

CASA and an effort to build a metacatalogue of serials based on the ISSN Register

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The CASA (Co-operative Archive of Serials and Articles) Project is the three-year project to develop mechanisms, services and systems to support a co-operative European metacatalog of serials and articles for both professional users (among them ISSN centers, bibliographic agencies, union catalogs, libraries, and publishers) and end users. The ISSN network will be the nucleus of the project, with ISSN centers being able to take advantage of telematic applications to exchange data, but union catalogs will also benefit. Funded under the "Telematics for Libraries" group of projects in the European Union Fourth Framework, it is coordinated by the Interlibrary Center of the University of Bologna.

The partners in the project consortium represent all the various groups involved in the serials chain, from publishing, to the bibliographic management of serials (at ISSN centers, union catalogs, and libraries), and the processing of users' requests at libraries. The consortium is composed of five full partners: the Interlibrary Center of the University of Bologna, the ISSN International Center, the University of Edinburgh Data Computing Services (representing SALSER-Scottish Academic Libraries Serials), the Istituto centrale per il catalogo unico e per le informazioni bibliografiche (the Italian union catalog for serials and monographs) and Ariadne S.r.l. (a software house). The consortium also includes four "associated partners," associated with either the University of Bologna or the ISSN International Center: the Istituto per i beni culturali e ambientali della Regione Emilia Romagna; the ISRDS-CNR, having both the role of the Italian ISSN center and the union catalog of serials; the Norwegian ISSN center, and the Greek ISSN center. Five subcontractors also take part in the consortium: the University of Florence, the University of Ferrara, the University of Turin, the Academic Press "Il Mulino," and the University Library of Bologna. The National Library of Florence, which acts as the Italian national bibliography for ISSN purposes, is a sponsor of the CASA Project.

Goals

The three main project goals are: improvement of the already existing ISSN procedures to record ISSN records on line, building a metacatalogue of serials, offering end users a serials services directory.

1. Improvement of the already existing ISSN procedures to record ISSN records on line

The CASA Project will result in an improvement of the already existing ISSN procedures. For the ISSN International Center, these include the validation or rejection of ISSN as well as requests for further bibliographic information; for ISSN national centers, they include the assignment of new ISSN, the addition of new records or the amendment of existing ones. CASA will also improve the mechanisms of collaboration between ISSN centers and bibliographic agencies through the application of telematic methods to facilitate the exchange of data. ISSN centers may not actually hold serial issues and may therefore need to receive photocopies of the preliminaries of serials from union catalogs and libraries, in order to be able to submit to the ISSN International Center proposals for the input of records for new titles or amendments to existing records. The CASA procedure will ensure greater access to a regularly updated -and thus authoritative - serials register whereby users can capture records and make proposals for amendments and input. ISSN centers not participating in the project will continue to use the present procedure, which consists of sending diskettes or tapes and preliminaries of the titles to be input or amended.

Union catalogs will also benefit from the project in a number of ways.

CASA will investigate the use of the ISSN system in the design of union catalogs. The project will provide a mechanism allowing professional users to add ISSN to catalog records of serials. In addition it will define procedures for catalogs to adopt to increase their interoperability. It will develop software that will facilitate matches of records between existing catalogs and the ISSN Register, and semi-automatic conversion tools and procedures that will allow the bulk transfer of existing data records in national catalogs into a national CASA server. Only in ambiguous cases

records will have to be processed manually.

2. Building a metacatalogue of serials

One of the main objectives of CASA is to build a metacatalogue of serials based on the ISSN Register. The original idea for this arose from our awareness that end users, and the professional staff that assist them, currently find the search for serial articles difficult, time consuming and frustrating, since this often involves searching within a variety of different union lists and catalogues, each requiring different access arrangements and each having different search commands. It was recognised that technically, and organisationally, there is little prospect of merging all catalogues into one physical union catalogue, if only because of the variety of standard (sic) procedures that have been applied for bibliographic description of serials and for serial holding statements. This led to consideration of the potential latent in the ISSN World Serials Register, the internationally recognised authority file for serials, for use in an alternative approach. The emergence of the World Wide Web (WWW) as an arena for interaction and trade was also confirmation of a trend towards the electronic and telematic basis of the information economy, with the desire on the part of the end user to integrate the search of online indexes and abstracts for interesting articles, with the location of the serials containing the article (whether print or electronic) and the process of request and delivery/access of the article itself. Could the system of uniform resource names and locators (URNs and URLs) then being implemented for use in the WWW be linked to the ISSN Register in such a way as to provide users with locational information on the variety of (holding) catalogues and union lists maintained across Europe, and beyond?

The inspiring model was NOSP - a cooperative effort of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden - which derives its records from the ISSN Register and adds locations and holdings. Each country only send NOPS the list of its ISSN, linked to holdings, but keeps locally its descriptions which are carried out with national rules. NOSP records include information of ISSN, bibliographic description of the serial - derived from the ISSN Register -, location and holdings. ISSN is the key link to combine the bibliographic record with location and holdings. This seemed to us an excellent - even if local - model of a metacatalogue based on the ISSN Register.

