

# ISSN International Centre

## Assessment of the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan

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January 2025 Edition

The ISSN International Centre 2020-2024 Strategic Plan was approved by its Governing Board and by member countries in April-May 2020.

This report provides an overview of the situation on 1 January 2025, when the International Centre is about to launch its next strategic plan.

### **OBJECTIVE 1: Develop the global interoperability of the ISSN Portal by improving the management of ISNIs within the ISSN Portal**

The International Centre believes it is important that the ISSN be interconnected with other identifiers and thus be part of the web-based identification ecosystem. The International Centre has been a member of the ISNI-IA since 2015 and has access to the ISNI professional and curated database.

The International Centre works with National Centres that already use ISNIs (ISO 27727: 2012) as identifiers for individuals and legal entities in their own local databases. These ISNIs are retrieved by the International Centre when records are imported into the ISSN Portal.

The International Centre wants to use ISNI to create standardized access points for publishers and organizations in the ISSN Portal to enhance search query results. The International Centre will also request the creation of ISNIs for those entities that do not yet have one.

**Key Performance Indicator: All organisations and publishers within the ISSN Portal are identified with ISNIs by 2024.**

The main focus was on identifying commercial publishers. The International Centre set up a wiki to identify approximately 300 multinational publishers, their affiliated publishers and related trademarks that populate the ISSN database. This wiki is managed by the International Centre with input from a number of National Centres responsible for identifying and describing the publications of these multinational publishers.

From this list, which is publicly available on Zenodo, the International Centre extracted data on 50 publishers, each associated with 3 ISSNs and key titles. This data was submitted to OCLC, which manages the ISNI database, in 2021 and, after a few corrections, OCLC was able to process it.

However, before the metadata for all publishers could be loaded into the ISSN database, work had to be done on the ISNI data model for this type of organisation. A short report was written by the International Centre to initiate reflection on the structure of ISNI records and the method of updating them. A specific committee was set up by the ISNI Libraries Sector Steering Group in 2022 to carry out this activity.

Following the successful testing of batch uploading of ISSN data into the ISNI database in 2021, the International Centre worked with the ISNI Libraries Sector Steering Group to produce a report addressing issues related to the identification of publishing entities in the ISNI database. The following issues were identified:

- The relation between a publisher and a diachronic work, i.e. a journal, does not exist in ISNI current data schema;
- The date of a journal title transfer between two publishers cannot currently be specified in the ISNI schema;
- The timespan of a relation between two publishers cannot be expressed in the ISNI schema;
- The various names of a publisher are not currently registered in distinct and appropriate fields in ISNI data schema.

In 2023, the ISNI Quality Team committed to reviewing the existing technical documentation in order to adapt the data model. However, no significant progress has been made on this front in recent months.

Therefore, from 2025 onwards, the International Centre envisages a new approach based on the retrieval of metadata from open databases such as OpenAlex and publishers' catalogues to provide unique access points for publisher names linked to existing identifiers such as those managed by IDRef, ISNI and Wikipedia.

However, by the end of 2024, ISNI identifiers will be present in approximately 20,000 records in the ISSN database. These ISNIs will be continuously retrieved and integrated by the ISSN network.

**Final KPI: 5%**

## **OBJECTIVE 2: Encourage the creation of new ISSN National Centres to extend the ISSN network worldwide**

UNESCO has 195 Member States and 11 Associate Members, and the United Nations has 193 Member States. By 2020, 90 countries will have a National Centre. Our recurring strategic objective is to ensure that all countries have a centre where it appears viable, and to encourage under-performing centres to meet standards and good practice. To achieve this, it will be necessary to strengthen training and awareness raising. Our aim is to open at least five new national centres between 2020 and 2024, to revise and implement the initial training programme,

to create several tools to monitor the activities of the centres and the agreements that the International Centre has signed with them.

**Key Performance Indicator: Five new ISSN National Centres are opened by 2024.**

2021 was an exceptional year for the opening of three National Centres, partly to make up for delays caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Ukraine opened its National Centre on 11 March 2021, hosted by the State Scientific Institution "Ivan Fedorov Book Chamber of Ukraine". Austria opened its National Centre on 1 April, hosted by the Austrian Book Trade Association. Peru opened its National Centre on 24 August, hosted by the Biblioteca Nacional del Perú.

In 2022, there were again opportunities for face-to-face meetings, which resulted in two strong candidates to host new National Centres, the United Arab Emirates and Mongolia. A detailed document on how to open a National Centre was produced to assist candidates in the process.

Although no new ISSN centres were established in 2023, several exchanges took place with colleagues in the United Arab Emirates, Mongolia and the Sultanate of Oman. The procedure for joining the Statutes of the International Centre is complex and relies on a diplomatic process managed by UNESCO. This stage often takes several months before membership is officially confirmed. The United Arab Emirates signed the working agreement with the International Centre on 29 May 2024 and the Sultanate of Oman on 22 October 2024. Mongolia's accession was accepted by UNESCO in November 2024. Slovakia's regularised membership was accepted by UNESCO in July 2024.

