



INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INTERNATIONAL CENTRE

ACTION PLAN 2025 – 2029 ISSN INTERNATIONAL CENTRE

January 2025



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Message from the Director

Dear members of the ISSN Network, dear partners, dear friends,

In 2025, the ISSN International Centre will celebrate its fiftieth anniversary and launch its third strategic plan since 2015.

Between 2015 and 2019, the International Centre began opening up its bibliographic data by providing open access to the essential metadata for identifying serial publications. This metadata has been made available online in traditional and linked data formats on the new portal that has improved subscriber access to all metadata produced by the ISSN Network. The International Centre has also introduced a fair pricing policy for publishers and organisations that request ISSNs directly from it.

Between 2020 and 2024, the International Centre focused on six objectives as it developed its new metadata creation tool, called ISSN+, which is available to National Centres. A report on this period of intense change is available on our institutional website. Of particular note is the development of the Keepers Registry service, which now has 20 participating long-term preservation institutions and agencies. Also noteworthy are the improvements made to the MARC21 format to accompany the implementation of the revised version of the ISO 3297:2022 standard.

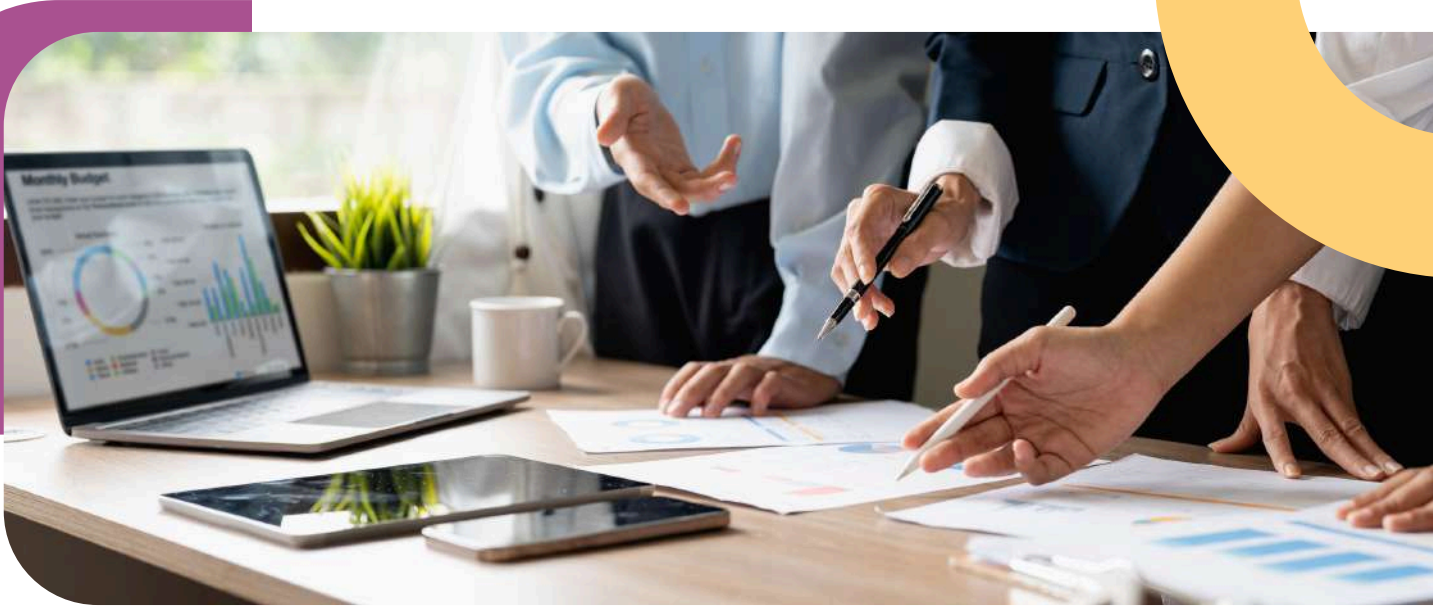
By 2030, we hope to have a new version of our portal for improved metadata dissemination created and validated by the ISSN network's expert information professionals. Thanks to our colleagues and the team at the International Centre who coordinate our activities, we are able to provide high quality services to libraries, publishers and content providers. I am grateful to them for their commitment to the improvement of our network and for their support of our strategy.

The details of our strategy are the subject of this document, and I invite you to have a look at it. We are counting on you to join us on this fascinating journey!

Yours sincerely.



