

# Editorial



*The Editors at Folly Beach,  
Charleston (how appropriate)*

There is a flurry of activity in the standards area of the serials world. ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is currently considering what revisions should be made to the ISSN, for example whether its scope should be extended from 'serials' to 'continuing resources' such as updatable databases and web sites, how it should deal with works published in different media and formats, and how it should harmonize with MARC21 and AACR2. Of course the main challenge is to make sure that, whatever the rules, ISSNs are properly allocated to all titles, and the paper on SUNCAT in this issue highlights the problems that have been discovered as part of that project.

Talking to Ed Pentz recently, it appears that CrossRef are now looking at improving and standardizing the title-level metadata, and at the possibilities of assigning a DOI at the title level, which some publishers do already. The NISO/EDItEUR Joint Working Party, co-chaired by Richard Gedye and Priscilla Caplan, has been charged with recommending that ONIX for Serials be used in the exchange of serials subscription information. Both a Serials Products and Subscriptions format (SPS) and a Serials Online Holdings format (SOH) are being piloted, with the former supporting communication between libraries and publishers and the latter between libraries and Publication Access Management Services (PAMS), which are defined as 'agencies offering customers

basic and updated data on the publications to which they have access rights, whether these publications are hosted locally or remotely ...' Examples include Serials Solutions and TDNet. From the initial results of the pilots, there is a real enthusiasm to implement these standards. One of the complexities which emerges from the standards in this area is the definition of a 'product' and a 'work', and the paper by Ed Jones on the NISO web site (<http://www.niso.org/Serials-WP.pdf>) gives an excellent summary of these issues. The ISTC (International Standard Text Work Code) RFP has just been issued by ISO, so we have the possibility of yet another identifier for the data we all have to deal with.

However, if you read Pat Loghry's report of Friedemann Wiegel's paper at the recent ALCTS meeting in 'On the Circuit', you will see that he says that the main problem with standards is not developing them so much as persuading people to adopt and implement them. Maybe this is because they are complex and not well explained, in which case we can refer you to Cliff Morgan's excellent paper on metadata for STM journal publishers in the January 2004 issue of *Learned Publishing*. This gives a superb, structured explanation of the standards for metadata for discovery, linking, catalogues, e-learning, digital preservation and rights, amongst many others.

Federated and broadcast searching was another feature of ALA (if you don't know the difference,

see the report of Sandy Hurd's paper in the ALCTS report). The problems here are that there is an absence of widely supported standards, best practices and tools in the metasearch environment, which ranges from Z39.50 and OpenURL (recently sent out for its final NISO ballot) to proprietary APIs and screen-scraping. NISO have a meta-search initiative which will be developing the standards and common understandings, will allow content providers to deliver enhanced content and protect their intellectual property, and allow libraries to deliver services that distinguish

their services from Google and other free web services. This initiative has multiple task forces and is co-chaired by Jenny Walker (Ex Libris USA) and Andrew Pace (North Carolina State University).

What is most encouraging, reading the reports of these standards working groups, is that there are now queues of people wanting to be part of the standards process, and asking to join working parties and committees. This is an indication of the importance that the industry is now placing on standards, and long may it continue.