



BISG Policy Statement POL-0701

Elimination of Dual Identifiers on Books and Related Products

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SCOPE

The BISG Policy Statement on the Elimination of Dual Identifiers is applicable to physical books and related products intended for retail sale by booksellers and general retailers in the United States. Specifically, it addresses which identifier, ISBN or GTIN-13 (formerly EAN-13), is recommended for a given product (or class of product). The policy does not affect the printing of the ISBN (a single identifier) in both ISBN-10 and ISBN-13 formats during the redefinition of the ISBN as a 13-digit identifier. It also does not apply to the assignment of more than one identifier to an information entity for other purposes (e.g. assignment of a DOI to an entity in order to make the entity searchable on the Internet).

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this policy is to provide guidance for retail booksellers and the retail supply chain on the elimination of dual identifiers (two or more identifiers for a product and two or more barcodes on the physical product).

IMPLEMENTATION

BISG recommends the implementation of this policy as soon as practical, with a target for new publications or product introductions of no later than March 31, 2008.

ELIMINATION OF DUAL IDENTIFIERS AND BARCODES

The ISBN (ISBN-10) and the U.P.C. (UPC-12) were once incompatible product identifiers and many products have historically been identified with both in order to meet the needs of different markets.

From its inception, dual identification has been a source of complication in databases and of confusion in the supply chain, leading to delays at point of sale, missing sales information, and lost reorders.

As a result of the ISBN transition to ISBN-13 and the GS1 US 2005 Sunrise initiative, ISBN and EAN/UPC numbers and symbols have become compatible; or, more accurately, they have evolved into members of the same 13-digit identifier (GTIN-13, formerly EAN-13).

Since the identifiers are compatible, it is now possible to eliminate dual identification.

ABILITY TO USE 13-DIGIT IDENTIFIERS

As a result of the transitions noted above, companies and organizations that are 2005 Sunrise compliant (able to scan and process GTIN-13) or have completed the transition to ISBN-13 should be able to utilize either identifier, regardless of precedent. In other words, booksellers should now be able to scan and process GTIN-13 identifiers and general retailers should be able to scan and process ISBNs.

BASIS FOR IDENTIFIER ASSIGNMENT

BISG has assembled the following guidance as to which identifier, ISBN or GTIN-13, is recommended for assignment to a given publication or other product. This guidance is based on the International ISBN Users' Manual¹ and ISO 2108:2005, *Information and documentation - International standard book numbering (ISBN)*². These sources are definitive and should be consulted for additional detail.

The guidance includes the recognition of the ISMN (International Standard Music Number) for printed (sheet) music. Where international rules for assignment have left the determination of recommended identifier to national bodies, generally established practice in the United States has been followed.

OTHER IDENTIFIERS

There are other identifiers for information entities beyond those within the scope of this policy. Some serve important needs in the book industry, but they are not commonly used in physical retail trade.

For example, the ISSN (International Standard Serial Number) is the more general and inclusive identifier for serials. In the library and academic areas, the ISSN is used for purchasing. However, in the United States, only the GTIN-13/GTIN-12 identifier and bar code are used on serial publications for retail trade and retail supply chain purposes.

For a description of other identifiers, see BISG's Roadmap of Identifiers³ or the International ISBN Users' Manual.

IDENTIFIER ASSIGNMENT GUIDANCE

Although this BISG guidance on identifier assignment is intended to be sufficiently specific to enable decision making, publishers and manufacturers are expected to exercise reasonable judgment in the inevitable cases that are not clear-cut.

Definitions

Item Identifier – the number assigned to a product for identification purposes that includes a prefix issued by an authorized numbering agency. The number may be presented in any of several forms, including human-readable, electronic, or bar code.

Bar Code Symbology – a defined method of representing numeric or alphabetic characters in a bar code; a type of bar code.

For definitions of other bar coding terms, please visit the GS1 website at <http://www.uc-council.org/> and click on "Glossary".

For additional information on bar codes or bar coding for books, please visit the BISG website at <http://www.bisg.org/documents/barcoding.html>.

¹ <http://www.isbn-international.org/en/manual.html>

² <http://www.iso.org/iso/en/CatalogueDetailPage.CatalogueDetail?CSNUMBER=36563>

³ <http://www.bisg.org/documents/roadmap.html>

Books and Related Information Products (as shown below)

Item Identifier (number): ISBN (in 13-digit format, as assigned by an ISBN Agency)

Bar Code Symbology: EAN-13+5 (where '+5' indicates the Add-On Symbol)

(For Add-On definition, see GS1 above; for Book Industry usage, see BISG above)

- Printed books and pamphlets, including guide books and instructional manuals intended for a wide audience
- Books such as almanacs and devotional guides that include date references but are not intended as time determination instruments (not primarily as calendars)
- Books in Braille
- Publications or copies of physical publications in digitized form; on various media such as tape, cassettes, CD-ROMs, DVDs, etc.
- Educational or instructional matter; including text, pictures, graphic images, video, and software; on various media such as tape, cassettes, CD-ROMs, DVDs, etc.
- Audio books (talking books) on various media
- Mixed media publications where the principal constituent is text
- Maps, in various forms and media, except maps intended primarily for decoration or amusement.

Printed Music (Sheet Music)

Item Identifier (number): ISMN (International Standard Music Number)

Bar Code Symbology: EAN-13

- An ISMN encoded in a bar code is expressed as a 13-digit identifier beginning with '979-0'

Other Products Typically Sold by Booksellers

Item Identifier (number): GTIN-12 (U.P.C.) or GTIN-13 (EAN-13)

(as assigned by a GS1 organization and NOT including ISBN)

Bar Code Symbology: Either U.P.C. or EAN-13

(item-specific, not price point, and without Add-On Symbol)

- Merchandise clearly not information product
- Ephemeral printed material such as advertising or promotional matter
- Wall, desk, and appointment calendars that are intended primarily as time determination or time management instruments
- Reading-related products such as reading lamps, bookends, and bookmarks
- Greeting cards
- Games in various physical forms and electronic media
- Art prints and art folders without title pages and text
- Entertainment matter, such as sound or image recordings on various media such as film, tape, cassettes, DVDs, etc.
- Software intended for any purpose other than educational

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