Dr. Gaelle BEQUET
Director
January 2025



VISION AND OBJECTIVES FOR 2030

The goal of this action plan is to achieve our vision and objectives for 2030:

- The ISSN Network will encompass about 100 National Centres and the International Centre, all collaborating to produce high-quality data for the ISSN portal.
- The ISSN International Centre will have solidified the status of its portal as the leading comprehensive authority database for periodicals and continuing resources and will offer innovative services to a broader client base.
- The Keepers Registry will be a global metadata tool used for preservation efforts all over the world.
- Consequently, by 2030, ISSN will have enhanced its role as the premier global identifier system for periodicals and continuing resources, both in print and digital formats. It will be connected to other relevant identifier systems in order to facilitate navigation, discovery and information management.

MISSION AND VALUES



OUR MISSION:

The mission of the ISSN International Centre is to offer trusted services to the publishing sector, intermediary services, and the library community through the identification of print and digital serial publications and continuing resources in order to support access to these works.

Building on the ISSN Portal and its metadata, we develop complementary services with the support of international partners from the information industry and the research community.

Our vision is to develop quality global information services about serials and continuing resources, based on international standards and multilateral cooperation.

OUR COMMITMENT TO REDUCING OUR ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT:

As a global actor in the information chain, and connected to UNESCO, we will work to minimize any negative impact on the environment through two approaches:

- In our role as manager of a global network, we will limit travel to what is deemed necessary and seek offsetting the carbon emissions from that travel.
- In our role as manager of an extensive database, we will require our suppliers to utilize sustainable energy resources.

OUR VALUES:

We will carry out the above-presented mission of the ISSN International Centre while adhering to the following values:

- Commitment to international cooperation
- Responsiveness to the needs of our community
- Commitment to trustworthy, quality information and standards
- Commitment to providing equitable access to the ISSN assignment procedure
- Expertise in information management
- Service innovation

CONTEXT OF THE ACTION PLAN



ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE 2020-2024 STRATEGIC PLAN:

The six strategic objectives of the 2020-2024 Strategy have functioned as guidance for the activities of the ISSN International Centre throughout the period of this plan. With success: the ISSN network will be expanded with 5 National centres and the Keepers Registry with 20 archival agencies at the end of 2024, the ISSN-H identifier (a cluster ISSN that groups the successive titles held by a publication over time) has been developed, and the assignment of ISSN to new types of continuing resources in the digital environment has started with the implementation of the latest version of the ISSN standard. This strategic plan aims to build further on these achievements in the period 2025-2029.

ADVANCED IT-INFRASTRUCTURE:

From 2020 to 2024, the International Centre worked hard to renew its IT infrastructure: in June 2022 the new cataloguing tool ISSN+ was launched, while in the course of 2025 a redeveloped ISSN Portal - giving access to the ISSN data – will be implemented. This advanced IT infrastructure will enable the ISSN International Centre to deliver better services and to broaden its service offerings to libraries and publishers in the 2025-2029 period.

FOCUSSED STRATEGY FOR 2025-2029:

This action plan has been developed with the limited resources of the ISSN Network in mind, leading to the formulation of four strategic objectives regarding: (1) The ISSN network; (2) ISSN services; (3) Preservation fostered by the Keepers Registry; (4) Further development of the ISSN identifier system and its position in the publishing landscape.

Each strategic objective is linked to 3 to 5 action lines. Additionally, the potential of artificial intelligence tools to assist in executing this strategy has been explored and where feasible, AI options have been integrated in two action lines (A1, A2).



A. STRATEGIC EXPANSION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE ISSN NETWORK

Further expansion of the ISSN global network by adding new national centres and enhancing the work activities of the network form two cornerstones of the policy for the ISSN network. For the period 2025-2029 the ISSN International Centre has set forth several initiatives aimed at further developing the network and enhancing its operations, giving the highest priority to data quality.

A1. DATA QUALITY ASSURANCE PROGRAM

A comprehensive data quality assurance initiative will be implemented across the network. This program will encompass ongoing training, prioritization of error correction procedures through the identification of problematic records, and the execution of activities aimed at raising awareness about data integrity. For specific data quality issues, tests have shown that AI can be effective and could be used to unburden the network.

A2. INCREASING THE COHESION OF THE NETWORK

Given the inherent diversity within the global network of National Centres, the International Centre is dedicated to fostering greater cohesion in the ISSN network. This objective is being pursued through comprehensive training programs and the deployment of production monitoring tools. A cornerstone of this endeavour is the ISSN Manual (in English), which has been recently updated and is now available on a wiki. The ISSN International Centre strives to make the Manual accessible in additional languages by employing AI for the translation of general text and expert translators for technical terminology. Moreover, AI tools will be used to overcome language barriers within the network.

