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INT. ISMN AGENCY / INT. ISMN-AGENTUR E.V.

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# NEWSLETTER #30

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# WELCOME TO ISSUE NO.30

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## INTRODUCTION



*This year marks the 27th anniversary of ISMN, counting from the publication of the international standard 10957 in December 1993.*

***BY DR. HARTMUT WALRAVENS, CHAIR***

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A more spectacular event is, however, the spreading of the new Covid-19 virus worldwide, which has been influencing almost all countries heavily, even if to varying degrees. International travelling came almost to an end, many economies came close to paralysis, cultural and sports activities were canceled, restaurants were closed as were schools, universities, libraries and museums. Age-old forms of human behavior had to change - no more handshaking; social distancing and masks in public life became the rule ... The world of music suffers, too. Concert halls were closed, most music events canceled, orchestras and bands are on forced "vacation". And even the ISMN is affected - the AGM had to be postponed. So we hope that we will be able to meet in Oslo next year ...

Few members will feel sad about missing the *formal* part of the AGM but many of us had been looking forward to meeting colleagues again, exchanging information, enjoying a social event, the traditional ISMN dinner, and possibly, a musical event. All this is very important for us who have otherwise not much contact with colleagues in the standard numbering field, scattered around the globe.

For a while we were considering to have an AGM as a video conference, which would be possible technically, but expensive as the lawmakers asked for a certain conditions to be observed. But, after all, where would be the social benefit? To see some faces on the screen is no surrogate for personal contacts and conversations. All right, we will have to wait for next year and hope that the virus will not have new surprises in stock.



The ISMN Board decided at its last meeting we would at least provide our constituency with the newsletter so that you are kept up to date. There are some changes which were announced and envisaged at last year's meeting but were put into practice this year, some other measures are still forthcoming and expected to be working by end of the year.

Carolin Unger who has been the soul of the ISMN office is now officially retired. She has made great progress in recovering her health.

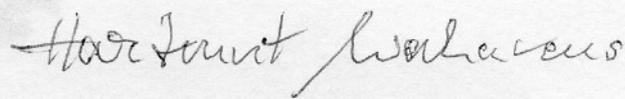
Birgit Böcher who joined us at the last meeting still on a provisional basis, is now firmly installed as Executive Director. The office moved as you all know to its new premises near the Zoo station in Berlin and works with friendly neighbours of other music-related organizations, the most important of which is the German Music Publishers Association.

Some of you may remember that I talked about possible retirement during recent years. It is not that I got sick and tired of seeing your faces but the need to push ISMN by getting more input from the publishers' side to make full use of the high potential of the ISMN has the highest priority.



There are still publishers and other professionals who maintain that the ISMN is a number that the *librarians* insist on having. Wrong - the ISMN was created for the benefit of the music publishers, and they are invited to make as much profitable use of it as possible. A music publisher at the head of the ISMN Board would have a much better chance of being listened to than a librarian ... By the way, at 76 one does not need a special excuse for resigning?!

About all these topics the newsletter will give you more information. Read on!



# FINANCIAL REPORT 2019

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„WE ARE WELL  
OFF AND ABLE TO  
TAKE ON NEW  
TASKS IN THE  
YEARS TO COME.“

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By Dr. Bettina  
von Seyfried  
*Treasurer*

The main aspect in the fiscal year 2019 was the change of the management of our office.

Due to the health situation of Carolin Unger we had been very lucky to have Birgit Boecher at hand who was willing and able to take on the duties of Carolin. She straight away went into the organisation of last year's panel meeting in Santiago de Chile, which went very well. Followed by digging deeper into all specifics of the workload of the office. This of course led to extra expenses. Over the years we set aside a solid amount of money for any unexpected expenses, which we then faced! The main point is, to guarantee the unspoiled organisation of all obligations of the agency.

