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1. ISNI – Introduction & Overview

1.1 ISNI

The International Standard Name Identifier (ISNI) is the ISO certified global standard number (ISO 27729) for identifying the public identities of parties.

An ISNI identifier is a unique 16-digit number.

Example

0000 0001 1450 5761

The last character of an ISNI identifier may be either a number or an X

Example

0000 0000 1019 855X

ISNI is part of a family of international standard identifiers that includes identifiers of works, recordings, products and right holders in all repertoires, e.g.: ISBN's, ISSN's, etc.

The ISNI website is located at the following URL: <http://www.isni.org/>

1.2 Public identities

An ISNI is assigned to a public identity of a party.

- **Party**

A party can be a natural person (a human being), a legal entity (such as a registered company) or a fictional character.

- **Public identity**

A public identity is the name by which a party is publicly known. Each public identity can be assigned an ISNI.

A party may have more than one public identity, e.g.: Ruth Rendell and her pseudonym Barbara Vine.

Each public identity relating to a given Party has a separate ISNI, e.g.:

Ruth Rendell (real name) – 0000 0001 2149 1740
Barbara Vine (pseudonym) – 0000 0003 6864 7620

Fictitious and legendary persons are also considered as public identities, as are legal entities such as registered companies/organisations.

- **Name**

A party may have more than one name, not all of which are associated with one of its public identities, e.g. maiden names, married names, names of divorced spouses etc.

These other name forms are considered private if not associated with any publications. The different public and private names of a party can be coded as name variants but are not separate public identities and would not be assigned ISNIs¹.

Examples

Maiden/married names (Hillary Rodham/Hillary Clinton)
Alternative spellings (William Shakespear/William Shakespeare)
Linguistic variances (Leon Trotsky/Leo Trotskij/Lev Trotskii)
Transliteration variances (Leon Trotsky/Бронштейн, Лев Давидович/לעו, טראצקי)

1.3 ISNI purpose

- Serves as a name identity hub – links the same identity known under different names and identifiers
- Acts as a bridge identifier across multiple domains that link existing identifiers. ISNI is universal in scope, identifying all public identities that create, produce, manage, distribute or feature in creative contents (includes writers, artists, creators, performers, researchers, producers, publishers, aggregators, and more)
- Facilitates reliable royalty management services
- Provides an identifier assignment service, offering identifiers that are managed and curated
- Enables academics and researchers to establish their identity for the purpose of reputation management and communication of their output

¹ The RDA Toolkit (Section 9) provides examples that can help better distinguish between separate public identities and variant names

1.4 How ISNI works

- Aggregates and harvests data from a large number of sources². ISNI also works closely with other identification standards bodies to ensure maximum compatibility with data sets throughout the information supply chain
- ISNIs are assigned when there is a high level of confidence in matching new names to existing names in the database and according to the assignment criteria³. Once ISNIs are assigned, they are made freely available along with their core metadata
- Each assigned ISNI is accessible by a persistent URI in the form [http://isni.org/isni/\[isni\]](http://isni.org/isni/[isni]), e.g. <http://isni.org/isni/0000000120254559>
- Users are able to submit enrichments, clarifications and corrections to the ISNI Quality Team through an online form

² For a list of ISNI data sources, see **1.6**

³ For an explanation of ISNI assignment criteria, see **1.5.1**

1.5 Assigning ISNIs

1.5.1 ISNI assignment

An ISNI is given an **assigned** status where a record has either:

- i) 3 or more VIAF sources
- ii) 1 or 2 VIAF sources and at least 1 non-VIAF source
- iii) At least 2 non-VIAF sources
- iv) Unique name assignment
- v) Rich record assignment (online and Atom Publishing only)
- vi) Single source assignment, e.g. JNAM, RING, BOEK⁴
- vii) Manual assignment (ISNI Quality Team/ISNI members)
- viii) Records which initially matched the criteria for assignment, but have lost some of their original data sources. For example, records which had 3 or more VIAF sources but lost 1 or more of those sources due to VIAF cluster changes. These records would not lose their assigned status even when they no longer meet the criteria for assignment.

1.5.2 Provisional/Suspect status

Records which do not meet the assignment criteria have a status of **provisional** or **suspect**⁵.