Six new countries joined the ISSN network during the 2020-2024 period. However, for reasons specific to the host organisations, the opening of national centres may be delayed.

**Final KPI: 100%**

**OBJECTIVE 3: Implement the latest version of the ISO 3297 by creating new cluster ISSNs**

The first ISSN cluster, created in 2008, is the ISSN-L or Linking ISSN, which brings together the different versions of a continuing resource across multiple media. Following the recommendations of a study conducted in 2019 in preparation for the revision of ISO 3297, the latest version of the standard, to be published in 2022, will allow for the creation of new cluster ISSNs. The 2019 survey also revealed an interest in a cluster ISSN, which groups together titles identified by ISSNs and representing the same "family". Tracking the changes that a serial publication undergoes over time is a long-standing challenge, and the relationship between old and current titles is recorded in MARC bibliographic formats in specific fields. A cluster ISSN that identifies such families was deemed useful to the library and publishing communities.

**Key Performance Indicator: Creation of specific fields for cluster ISSNs in data encoding schemes**

A discussion paper submitted in May 2021 was followed by a proposal to the MARC Advisory Committee (MAC) for the creation of a repeatable new tag for cluster ISSN, the 023. The discussion paper used the example of ISSN-H, the history ISSN, an identifier that will group the successive titles of a publication over time. Following initial feedback from the Library of Congress, the MAC requested further research into the needs of integrated library system vendors and the impact of a new identifier. Discussions with industry leaders took place in the autumn of 2022, and the proposal was resubmitted. Initial internal testing of ISSN+, the ISSN Network's metadata creation tool, showed that automated creation of ISSN-H would work, but a repeatable and unique MARC 21 field was needed for effective and widespread adoption.

The creation of field 023 in MARC21 format for cluster ISSN was validated in December 2023 (<https://www.loc.gov/marc/bibliographic/bd023.html>). The creation of the corresponding field in UNIMARC became effective in 2024. ISSN-H, which groups consecutive titles, has been implemented in the ISSN International Centre's internal production tool and made available to National Centres. Existing cluster ISSN are now recorded in field 023 in the production tool and will soon be available in the existing ISSN portal.

**Final KPI: 100%**

#### **OBJECTIVE 4: Implement the latest version of ISO 3297 by assigning ISSN to various types of continuing resources**

Significant changes in the publishing landscape may affect the ISSN in the coming years. The ISSN will need to better identify and incorporate resources such as academic repositories and databases, and make appropriate investments to consolidate its position in the identifier ecosystem. The ISSN Network aims to raise awareness among producers of all serial publications to ensure that their publications are assigned an ISSN in order to achieve full implementation of the standard.

#### **Key Performance Indicator: Publication of updated definitions of continuing resources and new data encoding values**

A proposal was approved by the MARC Advisory Committee (MAC) in January 2021 to include additional types of continuing resources defined for the control field (tag 008 position 21) to reflect the full range of continuing resources covered by ISO 3297:2022. Three code definitions have been revised and six new codes have been added. A change request for the corresponding codes for UNIMARC followed in April, and the new codes were officially published in both systems in autumn 2021. Official network-wide adoption of the codes occurred with the launch of ISSN+ in June 2022. The ISSN Review Group provided an advance version of the revised chapter of the ISSN Manual on this topic in December 2022, to explain in more detail how to use the new codes.

**Final KPI: 100%**

## **OBJECTIVE 5: Develop interoperability of the ISSN Portal through the management of persistent identifiers and URLs of digital continuing resources**

The ISSN International Centre manages the metadata of digital serial publications in the ISSN Portal. According to the ISSN Manual, it is mandatory to include the URLs of electronic publications in field 856 of the MARC 21 record. In the ISSN Portal, the URLs in the 856 tags are used to link to the resource itself. Like all bibliographic databases that manage URLs of documentary resources hosted on external servers, such as those of issuing bodies and commercial publishers, the ISSN Portal is faced with URL obsolescence as online publications cease to be updated, disappear or change hosting servers. The ISSN International Centre does not permanently and systematically index the Web, as search engines do, to retrieve current URLs.

We assume that only the archived digital resource is stable because it has a persistent URL provided by an archiving agency. Only a minority of digitised or digital titles are currently archived, but digital preservation is a booming activity. On the ISSN portal, a specific actionable identifier will be used to bring together the URLs of the resource as originally published, the URLs of successive publishers where applicable, and the URLs of the archived version managed by archiving agencies. This new service will add value to the ISSN Portal by aggregating in a single place the URLs provided by publishers and archiving agencies for a given resource.