The panel meeting in Santiago was of special importance to us. We got many new contacts and deepened older connections and developed new ideas. In terms of finances we had been well prepared for this long distance journey to South America. We are very happy about this event and the forthcoming results of those expenses.

We are very glad, that our members pay regularly and in time!

# A NEW FACE REPRESENTING ISMN



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„SINCE USING ISMN I  
WAS CONVINCED THAT  
IT WAS GREAT TO HAVE  
SOMETHING SIMILAR  
LIKE THE ISBN SYSTEM  
FOR BOOKS.“

**NICK PFEFFERKORN**

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**Interview by Birgit Böcher,**  
General Manager Int. ISMN  
Agency

The International ISMN Agency will change its chairmanship at the turn of the year. As you all know, Hartmut Walravens is going to retire - well deserved. The Board searched for a successor who would continue the work of the Agency and take it to a new level. A person well suited for this job is **Nick Pfefferkorn**, a music publisher who will take over the leadership of the organisation now represented by its own agencies in 60 countries worldwide. We would like to introduce him and therefore asked him a few questions.

**Mr Pfefferkorn, please tell us something about your career as a music publisher**

I founded my own music publishing company named "Pfefferkorn Music Publishing" back in 1996 at the age of 20. The company focused on the so called "minor masters" of the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century as I am convinced, that to get the whole picture of music history it is important to get to know who else was around, besides the majors we know of today. In 2014 I took a major step forward exhibiting at the Frankfurt Music Fair for the first time and again in 2015.

Since about 2008 I was also working as a professional engraver for major music publishers such as Bärenreiter, Breitkopf & Härtel, Boosey and Hawkes and others. At the 2015 Music Fair I was approached by the former editor in chief of Breitkopf & Härtel, Eva-Maria Hodel who then introduced me to Lieselotte Sievers, my now predecessor in office as the head of Breitkopf & Härtel. I joined the company in September 2015 as publishing director and as of January 2017 I took over the position of Mrs. Sievers as Managing Director.

**When did you first get to know the ISMN?**

As early as 1997 when I needed those numbers for my editions, too. Since using ISMNs I was convinced that it was great to have something similar like the ISBN system for books.

**What are the current challenges in the ISMN world? Have you set goals for your work as chairman of the ISMN agency?**

Introducing and more important implementing the ISMN system in countries like China, Japan and the US should be the main focus for the coming years. Mr. Walravens did pioneer work in this sector, however, the common knowledge about these numbers, especially among the retails is yet too little.

**What do we have to do to achieve these goals?**

As for mainland China I am in close contact with the Peoples Music Publishing house as they have the major influence on the officials. However, I am relying on Mr. Walravens' expertise and contacts to take over from him.

**How important is the worldwide dissemination of the numbering standard for you?**

As mentioned above, I think it should be the main focus for the coming years to get this numbering system to become a standard in the music sector in China and the US. If these countries are with us it'll be much easier to take the next step forward.

**The Covid19 pandemic also affects music publishers, how do you assess the current situation?**



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„THE WHOLE  
IMPACT OF  
COVID-19 IS NOT  
FULLY GRASPABLE  
YET“

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As the Music Publishing industry is the last link of the cultural food chain, the impact of this whole Covid-19 situation is not fully graspable yet. The impact can only be fully determined in a couple of months. The major problem for all publishers in the sector of the so called "serious music" is the lack of live performances both concerts and operas. The rental income for performance materials and therefore the collecting of performance fees is one of the main pillars of our income. To put it mildly: The situation could not be worse right now.

**And what does it mean in the long term?**

As I said above: The whole impact is not yet graspable in full. But I know from colleagues in the music publishing business that we're all facing tough times.

Thank you very much!

# THE ISMN MANAGER

## - AN AGENCY „MUST HAVE“



„THE ISMN  
MANAGER IS AN  
EXCELLENT  
SOFTWARE FOR  
THE DAILY WORK“

**Wolfram  
Krajewski**, Vice  
Chair ISMN  
Agency

The ISMN Manger and the IDNV are two separate solutions. However, there is a close connection between them and they complete each other. This article tells you what the systems do and how an ISMN agency can benefit from their use.

