ISSN No. 0974-035X

An indexed refereed & peer-reviewed journal of higher education

Towards Excellence

UGC-HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT CENTRE
Gujarat University, Ahmedabad-380009, Gujarat, India

INDIAN SERIALS AND THE INDIAN NATIONAL CENTRE FOR ISSN

Viswanath G. S

Jaya Rawat

Vijendra Kumar

G. Mahesh

Abstract

Purpose

ISSN, the unique identifier is a vital element for information discovery. This paper chronicles the 35-year journey of the ISSN National Centre, India from its inception in 1986 to the year 2019. It also explores the different development stages of ISSN Indian Centre, and presents the challenges faced by the Centre, particularly in the ISSN assignment process, cataloguing and collaboration.

Design/methodology/approach

All the data for the article were collected from the in-house records of the ISSN National Centre's annual reports and other registers for analysis.

Findings

During the first two decades, on an average of 177 ISSNs were assigned every year. However, during the third decade of 2007 to 2019, on an average of 1573 ISSNs were assigned every year. The spurt in the ISSNs during the last decade have been triggered by certain changes in the higher education regulatory framework in India.

Originality/value

This is a first-hand account of the ISSN activities of the Centre that also releases data on ISSNs assigned in India.

Keyword: ISSN; National Science Library; Serial Publication; History.

1. Introduction

According to ALA glossary, continuing resource is a publication that intends to be issued with no predetermined conclusion and generally carries numbering, dates or both. Serial publications and ongoing integrating resources are types of continuing resources. Serials are issued in separate parts while integrating resources do not have separate issues.

In today's world, the rapid growth in the publication of information or research work requires a tool or device to differentiate publication from one another. ISSN acts as universal identification tool for a serial.

ISSN (International Standard Serial Number) is an eight-digit number used to identify serials of all kinds in all media. The concept of universal identifier for serials was first coined by Eugene Garfield in 1955. It took a number of years to put it into universal practice. The ISSN was finally designed in 1972 by the International Organization for Standard (ISO) in order to meet the need for a brief, unique and unambiguous identification code for serial publications. As per the ISO 3297:2007 and IS 10101:2012, ISSNs are applicable to serials and other continuing resources whether past, present or to be published in the foreseeable future, whatever the medium of publication or production.

ISSN is a part of serial publication and unambiguously distinguishes an individual serial from all others, even those with identical titles. The ISSN is closely linked to the title of the serial. ISBN on the other hand reveals not only the region where the ISBN has been assigned, but also the publisher who is responsible for the publication. The number itself – unlike the coded digits of the ISBN – has no significance other than as a brief, unique and unambiguous identifier. The eight ISSN digits, has two groups of four digits each, numerals 0 to 9, except for the last – or check – digit, which can be separated by a hyphen and preceded by the letters ISSN.

ISSN is used worldwide for different purposes-

- It facilitates trade and exchanges.

- It helps in the management of subscriptions.
- It contributes to the authentication of publications.
- It accelerates distribution.
- It is used in the management of access over the Internet and in copyright management systems.

For uniformity in rules and standardization in assignment of ISSN to continuing resources, ISSN network was designed. Currently there are 89 member countries participating in the ISSN network and India is one of the countries having its own ISSN National Centre. The Centre has now existed for close to 30 years. This paper is a narrative about the Centre and its activities of 3 decades.

Objective of the study

For the purpose of this study, all the records available in the National Science Library and the ISSN National Centre were systematically collected. These include official records, annual reports and discussions with concerned officials. Following the examination of the records, the growth and development of the Centre have been analyzed and described decade-wise. Thereafter, analysis of the ISSNs assigned and the challenges faced by the center are given.

ISSN National Centre, India – The early decade (1986-1996)

ISSN National Centre, India (erstwhile International Serial Data Centre: ISDS Centre) was established in January, 1986 with the aim to be a unique registry of serials published from India. National Science Library, CSIR-National Institute of Science Communication and Information Resources (NISCAIR) (previously INSDOC) located in New Delhi has been designated as the centre for assigning ISSN to serials published in India. Before the establishment of the National Centre in India, International Centre, Paris directly assigned ISSNs to serials published from India.

The first Indian journal registered in ISSN Register is “AIOE Labour News (ISSN 0001-1630)” as per record by International Centre, Paris. Till the year 1985, 1645 Indian serials were assigned ISSN directly by the International Centre for ISSN, Paris.

