Making copyright work in a digital age

Olav Stokkmo of IFFRO explains how the proposed Linked Content Coalition will work, and how it relies on the use of established and newer identifiers

When, in 2010, the European Commission called for “Big Ideas” in support of its Digital Agenda, the European Publishers’ Council (EPC) presented a concept based on the premise that existing copyright law is fit for purpose for the digital age; it just needs to be properly managed to meet new expectations. That idea has now found a new form and new supporters in the shape of the Linked Content Coalition (LCC).

The aim of the LCC is that through interoperability, the use of existing open standards (such as the International Standard Text Identifier and the International Standard Name Identifier systems and ISNI) can manage the publications for which they are responsible and collective management organisations the rights they manage. ISNI identifies the name(s) that creators, publishers, producers and others involved in the publication process use publicly across the whole range of creative activities from books and theses, through films to music. For creators, an ISNI helps them to easily identify the book they want, publishers and librarians can manage the publications for which they are responsible and collective management organisations the rights they manage.

What exactly do ISTCs and ISNIs do?
Most are familiar with the ISBN to identify the publication. The ISTC helps link the text to the different titles and editions, under which it has been published. Readers can more easily identify the book they want, publishers and librarians can manage the publications for which they are responsible and collective management organisations the rights they manage. ISNI identifies the name(s) that creators, publishers, producers and others involved in the publication process use publicly across the whole range of creative activities from books and theses, through films to music. For creators, an ISNI helps establish their reputations unambiguously and enables them to be paid more quickly for more works and more uses of their works.

ISNIs provide a “bridge identifier” between proprietary rightholders identifier systems and resource discovery tools such as VIAF. Indeed the key to the ISNI process is matching against the VIAF database (the Virtual International Authority File maintained by 19 major world libraries).

ISNIs and ISTCs are already being used as the basis of the ARROW (Accessible Registries of Rights Information and OrphanWorks towards Europeana) project to speed up rights clearance for libraries and ISNIs are already being used as the standard for rights management on the internet.

Who is behind these standards?
Both ISNIs and ISTCs represent an international consensus–as standards of the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO)–and are the product of the collaboration of many interests. IFFRO, the International Confederation of Societies of Authors, Composers (CISAC) and ProQuest/Reed Elsevier are members of both the ISTC and ISNI International Agencies.

They are joined in ISTC by Nielsen Book and in ISNI by an unprecedented coalition of industry players: the Conference of European National Librarians (represented by the Bibliothèque Nationale de France and the British Library), International Performers Database (IPDA) and OCLC, which is also operating the database.

How do I get an ISTC or ISNI?
Already around 100,000 ISTCs and around 1.2 million ISNIs have been issued, so many will already have such identifiers. Further 15 million records have provisional ISNI status awaiting matching. The first thing to do is to check, for instance from the ISNI website, whether an ISNI already exists. If not, ISTCs and ISNIs are available by contacting a Registration Agency. Contact details are available on the ISTC and ISNI websites.