A3. MAKING THE ISSN ASSIGNMENT PROCEDURE MORE ROBUST

To enhance the robustness of the ISSN assignment process, the International Centre will adapt the procedure to include links in the ISSN records to the original documents provided by publishers to support their requests. These documents usually consist of title page scans or entire issues. For electronic resources, it could be a snapshot of the title page at the time of cataloguing. This adaptation is intended for internal management and will enable retrospective verification and comparison of records. The ISSN+ production tool will be adapted to facilitate this aspect of the assignment procedure. National Centres that do not use the ISSN+ system will be asked to submit these materials in a local repository and include a hyperlink to these materials in the ISSN record when this is feasible.

A4. STREAMLINING THE PRODUCTION PROCESS

With the new IT infrastructure in place, the International Centre has introduced a modern, user-friendly cataloguing tool named ISSN+. Currently, about half of the National Centres have adopted ISSN+, while the other half use their own tools to produce ISSN records and send them to the central database. The International Centre will make a concerted effort to create bridges between the ISSN+ system and local cataloguing systems when feasible.

A5. CONTINUED NETWORK EXPANSION

Since its inception, the International Centre has been committed to extending its network of ISSN National Centres. As of the current date, the network comprises 95 National Centres. The International Centre maintains its strategic goal of ensuring the presence of National Centres in all feasible countries. Between 2025 and 2029, the plan is to augment the network by adding three to five new National Centres, thereby enhancing global coverage and accessibility.



B: STRENGTHENING THE ISSN SERVICES FOR LIBRARIES AND PUBLISHERS



The ISSN portal is positioned as the authoritative database on periodicals, serial works and continuing resources. Combined with the newly developed, advanced IT infrastructure, this forms an excellent basis for strengthening its position in the marketplace. The International Centre will capitalise on this with a three-pronged approach: (1) consolidating its service portfolio; (2) streamlining its marketing & communication efforts; (3) innovating its services in response to market needs.

B1. CONSOLIDATING THE ISSN SERVICE PORTFOLIO

The renovation of the ISSN portal will encompass a redesign of the ISSN sites into a single website that includes all ISSN services. This presents an opportunity to showcase the ISSN services that have been developed or acquired over the years in one, cohesive service portfolio, offering a comprehensive and structured overview of the various free and premium services. This unified website will strengthen the ISSN portal's presence on the internet, thereby generating more traffic and increasing usage.

B2. EXPANDING THE CLIENT BASE BY TARGETED MARKETING & SALES

The International Centre is dedicated to expanding its client base for ISSN services. To this end, a marketing & sales plan has been developed in 2024 in order to guide marketing & sales efforts from 2025 to 2029. The marketing & sales plan consists of the following elements:

- **Streamlining marketing & communication:** The marketing and communication efforts of the International Centre will be streamlined in order to make it more efficient and effective. This will involve market segmentation and the creation of targeted communication efforts for different market segments. These targeted communication efforts will capitalise on the unique selling point of the ISSN services and will increasingly make use of social media that are relevant to the various market segments.
- **Developing value propositions and action plans for each market segment:** For each market segment, the value propositions of the ISSN services will be worked out in detail and the pricing structure will be adapted. For each market segment, an action plan will be developed.
- **Structuring the sales efforts:** The aim of the above-mentioned communication efforts is to identify prospective clients. The marketing and sales staff of the International Centre will approach these prospects using scripts with convincing arguments and with an understanding of the customer journey of the clients in this particular market segment. These scripts will undergo regular testing and upgrades for enhanced effectiveness.

The strengthening of the marketing & sales efforts dovetails with the redesign of the websites as described in B1. The proposals for innovating the ISSN services, as presented in the following paragraph, will each provide an opportunity for marketing and sales upon their implementation.

B3. INNOVATING THE ISSN SERVICES IN RESPONSE TO MARKET NEEDS

During the development of the strategic plan, several innovative proposals for ISSN services were suggested. These proposals are detailed below. The International Centre will evaluate these ideas through discussions and interviews with existing clients to understand the potential added value fully. If found relevant, the technical feasibility of these service enhancements will be examined for implementation.