“Pratibuddha (ISSN 0970-0005)” was the first journal that was assigned ISSN in January, 1986 by the National Centre after its establishment. During this period, assigned ISSN records were manually recorded in bound ledgers (Fig. 1). From January, 1986 to December, 1993 the service was given free of charge and 1475 ISSN were assigned to Indian serials. From December, 1993, the Centre started levying Rs. 500 (Rupees five hundred only) per serial as operational cost, for assigning ISSN and 164 ISSN were assigned after introduction of operational cost. From February, 1995 the operational charges were revised from Rs. 500 (Rupees Five hundred) to Rs. 1000 (Rupees One thousand) and 458 ISSN were assigned after that revision.

Fig. 1 A page from the Centre’s First ISSN Ledger

ISSN	Title	Language	Subject	Provisionally assigned (P)	Confirmed - Month	Input
0970-0005	Pratibuddha	Hindi	2		28.1.86 (A)	1986+
0970-0013	Omnesse Living	English	2	28.1.86 (P)	28.1.86 (A)	1986+
0970-0021	Dawn and Dawn Society's Magazine	English	2	28.1.86 (P)	28.1.86 (A)	1986+
0970-003X	Capital, Slavery News	English	68+1456, 325	19.2.86 (P)	19.2.86 (A)	1985+
0970-0048	International Library Movement	English	01-	20.2.86 (P)	20.2.86 (A)	1985+
0970-0054	Inventor Intelligence	English	608	12.3.86 (P)	12.3.86 (A)	1985+
0970-0064	World Science News Weekly	English	576	11.3.86 (P)	11.3.86 (A)	1984+
0970-0072	Librarian (Calcutta)	English	02-	13.3.86 (P)	13.3.86 (A)	1984+
0970-0080	Fusion Asia	English	576	13.3.86 (P)	13.3.86 (A)	1983+
0970-0099	Journal of Organizational Behaviour and Statistics	English	187-7	13.3.86 (P)	13.3.86 (A)	1983+
0970-0102	IAPQR Transactions	English	65	12.3.86 (P)	12.3.86 (A)	1976+
0970-0110	The Navigational World	English	327	13.3.86 (P)	13.3.86 (A)	1983+
0970-0129	Computers Today	English	601-8	20.3.86 (P)	20.3.86 (A)	1985+
0970-0137	Journal of Structural Engineering	English	67-4	22.3.86 (P)	22.3.86 (A)	1973+
0970-0145	Bulletin of Sciences	English	576	12.3.86 (P)	12.3.86 (A)	1983+
0970-0153	Annals of Biology (Calcutta)	English	57/61	8.4.86 (P)	8.4.86 (A)	1985+
0970-0161	Strategic Analysis	English	355:43	8.4.86 (P)	8.4.86 (A)	1977+
0970-017X	Strategic Digest	English	355:43	8.4.86 (P)	8.4.86 (A)	1971+
0970-0188	NISSAT Newsletter	English	576:022	8.4.86 (P)	8.4.86 (A)	1979+
0970-0196	Science for Villages	English	576	10.4.86 (P)	10.4.86 (A)	1977+
0970-020X	Oriental Journal of Chemistry	English	84	25.4.86 (P)	25.4.86 (A)	1985+
0970-0218	Indian Journal of Community Medicine	English	613/814	6.5.86 (P)	6.5.86 (A)	1976+
0970-0226	Journal of Research-APAU	"	63	6.5.86 (P)	6.5.86 (A)	1973+
0970-0234	Haryana Green Revolution (New Delhi)	"	63	6.5.86 (P)	6.5.86 (A)	1972+

2. The transformative decade of 1997-2006

The operational charges were again revised from Rs. 1000 (Rupees thousand) to Rs. 1500 (Rupees One thousand five hundred) and 1214 ISSN's were assigned during January, 1999 to November, 2005. Between this period also, ISSN records were manually recorded in bound ledgers and the details of ISSN assigned journals were mailed to International Centre on typed worksheets along with cover and content pages of the serials. From 1997-2006 around 1857 journals were assigned ISSN.

3. Third decade: Going Digital (2007-2019)

This has been the most active decade of ISSN activities of the Indian National Centre. From 2009 onwards, the Indian National Centre began using the Virtua software for transmission of bibliographic records of ISSN assigned serials directly to the International ISSN Database. Virtua software was developed by VTLS (Virginia-Tech Library System) Inc. Virtua Software enabled with Unicode and Z39.50 features which share data to Z39.50 clients. It's also enabled with features of WYSIWYG (What you see is what you get) interface, MARC 21, original script entries (in Devanagari, Arabic, Chinese, etc.). The use of Virtua software gives proficiency in ISSN process and also helps in ISSN record management.

