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(1998-2014)

In 2015 the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ISSN system is being celebrated. I am glad to be able to add my voice to those who will praise the many qualities of the ISSN system and underline the importance of a reliable identification system of serial resources for the development of science, education and democracy. Let me briefly remind that the ISSN system is used worldwide by many different actors for many different purposes: it facilitates trade and exchanges, particularly the management of subscriptions, it contributes to the authentication of publications, it accelerates distribution, it is used in the management of access over the Internet and in copyright management systems, to mention only a few examples.

What makes the ISSN system so successful? As one of the previous directors of the ISSN International Centre, this 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary provides me with a great opportunity to share a few thoughts with the ISSN Network, and hopefully beyond.

In my opinion, the importance of the ISSN system relies precisely in one of its main characteristics which can be summarized in two words: reliable identification. Yes, the ISSN system is highly reliable, and there are many different reasons for that.

First of all, the ISSN system is based on principles and professional rules which are shared by the whole ISSN network and which are publicly available. It should be stressed that ISSN rules are coherent with the international rules for the description of documents, which makes it easy to fully integrate

the ISSN activity with the current work of various institutions, and to integrate ISSN data with the professional practices of many different actors.

Then, and that is equally important, an ISSN number never goes alone: each ISSN assigned is linked to a set of metadata which enables to know what is identified by each number. And all this information – numbers and metadata, over 1,8 million records today – is gathered and made available in an international database, the ISSN Register.

But even more important, all this is the result of the work of the ISSN Network – and that is what I wish to underline and praise today: on a daily basis, 88 different countries, spread over the whole globe, speaking many different languages, having many different cultural backgrounds, in many different economic situations, apply the same professional principles and contribute their data to the international database. Indeed, the simple fact (but is it so simple?) that so many different countries are able to define common rules, and to apply those rules, on a daily basis in a coherent way is a wonderful accomplishment. And of course it is the major factor for the reliability of the system.

Of course there are other reasons. For instance, reliability is also due, in my opinion, to the fact that the ISSN network is actually a *trusted third party* – neutral, not depending on the producers or distributors, applying high professional standards, and deeply attached to the importance of access to knowledge, for the benefit of all. This vision is

shared by the countries which are members of the ISSN system, and by the institutions hosting the ISSN national centres, which together constitute and support the ISSN system.

Of course reliability also depends on other factors such as the quality and efficient maintenance of the ISSN Register, on the robustness of the computer system, on the training, on the follow-up of the ISSN National Centres, among others.

However, my personal conviction is that it is indeed the support of the Member countries, the daily work of the staff at ISSN National Centres and of their host institutions, as well as the work of the ISSN International Centre, which render ISSN so truly reliable.

May I also add that the ISSN system evolves on a regular basis, demonstrating that the evolutions of the world and of the technologies, and the changing role of identification are fully taken into account, particularly during the annual meetings when the whole community gathers to discuss and set the evolutions of professional practices. Indeed, the ISSN Network faces its many professional challenges with optimism, energy and great commitment.

For all those reasons, I am sincerely happy to have this opportunity to express my sincere congratulations to the ISSN Network and to wish it good luck for the future.