by many different users and for many different purposes), it is managed, funded and financially healthy, is has no competitor in

the printed world, it is a public system, the assignment is free of charge. The existence of the ISSN Register (consisting in ISSN numbers plus good quality and reliable identification metadata) is a main asset. It is a truly international system, and the existence of the international network is a strength.

Most importantly, the ISSN number in itself is the main strength of the system. In other words : the ISSN number is the main tool for identification, and a reliable one.

Those strengths should be consolidated, developed and exploited.

Role and place of ISSN in the digital and changing environment

We assume that the future of the ISSN system is very much linked to its use in the electronic environment.

A first fundamental condition for having ISSN fully used in the electronic environment is to have ISSN actually assigned to a significant number of electronic resources (a critical mass).

However, the number of electronic online resources is always increasing (and increasing fast), while the number of print publications does not decrease. It is unlikely that this situation will fundamentally change in a near future : there is, and there will be an always growing number of resources to identify.

In the meantime, within the ISSN Network, human resources do not increase, and identification methods remain identical. There is therefore a growing discrepancy between what should be identified and what is actually identified.

New methods, new tools, a new organization of the Network, new co-operations and partnerships have to be defined and implemented, and priorities have to be established.

A well-known and often mentioned characteristic of the ISSN environment is that the digital world is one of continuous evolutions and changes : new technologies, new tools, new types of resources, new uses appear and will continue to appear on a continuing basis. Those changes and evolutions are not predictable, but we know that both the nature of the resources and the needs of the users are changing and will continue to change. ISSN will have to change too.

To accommodate those changes, ISSN has to anticipate them, to explore new areas for development, to prepare for expanding the capacity of the system, to always be aware of its users' evolving needs, and to serve its users according to common standards.

ISSN users

The ISSN system exists because it serves the needs of users. Among the main strengths of the ISSN system, the number and the great variety of its users and uses have to be underlined.

However, in a rapidly changing environment, users and uses also change : the ISSN system has to reach new users and new markets, via the definition and implementation of new services and products, corresponding to the needs of those new users, and by promoting ISSN to new markets.

Continuous investments will therefore have to be made to enable the ISSN system, tools, products and services to evolve according to its changing environment. To enable those investments while maintaining the Member Countries contributions at an acceptable level, expanding the ISSN user-base is fundamental.

Performance measures and evaluations

Once the Strategic Plan (and the future corresponding Operational Plan) are in place, it will be fundamental to be able to measure how we are progressing towards our goals and objectives – which are goals and objectives for the whole ISSN network.

For that purpose, performance indicators and measurements will have to be defined, and annual performance reports prepared, providing information on our actual progress in achieving the goals in the strategic plan

ISSN STRATEGIC PLAN 2006-2012

MISSION

The mission of the ISSN Network is to uniquely identify serials and other continuing resources, regardless of the medium of publication, through the assignment of unique and persistent identifiers : International Standard Serial Numbers.

VISION

ISSN is the main identifier for serials and continuing resources in both the print and digital environments.

It is used for many different purposes, by many different users, in many different systems : each time there is a need for reliable identification of serials and continuing resources.

ISSN users have a significant role in the decision-making process, and contribute to the definition of the new tools, products and services, which reach new users outside the present user-base.

ISSN facilitates services and interactions in the publication/access/use chain. It is a significant part of the information chain management.

ISSN Network Overview

The ISSN Network is composed of Member Countries, which have acceded to the Statutes of the ISSN International Centre and establish ISSN National and Regional Centres, and of the ISSN International Centre, an intergovernmental organisation which coordinates the activities of the Network.

The ISSN system is governed by the general Assembly of all Member Countries⁴, and by a Governing Board, made of ten Member Countries elected by the General Assembly, and of representatives of the Host Country (France) and UNESCO.

⁴ In April 2006, the ISSN network is made of 80 Member Countries, one Regional Centre and the International Centre

STRATEGIC GOALS

Exploit strengths of ISSN

Guarantee the role of ISSN in a digital and changing environment

Expand the ISSN user base

Strategic goal one

Exploit strengths of ISSN

The ISSN is a well established, well known, broadly used system. It is managed, funded and financially healthy, has no competitor in the printed world, is a public system with assignment free of charge. The existence of the ISSN Register (consisting of ISSN numbers plus good quality and reliable identification metadata) is a main asset. It is a truly international system, and the existence of the international network is a strength. And, most importantly, the ISSN number is in itself the main strength of the system - in other words : the ISSN number is the main tool for identification, and a reliable one.