In the year 2013, the Centre retro-converted their entire ledger records in machine readable Excel format (xls) and made it available on the National Science Library website to avoid duplication in ISSN records and for public access. For this an in-house software was developed with different interfaces. The user interface allowed users to apply online for ISSN's and also the applicant could check the status of ISSN application. Given the huge inflow of ISSN applications, the endeavor of the center has been to dispose the application within 30 days of their receipt. From March, 2015 the ISSN National Centre, India revamped the ISSN request application from hardcopy to online mode. From October, 2015 RNI (Registrar of Newspapers for India) registration has been made mandatory for all print publications published from India for ISSN assignment. The office of the Registrar of Newspapers for India (RNI) under the

Ministry of Information and Broadcasting is also responsible for framing rules under the Press and Registration of Books Act, 1867. So, anyone wishing to bring out a newspaper, magazine, journals, etc. will have to have prior approval of RNI.

In 2016, ISSN National Centre modernized its webpage and also framed new guidelines as per the Centre's requirements and based on the International Guidelines. For maintaining quality, standard and authenticity for serials published from India, the ISSN Center put forward certain key requirements to be maintained by the publisher in their journals (ISSN National Center, India, 2016). In 2015 the ISSN National Centre, India received the ISSN Award (Fig. 4) from International Centre Paris for commitment, consistent efforts and promotion of ISSN among information Community. ISSN Centre published the 1st "Directory of ISSN Assigned Serials in India - 2014" in 2015. From 2015 onwards, after each year a new Directory of ISSN Assigned Serials in India containing details of ISSN assigned in the previous year was published. Till 2019, five such directories have been published by the Centre (Fig. 2) which has details of serials assigned ISSN during the period of 2014 to 2018 along with Publisher contact details and other Journal specific details. On February 04, 2016, the 1st "ISSN Certificate of Registration" (Fig. 3) was issued to "International Journal of Advances in Engineering Research (Online) – ISSN 2454-1796". Till December 2019, more than 250 ISSN certificates were issued. These initiatives resulted in the Centre collecting some money for the services that the Centre is providing. In November 2019 the ISSN Centre India for the 1st time hosted the 44th ISSN Directors' Meeting in which Directors of more than 20 ISSN National Centres participated and had a week long discussions on ISSN activities.

Fig. 2 Directories of ISSN assigned serials in India 2014 & 2015

Fig. 3
ISSN Certificate of Registration

Fig. 4
ISSN Award 2015

4. An overview of growth in ISSN from 1986 to 2019

Table 1 - ISSN Assigned – (1986 – 2019)

Year	ISSN assigned (Total)	ISSN assigned (Print)	ISSN assigned (Electronic and other media)
1986	125	125	0
1987	250	250	0
1988	200	200	0
1989	331	331	0
1990	138	138	0
1991	153	153	0
1992	142	142	0
1993	134	134	0
1994	176	176	0
1995	104	104	0
1996	105	105	0
1997	103	103	0
1998	141	141	0
1999	122	121	1
2000	149	148	1
2001	212	208	4
2002	151	150	1
2003	166	162	4
2004	219	209	10
2005	241	234	7
2006	353	339	14
2007	381	319	62
2008	639	506	133
2009	1071	850	221
2010	1767	1345	422
2011	2480	1698	782
2012	3040	1950	1090
2013	2761	1719	1042
2014	2928	1846	1082
2015	2463	1433	1030
2016	1138	312	826
2017	596	197	399
2018	479	121	358
2019	710	202	508

The Table 1 represents the total number of the ISSNs assigned by the ISSN National Centre, India during the three decades. A total of 24168 ISSNs were assigned by the Indian Centre during the 35 years from which 16171 ISSNs were assigned to print serials and 7997 ISSNs

were assigned to online serials. The highest number of ISSNs were assigned during the year 2012 i.e., 3040 (1950 Print & 1090 Online). The second highest number of ISSNs were assigned during the year 2014 i.e., 2928 (1846 Print & 1082 Online).

Fig. 5 Total ISSNs assigned from 1968-2019

Fig. 5 shows the growth of ISSN assignment during the 3 decades. From Fig. 5, it can be noted that the number of ISSN assignment started increasing after 2008. The UGC's Academic Performance Indicator (API) initiative, triggered the need for ISSN to journals published in India which resulted in the increased assignment of ISSN. However, after the initial spurt there has been a decline over the years which is also owing to the Centre introducing additional steps while screening the ISSN applications.