The ISMN Manager is an excellent software for the daily work of an ISMN Agency. And it is more since every ISMN manager is connected to the International ISMN Agency in Berlin and to all the ISMN agencies worldwide. In this way, the ISMN Manager is a reliable source of information in the professional network of the ISMN agencies.

The ISMN Manager contains several databases. You will find register tabs for the most important in the standard view of the Main Window:

Stat	Status	Agency	Name	Country	ISN	Registrant numbers	Single numbers	Reason	ISN	Sub-organizer of	Associated registrants
	Active	ISMN United Kingdom	300 Music Publishing	United Kingdom	x	9022296				x	300 Music Publishing
	Active	ISMN United Kingdom	30 Days Publishing	United Kingdom	x	703117					30 Days Publishing
	Unlicensed	ISMN Sweden	A&O Publarna International A&O Music	Sweden	x	9000002 / 9000010					A&O Publarna International A&O Music
	Unlicensed	ISMN United Kingdom	ADM&P Publishing	United Kingdom		2289					ADM&P Publishing
	Unlicensed	ISMN Spain	Academia de Música Locustem, S.L. (ceased publi	Spain	x	9013136					Academia de Música Locustem, S.L.
	Unlicensed	ISMN Spain	AC&M S.L. (ceased publishing)	Spain	x	9012136					AC&M S.L. (ceased publishing)
	Unlicensed	ISMN Sweden	Adem publishing	Sweden	x	700000					Adem publishing
	Unlicensed	ISMN United Kingdom	Adem Music Publishers	United Kingdom	x	57022					Adem Music Publishers
	Active	ISMN United Kingdom	Agent for Change Publishing Limited	United Kingdom	x	700006				x	Agent for Change Publishing Limited
	Unlicensed	ISMN Indonesia	Agropia Publishing	Indonesia	x	9013000					Agropia Publishing
	Unlicensed	ISMN Canada	A&A Publishing Ltd.	Canada	x	700011					A&A Publishing Ltd.
	ISMN	Wachter	ISMN Sweden	Akrisa musikforlag AB (ceased publishing)	Sweden	x	700002			„Publishers	Akrisa musikforlag AB (ceased publi
	Unlicensed	ISMN Sri Lanka	Akara Publishers	Sri Lanka	x	710001					Akara Publishers
	Active	ISMN United Kingdom	Alan Music Publishing	United Kingdom	x	700000				x	Alan Music Publishing
	Unlicensed	ISMN Finland	Akselintyty (ceased publishing)	Finland	x	500000					Akselintyty (ceased publishing)
	Unlicensed	ISMN USA	Alava Publishing	United States	x	800020					Alava Publishing
	Active	ISMN Indonesia	Almaya Publisher	Indonesia	x	9021916					Almaya Publisher
	Active	ISMN Australia	Almayo Publishing	Australia	x	9020000				x	Almayo Publishing
	Unlicensed	ISMN Spain	Almudiel Ediciones Musicas (ceased publishing)	Spain	x	9012136					Almudiel Ediciones Musicas (ceas
	Active	ISMN Germany AT, CH	Almudiel Publishing	Germany	x	902000					Almudiel Publishing
	Active	ISMN Poland	Almuri Ltd. Publishing House, Wydawnictwo Muzy	Poland	x	80204 / 80010				x	Almuri Ltd. Publishing House, Wydaw
	Active	ISMN Germany AT, CH	Andra Music Publishing	United Kingdom	x	700000				x	Andra Music Publishing
	Active	ISMN United Kingdom	Andrew & Andrew Music Publishing Ltd	United Kingdom	x	9002000 / 9002100 / 1					Andrew & Andrew Music Publishing
	Active	ISMN International (ISMN-Age	Antikoder Publishing	Spain	x	700000					Antikoder Publishing
	Unlicensed	ISMN Czech Republic	AO3 Publishing, s.r.o. (cezi podnikatelka, nakladatel	Czech Republic	x	9004000					AO3 Publishing, s.r.o. (cezi podnikate
	Active	ISMN Germany AT, CH	Apasakata Records & Publishing	Germany	x	9000010					Apasakata Records & Publishing
	Inactive	ISMN International (ISMN-Age	Apple Tree Music Publishing Limited	Hong Kong	x	80100 / 8010002					Apple Tree Music Publishing Limited
	Unlicensed	ISMN Belgium	APS Publishing	Belgium	x	801200				„Publishers	APS Publishing
	Active	ISMN United Kingdom	Arctura Publishing	United Kingdom	x	9002200					Arctura Publishing
	Unlicensed	ISMN USA	Arcturus Publications	United States	x	800007					Arcturus Publications

