

Important Notice: Changes to ISBN Prefixes

The United States ISBN Agency will soon begin assigning ISBNs starting with the prefix element 979 (in addition to the ISBNs with prefix element 978 we currently assign). This is necessary because the inventory of certain ISBN block sizes starting with 978, such as 10,000, 100,000 and 1,000,000, are dwindling.

What does this mean for publishers, libraries and retailers?

Prior to 2007, the ISBN was 10 digits in length. In January 2007, the 13-digit ISBN launched to increase the capacity of the ISBN system. To date, 13-digit ISBNs assigned by the U.S. ISBN Agency include the 978 prefix, which allowed systems to contain both 10- and 13-digit ISBNs for all books. However, a 13-digit ISBN starting with 979 *does not* have an equivalent 10-digit ISBN. **Once this change takes place, only 13-digit ISBNs starting with 978 or 979 should be used to identify a book.**

Bowker will continue to assign ISBN blocks starting with 978 until our inventory of a specific block size has been exhausted and replaced with 979. Based on current assignment trends and inventory, it may be years before ISBN blocks of 10, 100 and 1,000 starting with 979 are issued.

Changes to country classifications

Currently, the U.S. ISBN Agency assigns ISBNs starting with either 978-0 or 978-1. The 0 and 1 indicate assignment by an ISBN Agency in an English-speaking region. The 979 assignments will start with 979-8. The 8 will be unique to the United States. Of course, as with the 978-0 and 978-1, an ISBN starting with 979-8 will allow U.S. publishers and self-publishers to market their books anywhere in the world.

Questions? Bowker is happy to help. Please contact us at isbn-san@proquest.com.