

Tridecomania*: Useful Sites for Information about Thirteen-Digit International Standard Book Numbers

by Philip Harvey

The earliest appearances of thirteen digit International Standard Book Numbers (ISBN) have been sighted. We are also noticing the first official statements about this momentous bibliographical shift. In late September Adrienne Yeo at the National Library of Australia posted a statement to its Kinetica-I list that included the following:

The International Standard Book Number ... is being revised from the current 10 digit code to a 13 digit code. While the official date for implementation of this new standard is January 1 2007, some US publishers expect to begin printing both the current 10 digit, as well as the new 13 digit ISBNs in material later this year. The Library of Congress expects to begin recording 13 digit ISBNs in LC records on October 1 2004.

New Year's Day 2007 is in fact the date for full implementation, i.e. after that date no more ten digit ISBNs will be issued. So, between now and 2007 we can expect quite an increase in thirteen digit ISBNs, before they become the norm. Elsewhere in her message Adrienne writes:

It will take a little longer for Kinetica to provide users with the facility to input 13 digit ISBNs through the Cataloguing Client or the Web Input form. This functionality will be ready in December, and will require the roll out of a Patch for the Cataloguing Client.

This could prove to be a useful warning, or even news, for some systems. It is advisable at this stage to check that your system can read thirteen digit ISBNs and is not on a default setting for ten digits.

In cataloguing terms, the arrival of the thirteen digit ISBN requires us to include that number in the record, in addition to any equivalent ten digit ISBN that may also be printed in the same book. You will notice that the ISBN is already embedded in the barcode of many commercially published books. This in fact means that, if you choose, you can scan the thirteen digit figure into tag 020.

For further information on the implementation of thirteen digit ISBNs, please see :

<http://www.collectionscanada.ca/iso/tc46sc9/isbn.htm>

A page on the Library and Archives Canada site that provides a regularly updated FAQ list. Very useful, especially as the site adds current news.

<http://www.isbn-international.org/en/revision.html>
<http://www.isbn-international.org/en/download/implementation-guidelines-04.pdf>

The official and very thorough introduction to the program, the changes, and some likely effects on libraries. Includes several pages of FAQs that give you a no fuss view of what's happening.

<http://www.ariadne.ac.uk/issue41/chapman/>

An excellent article by Ann Chapman that outlines the planned changes to the ISBN standard and its impact on the information community and the book trade. Published on the 30th October 2004 in Ariadne, a magazine targeted principally at information science professionals in the United Kingdom, and also to interested lay people both in and beyond the Higher Education community.

* Tridecophobia is a word in Mrs Byrne's Dictionary and means an obsessive fear of the number thirteen. I have invented Tridecomania, based on that term.