ISNI – Ten years of identifying creative entities & prospects for the future

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ISNI – key topics for today

- What is ISNI and what's it for?

- A collaborative venture: the membership of ISNI

- Creative sectors using ISNI and their similarities and differences

- Our "ISNI infrastructure" and how it's supported

- How to interact with the ISNI database

- ISNI for organizations

- ISNI and other identifiers

- Spreading the word

ISNI – identifying names of public personas

- International Standard Name Identifier – ISO standard 27729

- Identifying the names of 'parties', or more generally, the public 'personas' of persons or organizational entities

- Our target: contributors to creative works and those active in their distribution or exploitation, very broadly defined

- Thus:
  - Total ISNIs assigned since 2012: 14.7 million and counting
  - Natural persons, pseudonyms, noms de plume, stage names … totalling over **13.1 million identities** to date (of which **3 million** are researchers)
  - Organizations, units thereof, brand names like publishers, imprints, music labels, film studios, … about **1.6 million entities** to date

Features of an ISNI ID

- The ISNI assigned to the name of a particular persona should be:
  - Unique
  - Persistent
  - Presented in a standard format
    ISNI: 0000 0000 7851 9858 – Taylor Swift
    ISNI: 0000 0000 3437 5143 – Sonny Boy Williams
  - Accompanied by a minimum basic set of metadata to enable disambiguation

- Additionally, it should:
  - Have its sources of provenance clearly defined
  - Be capable of enrichment with further, extended metadata

What are ISNIs for?!

- Resolving problems of name ambiguity in search & discovery

- Attributing published works accurately to their creators

- Acting as a robust bridge identifier across multiple schemes and domains

- Thus becoming a critical component in linked data and semantic web applications

Yes, but practical uses .. ?

- Identify rights-holders

- Protect rights and their management

- Assist in royalty collection and distribution

- Support scholarship

- Help clarify questions of attribution

- Aid cleanup & enhancement of databases

- Act as bridge ID to facilitate cross-walks, both "manual" and via machine-to-machine LOD and other mechanisms

Integrating ISNI in key workflows

- ISNIs in isolation may already be useful

- Their usage becomes more powerful when they are a routine part of key workflows

- Good examples here include embedding ISNIs in the ONIX files that underpin book publishing operations
  - Functioning already in France, UK, planned in Finland, under discussion in the USA

- Another, this time from the music industry, allows for ISNIs to be included in information exchanges using DDEX standards

Multiple sourcing and collaboration to create an open central resource

- ISNI is above all a collaborative venture

- Members, Registration Agencies and other contributors

- Contributing expertise based on their own specialisms, which can be territorial, linguistic, sector-specific

Information contributed to ISNI

- ISNI assignments have been based on numerous authority files and databases worldwide

- Assertions of identities (effectively, ISNI assignment requests) are matched and rated algorithmically

- Primary role played by ISNI Member organizations and ISNI Registration Agencies

- Smaller proportions start with self-registration of basic metadata by individuals – but still under the responsibility of the respective Registration Agency

ISNI – who does what?

- ISNI Assignment Agency (ISNI-AA)

- ISNI Quality Team (ISNI-QT)

- ISNI International Agency (ISNI-IA) & Board of Directors

- Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)

- Sector-specific Consultation Groups

- The membership of ISNI – both regular Members and Registration Agencies (RAGs)

ISNI's Membership

- ISNI's Founding Members, of whom five are still very actively involved

- Currently 70 member organizations, and growing

- 36 [regular or founding Members](#)

- 39 [Registration Agencies or "RAGs"](#)

- Located so far in 25 countries

- But coverage is world-wide

- Interest remains high: active pipeline of prospect RAGs and the most recent joiner signed up last Friday!

Creative sectors using ISNI

- Interesting and exciting to see ISNI's uptake across various sectors

- Initial interest was strongest in the realm of Libraries, which remain numerically the biggest contributors and users

- More recent broadening out into areas of music, rights and copyright management, book publishing and the research sector

- Expressions of interest from further afield, including film/TV, photography, patent management

Generic challenges/sector specifics

- Reassuring that many issues or challenges have great generic similarities between the sectors (unique identification, disambiguation, de-duplication, …)

- But to maintain and reinforce ISNI's relevance, we must listen and communicate with the user communities

- Creation of ISNI Consultation Groups (four so far):
  - Libraries
  - Music
  - Book publishing
  - Research sector

Challenges and opportunities

- Diverse user communities, each expecting facilities and approaches with which they are familiar

- Challenges of scale, driven by increased adoption

- Demands for new facilities or mechanisms

- Additional formats for ingest and output

- Services that are relatively new to ISNI

First priority, keeping the lights on!