- **Provisional** - the most common reasons for provisional status are ***no match initial database*** (there are no matches with records from other sources) and ***too many matches*** (potential matches have been found with more than one record so links are made between the records and will need to be reviewed before the status is upgraded to assigned)
- **Suspect** - this status occurs where errors have been identified in assigned records. The status is changed to suspect and the record is automatically removed from public view

⁴ For a list of ISNI data sources and their respective codes, see **1.6**

⁵ Note that Online and Atom Pub ISNI requests cannot create provisional records

1.6 ISNI data sources

The ISNI database is a cross-domain resource with direct contributions from over 40 sources, including the Virtual International Authority File (VIAF), an aggregation of data from major national and research libraries⁶.

A list of ISNI data sources and codes can be found here:

<http://www.isni.org/content/data-contributors>

The Bibliothèque nationale de France (BNF), National Library of Korea (KOREA) and Netherlands National Library (NTA) submit data directly to ISNI and are considered as non-VIAF sources for ISNI purposes, although they are VIAF partners.

ISNI updates to VIAF are supposed to occur bi-monthly. VIAF updates to ISNI have been suspended since March 2016.

1.7 ISNI governance

1.7.1 ISNI International Agency (ISNI-IA)

The ISNI International Agency (ISNI-IA) is the ISO Registration Authority for ISNI identifiers. The founding members are⁷:

- **Confédération Internationale des Sociétés d'Auteurs et Compositeurs (CISAC)**
- **Conference of European National Librarians (CENL)**
- **International Federation of Reproduction Rights Organisations (IFFRO)**
- **Societies' Council for the Collective Management of Performers' Rights (SCAPR)**
- **Online Computer Library Center (OCLC)**
- **ProQuest/Bowker**

The CENL (Conference of European National Librarians) is represented by the British Library and the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF)

⁶ For further information about VIAF see <http://viaf.org/> & <http://www.oclc.org/viaf.en.html>. 80 to 90% of data present in the ISNI database is from VIAF

⁷ For a list of current Board members see: <http://www.isni.org/content/founding-members-isni-ia>

1.7.2 International Assignment Agency (ISNI-AA)

The ISNI-AA manages the central assignment system and the ISNI international database and is run by OCLC in Leiden, Netherlands.

1.7.3 Registration agencies

Registration agencies⁸ provide the interface between ISNI applicants and the ISNI Assignment Agency. They are appointed by the ISNI-IA and provide ISNI related services to all users.

1.7.4 Quality Team

The ISNI Quality Team (QT) consists of a team of Authority experts from the **Bibliothèque nationale de France (BNF)** and the **British Library (BL)**. The role of the QT is to provide quality assurance of the ISNI database by:

- Working closely with the OCLC technical development team to provide quality review and feedback on test loads and full file loads
- Evaluating the database through random sampling to agreed levels to provide an overall level of confidence in the accuracy of the ISNI database as a whole
- Developing editing processes for error correction, feedback and reporting mechanisms and workflows to support ongoing ISNI operations
- Contributing to the writing of technical documentation
- Responding to error reports from data contributors (both VIAF and non-VIAF) and from the general public

⁸ A list of current registration agencies can be found here: <http://www.isni.org/content/isni-registration-agencies>

1.8 Access to ISNI databases

There are 3 ways to access the ISNI production database:

- **ISNI public database**
- **Web version ("PSI")**
- **WinIBW**

Within the web version and WinIBW there are different views, depending upon permissions.

There is also a test and "accept" database for testing new ISNI loads and program versions. ISNI accept is periodically overwritten by a new file from ISNI production.

