

International Standard Name Identifier

Frequently Asked Questions

Version 2.0 – November 2009

What is ISNI?

The International Standard Name Identifier is an ISO Standard developed as a global identification system of Public Identities of parties. Parties can be a natural person, a legal entity, or a fictional character.

What is a public identity?

A Public Identity is the name by which a Party is publicly known.

What is the scope of ISNI?

The International Standard Name Identifier (ISNI) is a standard that aspires to provide a means to uniquely identify Public Identities involved throughout the chain of creation, production, management and distribution of intellectual or artistic contents. It will identify the Public Identities of Parties such as authors, composers, cartographers, performers, or publishers.

Can I get access to comprehensive information about a Public Identity?

ISNI is designed to uniquely identify a Public Identity and therefore only contains the strict minimum amount of information about this Public Identity.

It is not intended to provide direct access to comprehensive information about a Public Identities but can provide links to external sources where such information is held.

Such an authoritative identifier will serve to provide as a link for occurrences of the Public Identity across databases on the web.

Is the ISNI an official international standard?

Yes, the ISNI is currently a Draft ISO (International Standards Organization) Standard referred as ISO 27729. The standard is being revised by an international working group under the auspices of Technical Committee 46, Subcommittee 9 of the International Organization for Standardization and will be formally published soon.

Who uses ISNI?

It is primarily intended for use by anyone involved in the media value chain, digital or physical, such as libraries, publishers, producers of music or films, bibliographic services, Rights Management Organizations, search engines, on line stores, data aggregators, etc.

How does the structure and syntax of an ISNI look like?

An ISNI is made up of 16 digits, the last character being a check character. The check character may be either a decimal digit or the character "X".

There are therefore one hundred thousand billion possible combinations.

EXAMPLE: **ISNI 1422 4586 3573 0476**

What about alternative spellings of a given Public Identity?

William Shakespear and William Shakespeare are alternative spellings of the same Public Identity and therefore refer to a single Public identity with a unique ISNI. The same applies alternative spellings, alternative presentations, character set variances, transliteration variances and linguistic variances.

EXAMPLES

- e. e. cummings and E. E. Cummings or Oxford University Press and OUP are alternative presentations of the same Public Identity.
- Günter Graß, Guenter Grass and Guenter Graß are character set variances of the same Public Identity.
- Ciaikovsky, Pjotr Iljč and Пётр Ильич Чайковский are transliteration variances of the same public identity.
- Pyotr Tchaikovsky and Peter Tchaikovsky are linguistic variances of the same public identity

Is it possible to allocate multiple ISNIs to the same Party?

It is. The same Party may have multiple Public Identities, as is the case of pseudonyms that an author may have chosen to use for signing his or her creations. Each Public Identity relating to a given Party shall have separate ISNI.

EXAMPLES

Ruth Rendell and Barbara Vine are two distinct Public Identities of one Party. Ruth Rendell and Barbara Vine shall be allocated distinct ISNIs.

Is it possible to have links between multiple Public Identities?

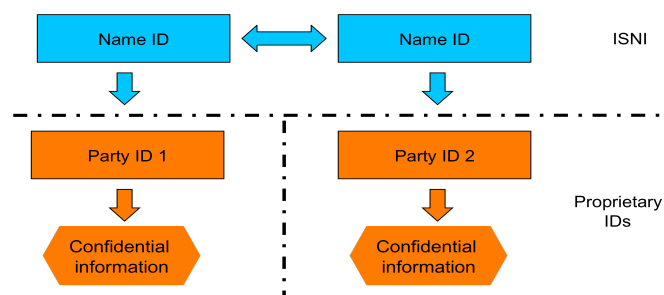
If authorized by the Party, two or more ISNIs may be linked indicating a relationship such as a pseudonym.

EXAMPLES

The ISNI metadata set for Ruth Rendell would include the following metadata element: ISNI 1422 4586 3573 0476 is the pseudonym of ISNI 3456 7890 3456 666X. The latter being the ISNI for Barbara Vine.

Can I keep my proprietary Party Identification system?

The ISNI has been designed as a “bridge” identifier, as an open layer above proprietary Party identification systems. It allows various industry partners to exchange information relating to a Party without the need to disclose confidential information. To that extent the ISNI only maintains the minimum metadata set needed to differentiate (disambiguate) two public identities. All other relevant information remains in proprietary databases secured by conditional access.



Who is the administrating the ISNI system?

The Registration Authority for this standard is the ISNI International Agency. The ISNI International Agency (ISNI-IA) is a registered not-for-profit organization.

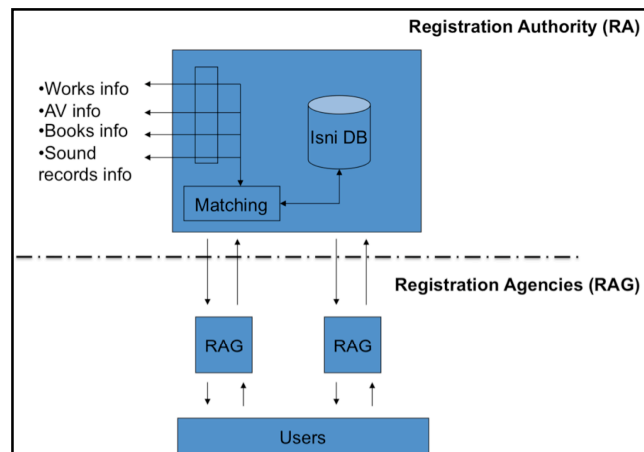
The ISNI Registration Authority (RA)

The ISNI Registration Authority (RA), appointed by ISO, will be in charge of creating and maintaining the ISNI reference database. The initial database will be created from the founding members' existing databases ranging from all types of repertoires. The Registration Authority will enrich and expand the database and is the sole owner of the ISNI related metadata. The RA is also responsible for the overall administration and governance of the ISNI Standard.

The Registration Authority will not provide direct services to users. It will systematically channel potential users through a Registration Agency.

How can I get an ISNI?

Most Users will access the ISNI database through a Registration Agencies. The list of all Registration Agencies will be posted on the ISNI website. www.isni.org



Is ISNI free?

Not quite. Although the RA and the RAGs operate under the not-for-profit model applicable to all ISO Standards, The RA and RAGs may charge fees to cover operating costs. As a principle, the RA tries to keep fees as low as possible as to allow the maximum deployment of the Standard.

The ISNI Registration Agencies (RAGs)

The ISNI Registration Agencies (RAG) are appointed by the ISNI International Agency. They will act as interfaces between the Users and the Registration Authority. Any business entity with a proven interest in the scope of ISNI will be eligible to become a RAG. No exclusivity will be granted either on a territorial basis, or on a market segment basis such as the book Publishing industry or the Music Industry.

Core functions of the Registration Agencies (RAGs)

First, the Agencies will have unlimited read-only access to the full ISNI database. Then Agencies are the only authorized entities to issue ISNIs. All requests by Users to obtain an ISNI will be channeled through an Agency.

What is required to obtain an ISNI?

Public identities are identified by the following metadata elements:

- Name of the Public identity
- Date and place of birth and or death (or registration and dissolution for legal entities)
- Class and Roles as defined by the RA. Classes defines the repertoire (such as Musical, Audio-Visual, Literary,..) and Roles can be Author, Performer, Publisher,..
- Title of reference to a creation
- A URI (or URL) providing a link to more detailed information about the Public Identity.