



What's in a Name?

Presentation Guidelines for Serial Publications

An update of a brochure originally developed by the Serials Section of the Association for Library Collections Technical Services (ALCTS), A Division of the American Library Association.

What is a Serial?

Serials are print or non-print publications issued in parts, usually bearing issue numbers, issue dates, or both. A serial is expected to continue indefinitely. Serials include magazines, newsletters, newspapers, annuals (such as reports, yearbooks, and directories), journals, memoirs, proceedings, transactions of societies and numbered series. Also treated as serials by many libraries are those publications issued in successive parts which bear numbering and also bear other characteristics of serials but whose duration is limited, e.g., the newsletter of an event.

Why is Presentation of My Serial Important?

Your publication has a wider audience than you think. Besides your subscribers, other readers want to find your publication in libraries or order it from a subscription service. Directory publishers and abstracting and indexing services might want to include your title in their directory or product. Readers might want to cite your publication or articles from it in their writing. In all of these cases, having a clear and consistent title, a unique numerical identifier, and clearly presented publication information will make these tasks much easier.

What Should I Consider in Choosing a Title?

Your title should:

- Be unique to avoid confusion with other publications
- Be distinctive
- Be concise

- Have important identifying words at the beginning to help readers find your title in large files and catalogs
- Avoid words indicating frequency, since frequency can change
- Avoid initialisms or acronyms; their filing location is unpredictable

How Should I Present My Title?:

- Use unambiguous typography
- Clearly separate any logos from the title
- Place the organization's name in a different location from your title
- Clearly distinguish your title from any subtitles
- Present your title in the same way everywhere on an issue and from one issue to another
- Do not modify your title in any way unless you intend a deliberate title change. (A change of typography or addition of cover wording may be misinterpreted by a library as a title change.)

Why are Title Changes a Problem?

- Your hard-earned identity may be lost
- Title changes cost libraries money to re-catalog and re-shelve the title
- In collections which are shelved by title, your publication may be split up among its various titles
- By calling attention to your title, a title change may trigger a library to reevaluate its need for your serial

What if I Still Want to Change the Title?

- Make the change at the beginning of a volume-this helps with shelving and binding
- Explain the change to your readers in advance, if possible
- Request a new ISSN (see section following on standard numbers)
- Keep the same numbering scheme unless you change the scope of the publication
- Avoid incremental changes; for example gradually shrinking the old title while gradually enlarging the new title over a series of issues; instead, make a clean break

What if My Publication Merges with Another Serial?

- Merge at the beginning of a volume
- Only begin the numbering again if a new title results from the merger
- Tell your readers what is happening

Why Should I Number My Serial and How?

- A consecutive number, issue date, or both, are very important for identification, recording issues in a check-in system, claiming, etc.
- A numbering system is generally required in order for libraries to catalog a publication as a serial.
- Use Arabic numbers, not Roman numerals. A commonly-used scheme consists of volume and issue numbers, e.g. Vol. 1, no. 1
- Avoid double numbering schemes, e.g. Vol. 3, issue I and no. 9

What Should I Do About Supplements and Special Issues?

- Size them the same as the parent publication
- Indicate whether they update or are to be used with the parent publication
- Indicate whether they are part of the subscription
- Check with your ISSN center; supplements may or may not be assigned the same ISSN as the parent publication, depending on their nature

What is the ISSN and How Do I Get One?

The ISSN (International Standard Serial Number) is a unique, internationally used identification number for serial publications and other continuing resources. It can be thought of as the social security number of the serials world. It looks like this: ISSN 1234-5672. ISSNs are assigned by a network of over 80 centers world-wide. U.S. publishers should contact the U.S. ISSN Center (www.loc.gov/issn). Publishers in other countries should contact the ISSN Center responsible for assigning ISSN to serials published in your country. The International Centre's web site (www.issn.org) provides contact information for ISSN Centers worldwide.

Why Would I Want an ISSN?

- To distinguish your title from any others with which it might be confused
- To help libraries and others who handle large numbers of serials to check in your title so it can get to users more quickly
- To help users search and link to digital records, articles, and other files
- To differentiate the medium versions of your serial for ordering, claiming, and other identification purposes since each version (print, online, CD-ROM, etc.) is assigned a different ISSN.

What are Some Other Standard Codes Used on Serials?

ISBN (International Standard Book Number) [ISBN Agency, R.R. Bowker](#)

- Book counterpart of the ISSN

- Used only on issues of serials that are identified or sold individually, e.g., a book in a series, an annual directory, an annual travel guide
- ISSN and ISBN can both be displayed on annuals and on books in series (ISSN identifies the overall serial; ISBN identifies the particular year or monograph in the ongoing serial or series.)

Bar Codes

- Used on serials to enable scanned check-in and inventory control
- UPC code (Universal Product Code): found on supermarket products, including mass market magazines. Does not incorporate the ISSN.

EAN-13 (Formerly International Article Number, European Article Number)

- Used in the U.S. by major bookstore chains for trade and other book publications. Used extensively in the U.K. and other European countries for magazines.
- Incorporates the ISSN as its second element. GS 1 US is the U.S. EAN agency:

*GS 1 U.S.
8163 Old Yankee Rd.,
Dayton OH, (800) 543-8137*

BIPAD

- Unique to the retail magazine business
- Constitutes the middle 5 digits of the UPC magazine barcode
- Available from BIPAD, Inc. (www.PIPS.com)

How Can I Learn More About How to Present My Serial?

The [National Information Standards Organization \(NISO\)](http://www.niso.org) publishes voluntary standards and recommended practices in the area of libraries, information science, and publishing.

For a thorough treatment of the issues highlighted in this brochure, see

Serial Publications: Guidelines to Good Practice in Publishing Printed and Electronic Journals (2nd edition)

by Diane Brown, Elaine Stott and Anthony Watkinson

Association of Professional and Learned Society Publishers

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