- **Identifier for publishers and organisations:** An earlier strategic objective was to introduce publisher identifiers within the ISSN portal. This would create a unique access point for publishers and thus bring added value to the ISSN services. In the period 2020-2024, the efforts of the International Centre were focused on including the ISNI identifiers for publishers. However, in the meantime, a number of other possibilities have emerged: the WikiData identifiers are an attractive option and already incorporated for many publishers due to a collaboration with OpenAlex. CrossRef has announced they will apply the ROR identifier to publishers in their system, while OCLC recently has developed WorldCat entities that also identify publishers. The International Centre will explore the various options and carry out experiments and pilot projects in order to select the optimal option to incorporate in the ISSN portal and in the assignment procedures.
- **Expanding browsing options:** Building on the existing title and publisher index browsing features, the International Centre plans to extend browsing capabilities to include any MARC 21 subfield or tag. This enhancement will be useful for the users of the ISSN portal (with indexes such as “city of publication”, “covered by” made available) as well as for production purposes (for statistics and quality checks).
- **Refining subject classifications:** The classifications in the ISSN database consist of a basic categorization of the genre of continuing resources, such as journal, newspaper, or magazine and a simplified UDC (Universal Decimal Classification) system. The proposal seeks to enhance these classifications. The genre categorization can be improved by making use of the recently expanded MARC21 subfield for this. For the subject classification, the creation of a list of much-used subject classifications in combination with application rules for cataloguers and/or AI procedures is envisaged. If this option scores high in the tests with the clients, the technical and practical feasibility will be further studied.
- **Enriching the ISSN records with cover page images:** This proposal aims to include journal cover page images in the ISSN records, allowing for optional display within the ISSN Portal. The aim is to improve the visual appeal of the database and to aid the intuitive identification of serial works.
- **Journals Hub Service for academic libraries:** A tailored service package designed for academic libraries and their users, offering campus-wide access and seamless integration with the ISSN portal. Libraries could upload their ISSN list for reindexing, enabling ISSN Portal records to be marked as available resources with direct links to the university catalogue. This would enable users to filter in or out resources from the participating library during their searches. The librarians of the participating library could freely use existing services regarding submission of lists to better manage ISSN in their own records or to get customised exports from the ISSN Portal to view the archiving status of their journal collection, the presence in Crossref, DOAJ etc.

C: FOSTERING THE WORLDWIDE PRESERVATION OF SERIAL PUBLICATIONS



The long-term preservation of electronic serial publications is essential for maintaining access to the entirety of the scholarly record as for preserving cultural heritage. Since 2019 the Keepers' Registry has been an integral part of the ISSN services. It acts as a global monitor on the archiving arrangements for serial publications, with 20 archiving agencies participating.

Two critical metrics used by the monitor are the Ingest Ratio, representing the percentage of serials with an eISSN archived by at least one agency, and the KeepSafe Ratio, indicating the percentage archived by at least three agencies. Recent analyses have highlighted two significant disparities:

(1) There is a notable gap between scholarly journals and cultural heritage serials: the Ingest Ratio for scholarly journals stands at 38%, leaving an estimated 72,000 scholarly journals with undetermined archival statuses. For cultural heritage serials, the Ingest Ratio falls to 9.5%.

(2) There exists a great discrepancy between world regions: serial publications from North America and Europe generally show higher Ingest Ratios, in stark contrast to the markedly lower ratios observed in other world regions.

C1. SELECTIVE EXPANSION OF THE KEEPERS REGISTRY NETWORK

In the period 2020-2024, the strategy focused on expanding the network of the Keepers Registry. This effort has been successful with now 20 archiving agencies participating. For the coming strategic period, the goal is to selectively expand the Keepers Registry network by adding one or two archiving agencies in world regions that are at the moment less well-covered, i.e. Asia, Africa, and South America.

C2. INCREASING THE VISIBILITY OF THE MONITORING FUNCTION OF THE KEEPERS REGISTRY

The International Centre is committed to increasing the visibility of the monitoring function of the Keepers Registry within the publishing and library sectors. To this end, targeted statistics about the progress of the preservation efforts as shown by the two key parameters will be regularly updated and publicised. In addition, partnerships with intermediary services will be pursued to distribute the information on the preservation status of journal titles more broadly.

C3. SPECIAL FOCUS ON SCHOLARLY JOURNALS

Preserving the entire scholarly record is crucial given its significance for current and future research. The Keepers Registry partners in the JASPER project (JournAIS are Preserved forevER), an ongoing initiative aimed at preserving open access journals. This project responds to research that shows that online scholarly journals risk disappearing from the internet.

C4. SUPPORTING ARCHIVAL STATUS ASSESSMENTS

A tool assessing the archival status of a journal collection will aid in the collection management efforts by libraries and other organisations. The proposal involves expanding the ISSN services with a tool that will visualise a chronological timeline of the archival status of a given journal collection, thereby aiding collection managers in decision-making. The International Centre will assess the technical feasibility of such a visualisation tool and - in a next step - will develop a market proposition for such a service. Efforts to further harmonise the holdings descriptions of the participating archival agencies will enable this tool to also show the preservation status at volume and issue levels.