Some of the databases are "official" and thus supported by the international agency in Berlin. Furthermore, there are the "Agency" databases in which you will find and edit your agency's data.

What can you do with your ISMN Manager? Of course the job of an ISMN agency, in sum:

- Organise the contact details of your registrant's and keep these up to date.
- Allocate ISMN to registrants in an error preventing way.
- Generate lists of ISMN and generate the bar codes (e.g. as pdf).
- Inform yourself about allocated ISMN and ISMN ranges... and more.

If you enter a new registrant, change an address or allocate an ISMN, the Manager automatically creates updates. The international ISMN agency receives your update via a secure data exchange, processes it (automatically) and publishes all the changes in the official databases.

So, just by doing your agency's job with the ISMN Manager will keep the network up to date. The software is easy to use, very helpful and efficient - you get a valuable tool supporting your work in every way.

If you have an own internal management system for your agency, it may be possible to connect this with the ISMN Manager so that the network of the ISMN agencies will receive your updates. However, this may be a topic for the ISMN Manager 2.0.



### **Key facts and functions. The ISMN Manager ...**

- ... Provides an error-preventing method for the administration and allocation of ISMNs.
- ... Helps you in organizing and maintaining the contact details and information of registrants in a standardized manner.
- ... Automatically supports you with the next available number of your different ISMN ranges.
- ... Allows generating ISMN lists and bar codes (e.g. pdf for the publisher items layout).
- ... Automatically collects all your changes and new entries to send an update to the International ISMN Agency via an integrated secure data exchange.
- ... Is a reliable source of information to you, to all ISMN agencies and to the International ISMN Agency.
- At the same time, the system is a shared directory of ISMN ranges for all the ISMN agencies, which is maintained by the Internationale ISMN-Agentur, Berlin and supports the collaboration in the international network.



# JAPAN ISMN AGENCY LAUNCHED

The JAPAN ISMN Agency was launched on 5th June 2020. The ISMN system will revolutionize the Japanese music market. JAPAN ISMN Agency is run by a private company, SPACE Corporation. It is located near the Tokyo Tower, which is widely known as a symbol of Tokyo. The codes of TC46 used in Japan are ISBN, ISWC, ISRC, and ISSN. ISMN is a new addition to those codes. In Japan, ISO agencies are often private companies. Particularly, ISBN, ISWC, and ISRC agencies are all private.

## 1. About Japanese music and the market

The National Diet Library collects roughly about 28,000 music scores. The collection rate of music scores in Japanese libraries is very low because in fact there are more than 40,000 scores in Japan. Moreover, there are more than 20,000 unpublished scores. 30% of the scores of contemporary works use traditional Japanese musical instruments. Since there are many cases where pop music is not published, there is a big difference between the number of copyrights and the number of published music. According to the survey from 2011 the Japanese music market was estimated at 150 million dollars, with domestic distribution predominant. In the future, I estimate that an introduction of ISMN can expand the Japanese music score market to \$350 million and the international music score market to about \$8 million. There