Fig. 6 Total Print & Online ISSN Assigned (1986-2019)

Fig. 6 shows the comparative growth of both print and online publications. Maximum ISSN were assigned during the third phase of the ISSN National Centre. The recent developments in internet technologies and the Open Access Initiatives made it easy for publisher and individuals to start online serials with minimal effort and charges. As can be seen, assignment of online ISSN surpassed the print ISSN in 2016 which clearly indicates the online is the preferred medium for serials.

5. Progress in ISSN Activities:

The ISSN National Centre is abuzz with many routine activities. On an average 30-40 ISSN related queries are answered by e-mail/Telephone every day. Apart from the commercial publishers, there is an increase in demand for ISSN from the academic and research institutions.

The Centre is playing a vital role in updating the Legacy Records, i.e. the ISSN records of journals that were assigned ISSN before the establishment of the Indian National Centre. Well publicized ISSN services on the national centre's website as well as their promotional materials have resulted in increased awareness about the ISSN and its importance. All efforts are being made to improve the coverage of serials in ISSN Register. The National Centre is trying its best to fill up the gaps in the ISSN register by corresponding with the publishers as well. ISSN National Centre has been contributing S&T Open Access Journal details to Directory of Open Access Resources (ROAD). Owing to the sustained efforts of the Indian National Centre, India figures 1st in the ROAD directory as per the 2015 report.

6. Challenges at Indian ISSN Centre

It was difficult to keep track of duplicate titles, checking plagiarism, etc., when the ISSN activities were being done manually. The UGC's Academic Performance Indicators (API) parameters introduced in 2010 for promotion and recruitment of professionals in various institutions resulted in the demand for ISSNs. The ISSN requests that met the minimum criteria for assigning ISSN, were assigned ISSNs. However, over a period of time, it was seen that many publishers were providing fake editorial boards, wrong contact addresses, incorrect indexing details, plagiarism and some even displaying fake ISSNs.

WordPress, Weebly, Wix, etc. are being used by individuals for creating journal websites which disappear after ISSN has been obtained and many of the online journals are published irregularly. Some journals are publishing just one article per issue.

It has also been found that individuals are starting online journals just to publish their own articles. Clearly many publishers seem to have limited knowledge of publishing a journal. The Centre also has to address grievances and complaints from publishers for non-assignment of ISSNs on valid grounds. The recent UGC notification regarding the list of journals for

publishing articles has also increased the number applications and queries regarding inclusion of journals into the list.

7. Conclusion

ISSN is not a criterion that determines the quality of a journal. The ISSN National Centre in India, like other national centres, has been playing an important role in the ISSN Network. In the recent years, owing to the random growth of questionable journals in India, ISSN assignment process was modified to arrest the mushrooming of such journals. While an ISSN is very important for a serial publication, the identifier should not be used as a quality indicator.

References

1. Godefroy, Pierre. (2015) The ISSN and the turning machines: the history of a relationship. *Ciencia Da Informacao (Science of Information)*. 44(1): 55.
2. Béquet, Gaëlle. Questionable Practices in Scholarly Publishing: The Stance of the ISSN. Columbus, OH: IFLA WLIC – Connections. Collaboration. Community: Session 114 - Serials and Other Continuing Resources (2016). <http://library.ifla.org/1462/>. (accessed on December 15, 2019)
3. Mahesh, G. (2017) The Indian ISSN conundrum. *Current Science*. 112(03): 452-453.

Websites

1. Association for Library Collections & Technical Services. What Is a Continuing Resource? http://www.ala.org/alcts/mgrps/crs_video_script (accessed November 30, 2019)
2. ISO.2007. ISO 3297:2007(en)-Information and documentation - International standard serial number (ISSN). <https://www.iso.org/obp/ui/#iso:std:iso:3297:ed-4:v1:en> (accessed on December 08, 2019)
3. Bureau of Indian Standards. IS 10101: Information and Documentation International Standard Serial Number (ISSN). 2nd Revision. Internet Archive. <https://archive.org/details/gov.in.is.10101.2012/page/n3> (accessed on December 08, 2019)

Viswanath G. S,
Assistant Librarian, School of Planning and Architecture, Vijayawada
viswam.gs@gmail.com ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2323-0207>
Vidwan-ID: 124870
&
Jaya Rawat
Ex-Library Assistant,
CSIR-NISCAIR, jayarawat11@gmail.com
&
Vijendra Kumar
Assistant Professor
Department of Library & Information Science, University of Rajasthan
vijendrakumar@live.com
&
G. Mahesh
Head
National Science Library, CSIR-NISCAIR
gmahesh@niscair.res.in