

## **Do We Need a Separate ISMN Standard?**

This question is often asked, and was repeated in the context of the revision of the standard. It is true, just looking at the technical side of the identifiers, ISBN would be able to cover also music publications. There are a number of practical reasons, however, which exclude this "easy" solution:

- Some ISBN agencies, especially those connected with private companies, refused to cover music publications, owing to lack of experience in this field. Sharing contingents of numbers within one country would easily lead to confusion.
- Music was excluded from the ISBN standard already before an ISMN standard was created, owing to the fact that notated music was considered something „different“ that needed special handling.
- The music sector (publishing, trade) is organised quite differently from the book sector; supply and distribution channels are not the same. There are special retail shops, conservatories and music schools, and special music libraries. So there are special target groups, different from those of the book sector.
- Many people are music illiterate - they cannot read music.
- There are distribution forms which do not exist in the book-trade. For example do publishers rent scores to musicians and whole orchestras. This is called hire material. After the performance of a concert the orchestra returns the scores to the publisher.
- In contrast to Books in Print, Music in Print should be an international directory.
- Music publications can be easily filtered out of the huge amount of other publications by means of the ISMN and thus used for Music in Print and other purposes. Customers do not have to search the needle in a haystack, e.g. extracting music from millions of non-music items.