- Submission of carefully curated authority files

- Supported by reference to creative works with which the data subjects are/were associated

- Powerful matching algorithms and disambiguation

- Maintenance and update of records as necessary

- Dissemination of the ISNIs into the supply chain

How to interact with ISNI data

- Importantly, ISNI is an open standard and the database of ISNI identifiers is largely open, too

- Whether you come from an ISNI member organization or not, you can:
  - Search the database "manually"
  - Search the database using a simplified API
  - Download single records or data dumps in RDF/XML or JSON-LD

- Member organizations have access to more facilities:
  - Dedicated web interface
  - An API for real-time ISNI assignment requests
  - More complex and unlimited API searches
  - Subscribable extracts from the main database

Further development of ISNI facilities

- Already several mechanisms or routes are available to interact with the ISNI database:
  - APIs for search or for assignment requests
  - Batch loading or matching
  - Web interface/manual input

- Others in progress or under consideration:
  - Exploring possibilities for creating a new API that supports the modification of existing records
  - Deployment of a so-called de-duplication crawler
  - Structural improvements to the database structure
  - Introduction of separate mirrored "production" and "publishing" servers

ISNI and Linked Data, 1

- Building on the various LOD initiatives described yesterday …

- ISNI has its own plans to contribute LD information

- Resourcing constraints have made it necessary to phase delivery of ISNI's LD plans but progress has been made

- We defined a serialization containing useful subset of ISNI identifiers and metadata, in consultation with the BnF, the PCC in the United States and other interested parties

ISNI and Linked Data, 2

- Phase 1, completed in the Autumn of 2021, made it possible to expose ISNI LD information:
  - Via a number of mechanisms including:
    - Single-record manual download
    - Comprehensive data dumps refreshed twice yearly
  - And so far in two "flavours":
    - RDF/XML
    - JSON-LD

- Phase 2, currently underway, will open up the resource to fully automated content negotiation as well as introducing a reverse proxy for secure and controllable operation

- Go to the ISNI Linked Data page for more information

Documentation and support

- Making sure that our technical procedures and facilities are well documented for users (particularly new users) is an ongoing challenge

- Lots of material already exists, as evidenced by the [Technical Documentation](#) and other pages of the ISNI website

- During 2022 we have also launched an effort to improve and make more accessible some core advice:
  - Background work underway to create an ISNI Manual
  - Prototypes for series of "how to" mini documents. First one in series about our procedures for on-boarding new members.
  - Considering other best practice descriptions like the Pseudonym handling guide

- Some will continue to be text-based but we are also experimenting with short videos, YouTube clips and other formats

ISNI for organizations

- Much of the traction for ISNI in its first decade has revolved around ISNIs assigned to the names of individuals

- Always envisaged that ISNI could also be used to identify the names of organizations of various sorts, e.g.:
  - Publishers
  - Universities and colleges
  - Commercial or nonprofit companies
  - Publishing imprints or other brands
  - Music labels

- Lots of quiet uptake already (1.6 million org records to date)

- Renewed interest being shown in both the Music, Libraries and Book Publishing Consultation Groups

- And don't forget music groups!

ISNI and other identifiers

- ISNI co-exists alongside a number of other identifier schemes, including IPI, ORCID, ROR, VIAF, and others

- ISNI was explicitly designed to act as a bridge or linking ID, can therefore act in that capacity by bridging between other IDs

- Cooperation between ISNI and ORCID – namespace, shared memorandum of understanding, aim for interoperability

- The ISNI database and ISNI IDs assigned are open and public, as well as being persistent

- ISNI assignment requests and their supporting metadata are curated by the submitting RAG

Spreading the word

- Big effort on improved communication in recent years

- We now have a Communications Manager

- Quarterly publication of ISNI News

- Much improved social media presence, though it started from a small base!

- Direct engagement with practitioners and "the interested" via our Consultation Groups and mailing list

To find out more …

- Check out the ISNI website: https://isni.org/

- Contact ISNI-IA: tim@editeur.org or info@isni.org

- Follow ISNI on Twitter @ISNI_ID , LinkedIn, YouTube

- Sign up for our mailing list and newsletter ISNI News