National Bibliography Number (NBN)

Using National Bibliography Numbers as Uniform Resource Names

See: http://www.ietf.org/rfc/rfc3188.txt

'National Bibliography Numbers' (persistent and unique identifiers assigned by the national libraries) can be supported within the URN (Uniform Resource Names) framework and the syntax for URNs defined in RFC 2141. At the time of writing there is no internationally agreed specification for the National Bibliography Number. The Conference of Directors of National Libraries (CDNL) has registered a URN (Universal Resource Name) name space identifier for the NBN.

Structure

All URNs consist of the letters "URN:" followed by a Namespace Identifier (NID) and a Namespace Specific String (NSS). For national bibliography numbers the NID is "nbn" and the NSS consists of three parts:

Prefix

Either ISO 3166 country code – 2 letter code e.g. GB

Or

Non-ISO prefix e.g. LCCN

The Library of Congress is the global registration agency for the NBN namespace and registers the non-ISO prefixes.

Delimiting character

Hyphen – this is always used for separating the prefix and the third part, the NBN string.

Colon – this technique can be used when there are several national libraries, which all need their own namespaces, or when the national library allows trusted partners to set up their own sub-namespaces within the national NBN namespace.

e.g.   urn:nbn:fi:st for Statistics Finland

         urn:nbn:fi:vn for Finnish State Council

NBN string

This uniquely identifies the electronic document at a national level.

> urn:nbn:<ISO 3166 country code:sub-namespace code>-<assigned NBN string>

The NBN string may include a checksum to enable validation but this is not

> urn:nbn:<non-ISO registered prefix>-<assigned NBN string>

mandatory.

This can be schematised as follows:

> urn:nbn:<ISO 3166 country code>-<assigned NBN string>

e.g. urn:nbn:fi-fe976238

e.g.: urn:nbn:fi:st-123456

e.g. urn:nbn:LCCN-9920567

Other issues

Guidelines adopted by each national library define when different versions of a work should be assigned the same or differing NBNs. This only applies if assignment is manual.

No resolution system is defined for the NBN. It is suggested in the registration document that resolution would be through national bibliographic databases, or through web indexes or archives.