Preparing for Europe
Standards for Europe — Standards and Europe

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The views expressed within this paper are those of the author and not necessarily the views of her employer.

Why Standards?

Why should we be interested in standards; standards are boring we don't really need them -

or do we?

To understand why there is currently much fuss about standards in Europe, we need to understand what standards are, what they do for us, and how and by whom they are produced.

Then we can look at standards and Europe and identify the issues.

So, let's say we want to uniquely identify our serials, identify data elements within the serial record or prepare serials holdings statements.

As can be seen from the attached listing (Appendix A), there are some international standards and some British Standards which can aid the management of serials. There are also some standards which cover the same area, but may or may not be identical.

Clearly there are many more standards used across the library and information fields.

- Three international standards are currently being produced for library statistics
- There was one, BS 3700:1989 referenced in Appendix A, concerned with the preparation of indexes
- For thesaurus construction, ISO 2788:1986
- For classification, the UDC schedules
- In the area of unique identifiers, we have ISO 3166:1988 (country codes), ISO 3297:1986 (ISSN), ISO 2108:1987 (ISBN)
- and for bibliographic exchange formats, ISO 2709:1981

In all, for library and information activities there are about one hundred international standards published or in development, and about seventy

British Standards. In addition BSI publishes the English Edition of UDC on behalf of FID as a series of British Standards. This comprised the medium edition, and some one hundred individual schedules.

In addition, as libraries become more technology based, we need to be aware of the range of IT standards being developed, as we automate our lending and ordering processes and use electronic data interchange standards.

What these standards do for us is to enable us to cooperate and share resources, to avoid duplication and improve consistency. This in turn facilitates easier exchange of information, and helps us either save money collectively or to put that money to more efficient use.

How Standards?

Standards don't just appear - they are created - by the likes of you and me. The texts of standards are developed in technical committees and working panels by consensus. They are a distillation of good practice. Once negative comments are resolved the standards can be published. This process may take five or ten years. Over a further period of years a texts is likely to be revised a couple of times before it is really right.

Now that's fine until you get to areas like IT, particularly if you would like systems to talk to each other. The appropriate open system interconnection (OSI) standards need to be in place before systems can interoperate. So there has been a mad frenzy of activity to get these standards produced.

Who Standards!

There are a large number of organisations involved in the development of standards, and the interrelationship between them is quite complex.

The major international organisations are ISO, the International Organisation for Standardization, IEC, the International Electrotechnical Commission, and ITU, the International Telecommunications Union, which is a grouping of telecommunications standards bodies.

ISO for example has about ninety members. These are national standards bodies like BSI, British Standards Institution.

Once an international standard is published each national member like BSI can choose whether or not to adopt the standard as a national standard, whether to modify it before adoption, or whether to published a completely different text. This is one of the issues for European Standards, as we will see later.

We saw these flavours in the list of standards relevant to the serials management.

Further, an international standard has no legal status, for example in the UK, until it is adopted nationally by BSI.

Many libraries and information centres are publicly funded, or in government departments. We mustn't forget that in these cases they must follow Government procurement specifications when purchasing equipment, systems, etc. These procurement specifications quote international, British and increasingly European Standards.

Which brings us to Europe, and highlights the issue exemplified by a quote from former director of BSI (Dr GBR Fielden)

Standardization

Do it once

Do it right

Do it Internationally!

Europe

CEN (The European Committee for Standardization) and CENELEC (the European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardization) together form the Joint European Standards Institution. This is open to both EC and EFTA (European Free Trade Association) countries.

Telecommnications standardization is covered by the European Telecommnications Standards Institute (ETSI).

The prime task is one of harmonizing national members body standards, and adopting international standards where they exist.

The promise is that European standards contribute to the removal of technical barriers to trade so facilitating the free movement of goods within Europe.

The fear from countries outside Europe is of a fortress Europe.

Once created a European standard must be adopted by a national body's members and any conflicting national standards withdrawn.

Growth areas for standards are building, health, and IT.

The principle task of CEN is to prepare European Standards (EN) These are drawn up on a basis of consensus, adopted by weighted majority, must be implemented in full as national standards, and conflicting Standards withdrawn.

CEN also publishes Harmonization Documents (HD) and European Prestandards (ENV). Harmonization documents are more flexible than ENs, they takes account of technical, historical, legal circumstances in individual countries. European Prestandards (Vornorm) are prospective standards for provisional application in areas which are unstable and subject to a high level of innovation, where safety of persons and goods is not involved. Once adopted ENVs are subject to an experimental period of up to 3 years.

Where an organisation does business on an international and not just on a national or European basis and this would include library organisations or networks or database providers who offer bibliographic or other records for sale internationally, their first preference is for international, and not regional standards.

The European Commission

Having said that because of the need to arrive at consensus, standards making is a slow process, and that because there is a need to have IT standards yesterday there have been procedures put in place to produce international IT and various other standards faster. This has not been good enough for the European Commission who have 1992 looming large over their shoulder and they need to have the required standards in place.

There is therefore an additional factor present in European standards development which is absent from the international scene. The EC have selected certain standards (including IT standards) as high

priority and are providing funding, through mandates, for their development.

The concern here is that if a standard is published in Europe before the corresponding international document, because of the international consensus process, the international text when published may be different, and that difference could be significant.

In the OSI area for example an organisation EWOS - European Workshop on Open Systems - has been receiving mandates to develop a number of OSI standards, and look at various applications areas.

You should be aware that a mandate has been issued to study OSI applications in libraries.

The European Commission also makes laws, issues directives. There is legislation that requires certain processes and products to conform to certain standards. This mostly relates to health, to safety and to the environment.

The European Commission also issues rules on public procurement of products and services. This includes ensuring these products and services conform to standards (conformance marks).

In some areas, eg safety, tests are relatively simple with a clear cut pass or fail, eg can you touch a live wire.

In other areas, eg OSI, the systems and hence the conformance tests are extremely complex, and the results often inconclusive.

In Europe a body - the European Organisation for Testing and Certification (EOTC) has been set up. It is intended that it will coordinate sectoral committees, for example ECITC, the European Committee for IT testing and Certification.

Issues
> Proliferation of standards
> Fortress Europe
> European work in the library sector
> Public procurement
> Conformance to standards

Information
> ISONET
> BSI Information Services
> Access to standards information
> Standardization and documentation ❏

Appendix - A -
Some standards relevant to Serials Management

ISO 3297:1986

International standards serial numbering (ISSN)

ISO 215:1986

Presentation of contributions to periodicals and other serials
BS 5332:1982
Specification for data elements for the generation and exchange of serials records
BS 5999:1980
Specifications for serials holdings statements for libraries and documentation centres
BS 7187:1989   ISO 9115:1987
Specifications for code for bibliographic identification (biblid) of contributions to serials and books
BS 6627:1985   ISO 5123:1984
Recommendations for presentation of headers for microfiche of monographs and serials
BS 3700:1989   ISO 999:1975
Recommendation for preparing indexes to books, periodicals and other documents
BS 1629:1989   ISO 690:1987
Recommendations for bibliographic references