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TOPIC: ORGANIZATION AND PEOPLE IDENTIFIERS

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INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD NAME
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THE NAMES PROJECT

STANDARD ADDRESS
NUMBER (SAN)

INSTITUTIONAL IDENTIFIERS
(¹) AND ISNI



STANDARD SPOTLIGHT:
STANDARD ADDRESS
NUMBER (SAN)
ANSI/NISO Z39.43



LOUISE TIMKO

The Use of the Standard Address Number (SAN) in the Supply Chain

In current discussions of metadata in the publishing supply chain, much attention is necessarily paid to issues surrounding title metadata and the effective use of the ISBN. Other standards, such as the ISTC (International Standard Text Code) and DOI® (Digital Object Identifier), are mentioned in this regard as well. Often overlooked is the role played in the industry supply chain by that less glamorous cousin to the ISBN, the SAN (Standard Address Number).

SAN was initially developed at R.R. Bowker in response to retailers' requests for a standardized account to facilitate ordering across the supply chain. As the ISBN is the standard ordering number for the book publishing supply chain, the SAN was intended to meet the need for an accurate way to contact trading partners so that orders could be processed effectively, accurately, and seamlessly. In the end, rather than becoming an account numbering system, though, the SAN system was set up to identify addresses, the key piece of information for accurate business transactions.

The SAN is a unique identification code for each address of an organization in the publishing supply chain. The SAN enables product discoverability by facilitating standard daily business activities, such as order placement. A simple example of the use of the SAN is as a means for publishers to identify retailers and link their ordering processes with them. Another example is that of a bookstore chain using SAN to identify publisher shipping addresses for returns.

In the United States alone, more than a hundred thousand organizations are involved in repetitive transactions with one another in the publishing industry supply chain. These transactions include purchasing, billing, paying, crediting, refunding, lending, exchanging, shipping, and receiving. The organizations engaged in these

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EXAMPLE SAN

SAN: 214-1191

Company Name: R. R. Bowker LLC

Status: ACTIVE

Product: ART, BOOK, CHILDRENS, CD ROM MANUFACTURERS, CIP PARTICIPANTS, CHRISTIAN BOOKSELLERS TRADE, EL-HI, LAW, MEDICAL, MUSIC PUBLISHERS, PAPERBACK BOOK, PRIORITY TRADE PUBLISHER, PARENT TEACHER GUIDE, RELIGIOUS, SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY, SOFTWARE PRODUCERS, VIDEO PRODUCER/MFR., LARGE PRESS PUBLISHERS, SPANISH BOOKS IN PRINT

Type: Publisher, Distributor

Address: 630 Central Ave.
City: New Providence
State: NJ Zip: 07974
Country: USA

Telephone: Toll Free: FAX:

Primary Contact: Roy Crego

Website: <http://www.bowker.com>

Comments:

transactions include not only publishers and retailers, but also wholesalers, distributors, printers, paper vendors, binderies, and other vendors and suppliers to these same organizations. In addition, although not directly in the publishing industry, libraries, library binders, serial vendors, school systems, colleges, and technical institutes also take part in such transactions, since they are involved in publication purchasing and shipping.

Many of these organizations have different addresses to which bills should be sent and which differ from shipping addresses. Some organizations have multiple addresses. A printing company may very well have an ordering address, a billing address, and several warehouse addresses. Identifying which address is appropriate for a specific transaction can be confusing and challenging.

Identifying the correct point of contact among similarly named organizations can also further complicate the successful processing of transactions. For example, there are more than fifty U.S. publishers trading under the name Lighthouse Publications or Lighthouse Publishing. Failing to identify the correct, similarly-named organization provides opportunity for error, delay in billing and payment, as well as the possibility of shipments gone astray. Maintaining extensive records both for billing and tracking shipments can be complex under such circumstances. EDI systems (Electronic Data Interchange) add a further dimension to the picture.

Like the ISBN, the SAN makes sense of the decentralized nature of the publishing industry supply chain. Organizations in the publishing industry can communicate with one another more effectively by using not only the ISBN but the SAN as well. While the ISBN enables product identification, the SAN enables communication from organization to organization, connecting buyer and seller directly, whether through traditional ordering and shipping mechanisms or through electronic systems. The SAN standard accomplishes this by providing a one-to-one correspondence between SAN and the address to which it is assigned.

Approved in 1979 as ANSI/NISO Z39.43-1980 and later updated in 1993, the SAN consists of six digits, plus a modulus-eleven check digit. This seven-digit code is hyphenated after the third digit for easy human transcription, but the hyphen need not be retained in electronic systems. Each SAN identifies a single address. An organization with multiple addresses would use multiple SANs, each identifying a different one of the organization's addresses. When an organization relocates, the SAN is updated with the new address. If an organization closes a location, the SAN cannot be reused. If an organization, such as an independent bookstore, changes ownership, the SAN can be transferred to the new organization. A new SAN need not be obtained because the address remains the same and the SAN primarily identifies the address of the organization rather than the organization itself, although the organization name does appear as part of the SAN record.