Those strengths should always be developed, in order to remain the main assets of the ISSN system.

Strategic objectives and performance goals

Develop, expand and strengthen the ISSN system and network

The ISSN system and network have demonstrated their efficiency in identifying continuing resources, in assigning ISSN numbers and in establishing reliable identification metadata, based on a common set of rules that are continuously revised so as to remain in line with the technological changes. These fundamental strengths have to be continuously developed and expanded

Encourage the establishment of new ISSN Centres

Strengthen existing ISSN centres

Improve communication and co-operation within the network

Develop performance indicators and measurements for the network

Develop the ISSN Register

The ISSN Register is a unique tool, and one of the main strengths of the system. Very few identification systems are based on a complete and reliable identification database. To meet the needs of the ISSN users and remain a main asset of the ISSN system, the coverage of the ISSN Register must be continuously developed and improved.

Improve the coverage of the ISSN register

Accelerate the availability of ISSN records in the Register

Seek broader co-operation and new partnerships at the national and international levels.

Work with ISSN users to take their needs into account

The ISSN system is used by many different users, for many different purposes. The ISSN users needs evolve, important technological changes take place. To answer the users needs, and to stay in line with the technological changes, the ISSN must foster an active participation of its users, and take their needs into account.

Strengthen the role and influence of the ISSN User Group
Speed up the provision of ISSN to users
Define with ISSN users new products and services

Strategic goal two

Guarantee the role and place of ISSN in a digital and changing environment

We assume that the future of the ISSN system is very much linked to its use in a digital and changing environment.

The first fundamental condition for having ISSN fully used in the digital environment is to have ISSN actually assigned to a significant number of electronic resources - a critical mass.

The continuous evolution and change in the electronic environment (new kinds of resources, new technologies, new tools, new uses) though not always predictable are realities with which the Network must be poised to deal.

Strategic objectives and performance goals

Improve coverage of publications within the digital and changing environment

Most probably, no additional human resources will be devoted to ISSN work within the Network, while the number of printed and electronic resources is always increasing. Therefore new methods and tools for ISSN assignment have to be defined and implemented, new co-operations have to be established, and the identification responsibilities within the network have to be re-defined.

Define and implement new methods and tools for ISSN assignment,
e.g. co-operative registration and automatic ISSN and key-title
assignment
Develop co-operation with various stakeholders for ISSN assignment
Redefine and expand identification responsibilities within the network

Identify and register a critical mass of priority electronic resources

Although a large number of electronic resources have already been assigned ISSN numbers, there is still a number of such resources which have not yet been assigned ISSN. To be definitively established as one of the main identifiers in the digital world, ISSN have to be assigned to a critical mass of those resources – for which priorities have to be established.

Define and implement standards of service for users

The ISSN system is strong because it answers the needs of various communities of users. The spirit of service should always be present within the network, the level of service should always be improved, the users should be served according to common standards.

Anticipate changes in the ISSN environment

In an era of continuous and rapid changes, it is fundamental for ISSN to anticipate those changes, to explore new areas for development, and to accommodate the changing environment.

Create and maintain an “environment scan system”
Explore new areas for ISSN development
Expand the ISSN numbering system to accommodate the changing environment.

Strategic goal three

Expand the ISSN user-base

To achieve the goals defined above, ISSN has to reach as many users as possible : promoting the strengths of ISSN is fundamental.

It also has to be financially able to make continuous investments : a good financial situation is a fundamental condition for ensuring the future of the ISSN system. To enable those investments while maintaining the member Countries contributions at an acceptable level, new products and services have to be defined and developed, and new markets have to be reached.

Strategic objectives and performance goals

Define and implement new services and products that meet the needs of new users

Promote the strengths of ISSN to new markets

Performance measures and evaluations

We will prepare annual performance reports that provide information on our actual performance and progress in achieving the goals in the strategic plan.