# GOING EAST

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„I BELIEVE THAT WITH THE  
INTRODUCTION OF THE ISMN  
SYSTEM, BOTH THE SCORE  
INDUSTRY AND THE MUSIC  
INDUSTRY WILL BE  
STIMULATED“

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**by Kyoto  
Iwamoto**  
Japan ISMN  
Agency



are several reasons. First, Japanese music scores' information will be circulated domestically and internationally by registration with ISMN Manager, IDNV, and Japanese ISMN System. Second, small publishers and composers will be able to use the ISMN code to significantly increase their chances of participating in music sales. Finally, the Japanese ISMN system will collect music score data, which is convenient to solve copyright problems. I believe that with the introduction of the ISMN System, both the score industry and the music industry will be stimulated.

Japan ISMN Agency will develop a new system in cooperation with DE-Parcon Co., Ltd. Our new system will bring a lot of added value to the ISMN. This will be even useful for the mergers and acquisitions in the ISMN market.

## **Parties involved in Japanese ISMN**

All parties involved in Japanese ISMN welcome an introduction of ISMN. The Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan has officially made comments regarding the promotion of ISMN in Japan. Japan ISBN Agency, Japan GSI Agency, and Japan ISMN Agency have agreed to work together to encourage the use of the correct code. Japanese publishers have used the ISBN code and JAN code (GSI code) for the scores so far, but in the future, it will gradually change to the ISMN code system. Furthermore, the Japan ISMN Agency and the Japan TC46 Committee will work together to get a JIS (Japanese Industrial Standards) for ISO 10957. JIS is a quality assurance system conducted by the public institution with thorough examinations. The implementation of JIS is expected in 2022. Documents and negotiations for JIS examination are enormous and difficult, but the realization of JIS is the most effective way for the spread of ISMN in Japan.

The Japanese Diet Library also welcomes ISMN codes. From January 2021, the National Diet Library officially uses the ISMN code for classification. This Japanese ISMN information will be reflected in the World's Largest Library Catalog.

Taking this chance, I would also like to introduce myself. I am an enthusiastic researcher on ISMN and an author of a paper about ISMN in Japan. I obtained my master's degree in cultural policy from the National Institute for Policy Studies in March 2019. I am going to continue my research and obtain a doctoral degree in this field. I own two companies. One is Space Co., Ltd., which manages international exchange events since 2008. The second is Mother Earth Co., Ltd., which was established in 2003 and majors in publishing. In addition, I have been practicing Japanese traditional dance and music since I was 3 years old and have won many awards both at home and abroad.

Unfortunately, this year's ISMN International Conference has been canceled. I look forward to seeing you as soon as the effects of COVID-19 subside.



The longtime General Manager of the International ISMN Agency stepped down in September 2019 and is now enjoying her pre-retirement. Colleagues from ISMN are saying goodbye and are honouring her efforts.

# A FAREWELL TO CAROLIN

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„I WAS LOOKING  
FORWARD TO  
MEETING HER AT  
EVERY PLACE  
BECAUSE SHE WAS  
EVERY TIME  
SMILING”

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**Antonin  
Jeřábek**

Czech National  
ISBN/ISMN  
Agencies



Carolin and Antonin 2015

If I remember it well I have known Carolin Unger for ages. I do not know where and when I met her for the first time but it had to be in West Berlin during some of-panel meetings of the International ISBN Agency. She was engaged at that time in PIID (Publishers' International ISBN Directory) and was an unseparable working collaborative twin with Dr. Hartmut Walravens - at that time the Director of IIA. As always Carolin did her job perfectly.

In 1993 the International ISMN Agency was established and seated in Berlin and with Hartmut also as its Director. Carolin remained working for ISBN.

But time flies and ISBN moved to London in 2007 and a new Director appeared there but that unseparable twin still worked in Berlin. But Carolin „changed her colours” and entered the International ISMN Agency being the right hand of its Director.