C5. DEVELOP THE KEEPERS REGISTRY NETWORK OF ARCHIVAL AGENCIES

The International Centre is committed to evolving the Keepers Registry network of 20+ archival agencies into an active community. This community will facilitate the exchange of information and knowledge and help to coordinate the efforts to further the worldwide preservation of serial works.

D: ENSURING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ISSN IDENTIFIER SYSTEM AND ITS CONNECTION WITH OTHER INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS AND IDENTIFIER SYSTEMS



The International Centre has built a solid reputation as an important global player and as the manager of the ISSN identifier system. The maintenance of this strong position is crucial because the ISSN identifier system must be continuously developed and innovated in response to changes in the publication landscape and in the identifier ecosystem. This means that the International Centre must: (1) closely monitor developments in international standards, formats, and identifiers; (2) ensure that relevant developments are connected to the ISSN identifier system; (3) stand ready to coordinate with other identifier systems if needed.

D1. ENHANCING THE SERVICES AROUND THE ISSN-H CLUSTER IDENTIFIER AND FURTHERING ITS USAGE

The ISSN-H cluster identifier has been developed in the 2020-2024 period and partly implemented. Full implementation of ISSN-H as an identifier is foreseen in the period 2025- 2029, when the cluster ISSN (ISSN-H and ISSN-L) will be made available in the new ISSN portal. The International Centre will then inform the publisher and library sectors about this new cluster ISSN and actively promote its use.

D2. MONITORING THE DEVELOPMENTS AND CHANGES IN THE SETUP AND DESIGN OF CONTINUING RESOURCES IN THE DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT AND STIMULATING THE APPLICATION OF ISSN IDENTIFIERS

The scholarly journal, as a model of publishing, is transitioning from print to digital. Increasingly, this transition entails the emergence of completely new forms of dynamic publishing models in the knowledge industry. In the 2020-2024 strategic plan, one of the objectives was to 'implement the 2020 ISSN standard by assigning ISSN to various types of continuing resources'. In the coming period, the International Centre will advocate for increased awareness among producers of serial publications through the National Centres to ensure that new types of continuing sources are assigned an ISSN identifier.

D3. COLLABORATING WITH RELEVANT EMERGING IDENTIFIER SYSTEMS AND INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS TO ENSURE THE CONNECTION WITH THE ISSN SYSTEM

In scholarly communication, there is a resurgence of interest in the landscape of identifiers, particularly in persistent identifiers (PIDs). Identifiers play a key role in the discovery, navigation, retrieval, and access to digital scholarly resources. In addition to the identifier systems for publications, e.g. ISSN, ISBN, DOI, there are various identifier systems for a range of other entities at different stages of adoption. A recent development is decentralised identifiers, unique fingerprints that are generated by a cryptographic algorithm based on the digital object itself. These identifiers follow a decentralised model, which means that everyone can create the identifier, while resolvers are organized in so-called decentralised ledgers. dArk, a decentralised identifier developed by Latin American organisations and set for implementation in 2024, aims to provide a cost-free alternative for the DOI system. Other decentralised identifiers in development are the ISCC and dPID.

The International Centre collaborates closely with the governing bodies of MARC21 and UNIMARC regarding updates to the ISO 3297 - ISSN standard and its relationship with the bibliographic formats they manage. Consequently, the development of the BIBFRAME bibliographic format, which is based on linked data, is of significant interest. After years of development, some libraries e.g. the Library of Congress, Kungliga Biblioteket, are implementing BIBFRAME, while some library management systems are being adjusted to accommodate the BIBFRAME format.

ABOUT THE ACTION PLAN

The following steps have been undertaken to develop this plan:

- (1) The newly emerging decentralised identifiers, the possibilities of artificial intelligence, and the options to enhance the ISSN Portal and services were extensively explored.
- (2) Workshops and interviews with the ISSN IC staff led to the development of a first draft.
- (3) In addition, the marketing and sales activities of the International Centre were vetted by an expert.
- (4) Interviews with 16 stakeholders were conducted in order to get their feedback on the first draft.
- (5) The results of the earlier steps and input from the Technical Advisory Committee of the Keepers Registry were incorporated in a second draft of the strategic plan that was discussed and finalised by the ISSN IC staff members.

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Website

<https://portal.issn.org/>

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