

## ***Proposed ISO International Standard Collection Identifier (ISCI) – an overview***

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2001-01-10

*This document provides an overview of a proposed International Standard Collection Identifier with a brief description of how the system may be managed. It is presented for information in advance of the ISO/TC 46/SC9 meeting on February 9, 2006. A formal New Work Item proposal will be issued for voting by ISO's member bodies later in February 2006.*

### **Background**

The need for identifying collection has emerged with introduction of metasearch engines, which do – or will – include collection descriptions as a means of helping the patrons to locate relevant information retrieval services. An identifier is generally seen as one of the key metadata elements of collection description; while it is possible to use local identifiers, in an environment where global exchange of this kind of metadata is anticipated, usage of local identifiers is not a good option.

There is a large number of collections available either on-line in the Internet or off-line, and a broad range of organizations hosting them. This is a challenge for development of a collection identifier, especially if the aim is to build a system which does not require either a large - and expensive - international center or large national / regional centers, even if tens or hundreds of thousands of collections are identified.

### **ISCI Syntax**

The approach chosen by the Helsinki University Library is to use ISIL (International Standard Identifier for Libraries and Related Organizations, ISO 15511) as the starting point for developing collection identifier standard. This will enable decentralization of identifier assignment down to the organization level as a by-product of adoption of ISIL. A potential problem here is that although any memory organization is clearly a library or “related organization”, it is not clear that e.g. publishers could be given ISILs so that they can describe digital collections made available for users. This issue was discussed with the ISIL International Agency, and it seems that any organization which wants to have ISIL and has a good reason for it (such as being able to assign collection identifiers) will get one.

In addition to ISIL, there will be two other components in ISCI:

1. Delimiting character, colon (:)
2. Organization-specific (local) collection identifier string.

ISIL may contain one or more colons, but collection identifier string must not; therefore the parsing rule is that the delimiting character will always be the last colon within the ISIL string.

Collection identifier string may contain up to 12 characters, including (at least) letters a-z and numbers 0-9. The character set of local string will be defined more precisely later.

Formally, this can be expressed in the following way:

<ISIL>:<Local collection identifier string>

Example:

FI-H:Fennica

Note: there is a need to check what kind of local collection identifiers have already been assigned, and accommodate the NWI proposal accordingly. The same approach was chosen (successfully) for development of ISIL.

### **Organizational aspects**

Following discussions with the Danish Library Authority (Biblioteksstyrelsen; <http://www.bs.dk>) we propose that both the ISIL and ISCI international centers will be hosted by the Danish Library Authority.

The ISCI International Centre responsibilities will be relatively limited; it should, with the assistance of the ISIL/ISCI national centres, keep track of those organizations which assign collection identifiers, and provide assistance and support for them.

There should be no need for the International Agency to compile a physical union catalogue such as the ISSN database. It is foreseen that collection metadata (and identifiers with it) will be exchanged between organizations hosting metasearch portals, and eventually there may be one or more organizations which may try to build exhaustive global union catalogues of collection metadata.

Any issues related to cataloguing of collections in general – such as defining a collection – will be dealt with in Z39.91-200X and related documents.

### **References**

NISO Z39.91 - 200x, *Collection Description Specification*. [Draft standard for trial use.] Available at: <http://www.niso.org/standards/resources/Z39-91-DSFTU.pdf>.