The role of the SAN as an address identifier has distinct and clearly defined functionalities. The SAN is never associated with a specific product because it is the ISBN that acts as the ordering or tracking number for a specific product. Nor can the SAN be encoded on a barcode. Despite its role in supporting accurate shipping, the SAN is distinct from shipping labels and product labels and does not appear on such carton marking.

In discussions on standards, the SAN would seem to be similar to, and is frequently compared to, the GLN (Global Location Number) assigned by GS1. However, the SAN differs as an identifier from the GLN. The GLN is broader in its application, identifying addresses and functions in order processing and shipping similar to the SAN, but is more widely applied as a location identifier, including the recognition of individual legal entities. The GLN can be modified to identify specific

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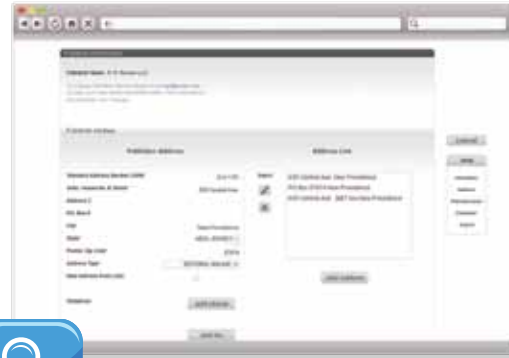
locations within a warehouse, for example, and can be as granular in its location identification as a single store shelf. The GLN is not industry specific and can be used to identify any location of an object or product, such as a hospital bed or a shipment of sneakers.

The SAN, on the other hand, is industry specific, used only in the publishing industry supply chain, and is more clearly defined in its functions, thereby making it more functional and efficient for its intended use. The SAN is strictly a standard identification number for an address associated with the publishing industry, whether used for placing orders, shipping from place to place, or other common business transactions. It can be placed on any correspondence between trading partners necessitating address accuracy, such as invoices and receipts. In back-office databases the SAN can function as a link between ordering and shipping databases and as a search key for addresses in such databases. In an EDI system, such as Pubnet, the SAN functions as an electronic address in itself. Problems that can occur, such as billing errors, products shipped to the wrong points, and errors in payments and returns will almost be eliminated by using the SAN.

Significantly, when using a SAN, the need to look up account numbers as a normal and required step of order fulfillment and shipping processes ends. Without a SAN, the correct account number for processing a transaction with a particular organization must be identified before an order can be processed. With a SAN, vendors can proceed to process orders immediately without needing to locate or to assign an account number, for example. The SAN itself is used as the central number for doing business with all of an organization's trading partners in the publishing industry supply chain. To locate trading partners' SANs, a comprehensive database of publishing supply chain trading partners and libraries can be accessed by subscription. Bowker's SAN-based online directory lists SAN assignments for publishers, libraries, distributors, wholesalers, bookstores, printers, book manufacturers, etc., including address and contact information.

The SAN system has escaped the intense, lively discussion and confusion over use that has recently inveigled the ISBN. This is the case for several reasons. Unlike the ISBN standard, which is evolving to meet the product identification needs of a new category of electronic publications, the essential nature of business transactions have remained unchanged so the SAN need not evolve dramatically as an identifier. The seven-digit SAN is easily associated with electronic office software, if desired, and with POS (point-of-sale) systems.

In addition, while the advent of e-books has been a boon for the self-publisher, the typical user of a SAN is a business accomplishing standard business tasks on a daily basis. The SAN meets this need because it was specifically developed for use with repetitive transactions with multiple trading partners.



Example Book Industry Locator Search

Self-publishers, on the other hand, are not running a business on this scale and are often uninterested in embarking on such an enterprise. Because their business activity is minimal, they face no pressing concern to track a product or process orders among multiple trading partners. They may, in fact, be working with only one publishing services company or a single retailer. Such individuals who are publishing e-books have no need of a SAN under these circumstances.

No doubt the publishing industry supply chain will continue to transform itself in unpredictable ways. The use of identifiers will continue and, by necessity, the identifiers themselves will evolve in response to practical business needs. Whenever an organization needs to engage in ordinary transactions with multiple trading partners, the SAN will continue to be a simple, elegant way to identify the right point of contact. | SP | doi: 10.3789/isqv23n3.2011.06

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Global Location Number (GLN)

www.gs1.org/barcodes/technical/idkeys/gln

International ISBN Agency

www.isbn-international.org/

Pubnet

www.pubnet.org/

R.R. Bowker

www.bowker.com

SAN look-up database

www.BookIndustryLocator.com

SAN Standard (ANSI/NISO Z39.43)

www.niso.org/standards/z39-43-1993r2006/



RELEVANT
LINKS