### **Key Performance Indicator: The ISSN International Centre to manage operational resolver handling various types of URLs by 2024.**

The International Centre has created a URN:ISSN resolver (<https://urn.issn.org/>) that integrates the URLs available in the ISSN portal. A discussion paper entitled Enrichment of Web Archive Information in Field 856 in the MARC 21 Formats was submitted to the MARC Advisory Committee in December 2021, with the aim of redefining some of the subfields to track archive information and persistent identifiers (PIDs), and finding a solution to link rot and content drift.

The January 2022 discussion paper resulted in two documents submitted to the June 2022 MAC meeting: a proposal to update Field 856 and a second discussion paper on the creation of a new Field 857. The requested changes to the 856 field were approved and included in Update No. 35 in December 2022. There is now a separate 856 subfield to store PIDs and another to track non-functioning URIs.

The proposal for a new field 857 was submitted in November 2022 and approved at the mid-winter MAC meeting in January 2023. Field 857 - Electronic Archive Location and Access became official in June 2023. Following this formal adoption, the ISSN International Centre tested the retrieval of archival status data and URLs (current, past and archival) to populate MARC21 Fields 856 and 857. Holders Registry data was migrated to the new MARC 21 Field 857 - Electronic Archive Location and Access in June 2024. The data in 856 and 857 are now stored in ISSN+ and visible in the ISSN Portal. As part of the redesign of the ISSN portal, the URN:ISSN resolver will be

updated to take into account the different registered URLs, and will redirect users sequentially to the current location of the resource, to the archival location of the resource, and finally to the ISSN portal page.

**Final KPI: 80%**

## **OBJECTIVE 6: Promote and develop Keepers Registry to associate new agencies and increase the number of identified archived resources**

The Keepers Registry (<https://keepers.issn.org>) is a free service that aims to inform the library and publishing community about the actions taken by various archiving organisations to preserve the titles of digitised and digital serial publications identified by ISSNs, in order to promote long-term access to these resources and to stabilise scientific references for the research sector.

For the International Centre, taking over the Keepers Registry service in December 2019 was a strategic decision that led to the expansion of the ISSN Portal offering. Together, the ISSN International Centre and the ISSN Network produce an indispensable source of information on serials at all stages of their existence, from their identification and description by the ISSN Network to their preservation by partner archiving organisations.

**Key Performance Indicator: The number of archiving agencies participating in KR to reach 20 by 2024.**

Three agencies signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the ISSN International Centre in 2021: the Bibliothèque nationale de France for Gallica data, the California Digital Library for Merritt Repository data and the Internet Archive for Fatcat data. Two agencies have been approved to join the Keepers Registry in 2022: the ZBW-Leibniz-Informationszentrum Wirtschaft (ZBW), Germany, and the National Library of Spain (BNE), which signed its MoU in 2024. In 2023, the Technische Informationsbibliothek (TIB), Germany, joined the Keepers Registry. In 2024, Persee, France signed the MoU. As of January 2025, eighteen active agencies and two inactive agencies, the British Library and the Swiss National Library, are participating in the Keepers Registry. See the full list here: <https://keepers.issn.org/keepers>.

Keepers Registry is also a partner with DOAJ, CLOCKSS, Internet Archive and Public Knowledge Project in the JASPER project (<https://doaj.org/preservation/>). The first phase of the JASPER project was a scoping exercise aimed at finding a solution to reduce the number of unarchived open access journals. Starting with a list of Diamond Open Access (i.e. non-APC charging) journals from DOAJ, the five partners have worked together to develop a technical process for archiving journals.

**Final KPI: 100%**

## **OBJECTIVE 7: Promote the ISSN Portal as a professional tool for the ISSN National Centres to improve the ISSN assignment process**

Launched in 2018, the ISSN Portal provided enhanced functionality that allowed the International Centre to standardise the metadata provided by publishers requesting ISSN assignments. The International Centre wanted to offer this tool to the National Centres, when processing requests for ISSN assignment from their national publishers. The ISSN Portal is a web-based platform that is now available to National Centres who wish to use the system to manage requests from their national publishers. New National Centres are particularly encouraged to use this turnkey system.

**Key Performance Indicator: Two new National Centres to adopt the ISSN Portal service to handle publisher requests for ISSN by 2024**

In 2020 and the first quarter of 2021, the Request Management System was presented to colleagues from the Book Chamber of Ukraine, the Austrian Booksellers' Association and the National Library of Peru. As of March 2022, no agreement has been reached with the ISSN National Centres on the use of the system. The Governing Board of the International Centre has been informed of the difficulties encountered in achieving this objective, as the National Centres have shown no interest in the tool. The International Centre, with the approval of its Governing Board, has decided to abandon this objective in 2022, as the ISSN Portal needs to be overhauled and its functionalities reviewed.

**Objective abandoned in 2022**