Shortly after her „transfer” from ISBN to ISMN Carolin visited me and Dr. Magda Saková - the head of the Czech National ISMN Agency - in the National Library in Klementinum. She was interested in work of our Agency from the beginning of entering new music publishers, instructing them, giving them blocks of ISMNs, checking numbers in music items *de visu*, dealing with errors etc. Carolin „consumed” all of it perfectly, understood everything, left us with many thanks and went to walk Prague with her husband...

It may be interesting to mention those places in which we met. Besides nearly the whole Europe (even Luxemburg, Moldova and Malta) outside Europe it was Tehran (Iran), Buenos Aires (Argentina), Bali (Indonesia), Pretoria (South Africa), New York and Washington. Each of these meetings presented a great challenge for Carolin because she had to prepare herself for it not only from the working side but also from „geographical” one: to be able to enjoy and see interesting places and things.

I can say that I was looking forward to meeting her at every place because she was every time smiling and in good mood, ready to help everyone in need and keeping good mood during all ISBN/ISMN Dinners.

Well, I am happy that I had chance to meet such a nice person.

Long live Caroline!

**Bettina von Seyfried:** I met Carolin when she stepped in after Uli Wegener left the agency. Her pleasant character and her gift to communicate led to a very harmonious collaboration. It was obvious, that through the constant rise of memberships and specifically through more responsibilities after the agency moved away from Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin Preußischer Kulturbesitz that she would become a proper manager of the agency. She took on all those new aspects of her work and presented us a very well organized office for altogether 12 years. Our cooperation has always been very friendly and free from any conflict. Her main focus was to keep all data all right and all members well informed. At all the conferences she was always very busy and felt responsible to keep all and everything together. What a pleasant host. It was a great pleasure to work with her as treasurer of the agency.



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## „SHE CHARMED ISMN VISITORS AND COLLEAGUES LIKEWISE“

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**Hartmut Walravens:** Carolin did an excellent job as the ISMN Executive Director for many years. About 30 years ago she joined the service of the State Library, at first in the Readers Services Department. But soon she switched jobs and became a member of the ISBN team; when ISBN International moved to London in 2006, ISMN was left behind and Carolin loyally took the responsibility on running it. ISMN had to be restructured as a registered association as the State Library did not really know what to do with it. We had to find new office space and were grateful to the library that they paid the rent for a number of years. What I mention in a few words actually comprises a diversity of tasks, many of them of a practical nature. But they also required vision and imagination. We needed a website, we needed PR material, we needed information material in Spanish. Trips, conferences had to be organized, new software to be tested, the newsletter changed to an electronic format; our publisher decided to give up the *ISMN Music Publishers Directory* because it did no longer return the expected revenue at a time when so many information resources migrated to the internet; so a web application had to be generated. The ISMN Manager (a tool for agency management, kindly provided by Wolfram Krajewski) had to be tested and explained to our constituency. I could go on and on – but this should not be a job description – the important point is that Carolin was the heart and soul of all these activities. She charmed ISMN visitors and colleagues likewise, made them feel welcome and at ease. I daresay I profited most from this pleasant and easy cooperation. I did not have a working space at the small office – when something had to be discussed in detail or papers signed, Carolin stopped by and we settled things in my home office. Otherwise much was accomplished on the phone, always with good humour, or by email.

Dear Carolin, we wish you a great time now that your health seems to be stable again - enjoy life without office work, and remember that you left good and well-wishing friends behind (a number of whom also retired)!

# NOTES ON NUMBERS, NOTATIONS AND NOTABLE ENCOUNTERS ALL AROUND THE WORLD

Quite a long period of my life I spent with you and standard numbers. And it has always been a pleasure! All of these years, beginning in 1989, I was working closely with our chairman Hartmut Walravens - at first at the International ISBN Agency whose director he was from 1986 to 2006 when the agency was still based in Berlin, and later on at the International ISMN Agency, beginning in 2007 as its Executive Director. By this time the agency had left Berlin's state library and was transformed into the Internationale ISMN-Agentur e.V.