1.8.1 ISNI public database (www.isni.org)

This database is the public view of ISNI and only includes records with the status **assigned**. There is no user ID or login required. Confidential data is not displayed (see 1.9)

1.8.2 Web version ("PSI")

Within the ISNI web version there are 3 views:

- **i) ISNIQT view** (<https://isni-m.oclc.org/DB=1.1/>) – access to full level of maintenance; entire ISNI database is available, including data from sources considered as "private"
- **ii) Member view** (<https://isni-m.oclc.org/DB=1.3/>) - access to a basic level of maintenance (merges, data correction of own source data, creating new records); entire database is available, but data from some sources is considered as "private" and cannot be viewed
- **iii) Accept/test version** – ISNIQT view mirrors (i) (<https://isni-m-acc.oclc.org/DB=1.1/>) ; Member view mirrors (ii) (<https://isni-m-acc.oclc.org/DB=1.3/>)

1.8.3 WinIBW

Within WinIBW there are 3 views:

- **i) ISNIQT view** – access to full level of maintenance; entire ISNI database is available, including data from sources considered as “private”
- **ii) Member view** – access to a basic level of maintenance (merges, data correction of own source data, creating new records); entire database is available, but data from some sources is considered as “private” and cannot be viewed
- **iii) Accept/test version** – ISNIQT view mirrors (i) ; Member view mirrors (ii)

1.8.4 ISNI Accept on WinIBW

To access ISNI Accept on WinIBW, enter the following command into the search bar at the bottom of the screen⁹:

<pica3://isni-m-acc.oclc.nl:26035/>

The following display will appear:

 **isni** Login

Type your user id and password. Click on Enter to continue.

Login

Password

⁹ For guidance on using the search bar, see **2.2.1**

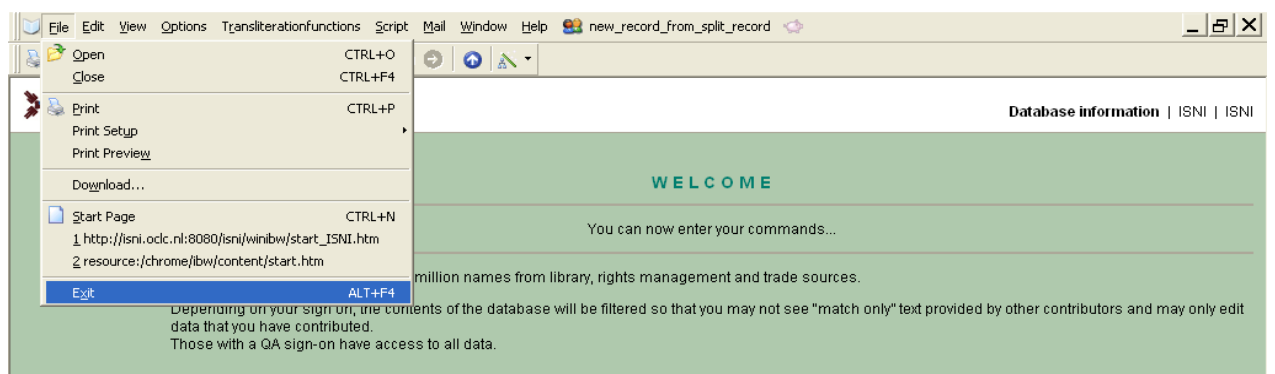
Login name and password are the same as on WinIBW QT or Member view.

On entering login name and password, a **Welcome** or **Menu** screen is displayed.



To return to WinIBW QT or Member view ISNI Accept will need to be closed down.

To Log out from ISNI Accept go to file at the top of the screen and select Exit.



Select the WinIBW icon on the desktop to return to WinIBW QT or Member view.

1.9 Public and private data on ISNI

Some source data is considered “private” on ISNI and cannot be viewed in the member or public display.

Access to the following data sources¹⁰ is **unrestricted** and available to members and on the public display:

AUVLU
BL
BLSA
CARLETON
CDR
COPYRUS
ETHOS
HARV
ISNI
JNAM
KOREA
MUBZ
NAKOREA
NG
NTA
OCLCT
ODIN
OPENL
PCC
SCHU
VIAF
ZETO

¹⁰ For a full list of ISNI data sources and codes, see **1.6**

Data from all other sources is **restricted** and only accessible to ISNIQT, not the member or public display:

ACCE
ACS
AGLD
ALCS
AMS
BOE
Bowker
CEDA
CEDR
CISAC
DAI
ICON
IPDA
MLA,
NLN
PROL
PROQ
Ring
SWISP
TEL
UNSW
VGWO

Note that where data is private the source code and 7XX/4XX fields of the restricted source will still be visible to members and on the public display. The titles, dates, etc. will only be visible to ISNIQT.