As far as the Italian situation is concerned, we would like to point out that there is not a single union catalogue in Italy, but many catalogues, each based on different automated cataloguing systems and adopting different standards. The two main catalogues are ACNP, the Italian Union Catalogue for serials and SBN, the National system for Italian Libraries.

ACNP is composed of 97.000 bibliographic descriptions with more than 500.000 holdings in about 2.200 libraries. Presently, it is the main Italian source for the national and international community to locate a serial in Italian libraries. It is already a partially derived catalogue from the ISSN Register, as far as new added descriptions are concerned.

The SBN catalogue is a national catalogue which contains both monographs and serials. It contains about 130.000 serials held by 800 libraries throughout Italy. Many libraries belonged to both catalogues for different periods and therefore their data are in both databases. This anomalous situation forced some libraries to update both databases - which adopt different standards - or, in some cases, to stop updating one of them. The use of different bibliographic standards made it difficult to merge the two databases, although this was considered as an important objective and, moreover, it also made it impossible to feed and align them periodically with batch procedures.

The CASA project aims to overcome this situation through the virtual merge of the two catalogues, using the ISSN identifier. Actually, ACNP will become a real derived catalogue from ISSN, and its descriptions will therefore gradually be discarded, whereas SBN will maintain its descriptions. Therefore, in this case, the SBN derivation will be indirect, more similar to the NOSP model, I think.

ACNP and SBN will become the first nucleus of a single Italian union catalogue of serials,

however, each will continue independently, but will differentiate their roles and become complementary. This will make less burdensome and more reasonable for libraries to participate in both catalogues. On one hand, SBN, integrated with BNI, the Italian National bibliography, will become the main tool for interactive cataloguing of new titles and for old titles held by libraries and not yet recorded in the ISSN Register. On the other hand, ACNP will become a derived catalogue, therefore it will not be adopted for direct cataloguing. However, it will be possible to use it to send proposals to the ISSN Register. It will be a distributed catalogue fed with some minor catalogues such as Aleph or Dobis, using batch procedures. It will act as a reference guide for information about serial services as well.

Other catalogues might decide to participate in future, and might decide either to participate in ACNP or to send periodically their holdings of serials having ISSN. Such integration of catalogues will produce new proposals of recording which will feed the ISSN national Register and therefore the International Register.

The main obstacle for the derived catalogue is due to the fact that over 75% serials in ACNP (67.223) do not have ISSN either because it has not been assigned yet or because it has not been input yet. This is partially due to the fact that ACNP started before the creation of the Italian ISSN Centre and therefore titles input in ACNP before the creation of the ISSN Centre could not have ISSN.

Before ACNP migrates from the present management procedures to the CASA ones, all ISSN numbers - already assigned to serials, but not yet recorded in ACNP - will have to be added to serials. This will have to be done using an automated match between the ISSN International Register and ACNP. Then all serials not having ISSN - and most of them are Italian titles - will have to be assigned an ISSN. This last procedure will have to be done also for foreign titles, possibly with the collaboration of the national centres of the countries where the titles have been published.

3. Serials services directory.

The third objective of the CASA project is to offer end-users services about serials. Thus it have defined how users can move from discovering what serials/ articles are of interest, on to find out the location of the serials containing these articles, and the terms of availability of the title/ work sought. Typically, the serials/articles workflow can be viewed as constituting several steps. These are set out into four main stages: discovery, location, request/order, access/delivery. They can be enhanced by recording services about serials in a directory of services including:

- location of titles (in union catalogues)
- databases of tables of contents and abstracts
- publishers
- providers of services of ILL and DDS.

This directory of services has been called Serials Services Directory.

This is an area with many cross-currents. In this directory, libraries are viewed as but one class of provider of services on serials, alongside publishers, indexers, secondary vendors and other providers of document delivery services. It is well known that for the end user, the article is the intellectual work or information object, that matters: serials are important only because they contain articles. Publishers of serials have recognized that efficient trade in these and other information fragments require a system of authoritative and unique numbering, equivalent to that of the ISSN. (There are several candidates, but the one favoured in the CASA project is the Serial Item COntribution Identifier - SICI -, since it includes ISSN). This has prompted discussion of the utility for the emergent information economy of one or more servers acting as «Yellow Pages» directory of services on serials and articles. This raises the choice of standard for the metadata about the content and the location of these services, and the extent to which these should adhere to conventions of the bibliographic world, those of networked (digital) information objects, or those of the world of business.

The project itself will not organize directly a document delivery or interlibrary loan system, but will make available links to providers of such services.

The Serials services directory have been projected with the most recent technological solutions. Who wishes to have further technical details can find them in the two documents Yellow Pages and Serials Services Directory: a feasibility study written by A. Bollini (the CASA technical Manager) and P. Burnhill (responsible for the workpackage serials services directory). The first document is an introduction outlining the purpose of the Yellow Pages and the second document is a more technical one.

To conclude, we would like to emphasize that CASA has been conceived as an open system and its growing depends on other subjects' involvement, namely partners and above all catalogues. Therefore, the CASA consortium would be glad to start cooperation either with the future European catalogue of serials or with single catalogues involved in it. Such a cooperation could start either at the end of the project, when the Exploitation consortium will be created, or even since the test phase. Of course, the cooperation will benefit of all CASA services, including the Serials services directory.