So, when I had to stop working about a year ago, it had been 30 years that I had worked with Hartmut. I thank him so much for his everlasting support and for everything I learned from him. He has always been a wonderful boss! After such a long time it was quite a strange feeling to quit for health reasons but I am very glad that Birgit Böcher was kind enough to step in right away. I am convinced that ISMN will have a bright future as the indispensable tool to bring notated music to its customers and to support music culture all over the world.

But it was not only Hartmut who I got to know over all these years. The Panel meetings and as of 2007 the AGMs were a very important part of my work and gave me the chance to meet so many of you in person. Would you believe that I first met Alenka Kanič and Antonín Jeřábek almost three decades ago! And there were so many more wonderful colleagues, not only from the ISMN but also from the ISBN world!

It was so good to meet you all and to exchange ideas or just chat. In my everyday work I was lucky to have a very kind, helpful and supportive Board at my side, consisting of Hartmut, Bettina von Seyfried, Joachim Jaenecke and later Wolfram Krajewski.

Currently, the coronavirus is plaguing us, bringing a lot of harm to so many. Like almost all assemblies around the world the 2020



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## WAVING GOODBYE, DEAR COLLEAGUES AND FRIENDS!

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by Carolin  
Unger



ISMN AGM in Oslo had to be cancelled. At the Oslo AGM of 2007, by the way, I took over from my predecessor Ulrich Wegner. At that time, there were about 40 member agencies and now there are about 60. This success was only made possible because of all of you who are contributing to the ISMN. Thank you all for the support and input!

What I especially loved about this job was that behind these abstract numbers there are so many real wonderful people. Being in contact with you from all over the world, and especially meeting you in person, has always been a highlight for me! Thanks to the ISMN in the last 13 years I was allowed to travel to so many interesting places and to attend meetings in so different cultures - needless to say that all of the gatherings were always splendidly organized. I learned a lot about these countries, and often we were offered presentations of local music which were extremely interesting and mind-opening. I hope you will be able to enjoy many more of these meetings as soon as the pandemic will be overcome!

I wish all of you the very best, take good care of yourself and your loved ones in these difficult times, and: **Please continue to promote the ISMN!**

I will always fondly remember my years with Hartmut, the agency and you.

*Carolin Ungert*

# MY FIRST STEPS WITH ISMN



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„I LIKE THE IDEA  
BEING  
CONNECTED WITH  
THE WHOLE  
WORLD“

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**by Birgit Böcher,**  
General Manager  
Int. ISMN Agency

A year ago we were sitting in Santiago de Chile in beautiful weather and I had the pleasure of attending my first board meeting of the International ISMN Agency. It was not only my first time in South America, but also the first time I had contact with representatives of the agencies worldwide. 12 months later, not only has a lot happened in Chile (and unfortunately not much good), but the world is a different place. Covid-19 keeps us all in suspense, especially the music sector is particularly affected by concert cancellations, production stop in the film and advertising market, closure of restaurants, bars and live music locations.

Of course, this has also had an impact on our daily work. Many agencies were in the home office and had only limited access from there to working resources, such as the ISMN Manager. In the summer it became clear that the annual assembly in Oslo had to be cancelled. It is a pity, but it was the right decision in view of the rising infection rates.

And slowly routine is beginning to take hold at the International Agency in Berlin. From time to time I have to ask Carolin, who is always there to help me with advice. I still enjoy working with the board, the members and the ISMN. I am happy about the contact to the whole world. For next year I already have some projects in mind, which I hope we will implement together: for example, spreading the word about the ISMN Manager among agencies, raising awareness of the standard in the commercial sector and last but not least: the paperless office! /



## A LOOK THROUGH THE EYES OF A PIONEER

*I was honored and flattered when the editor-in-chief of the ISMN Newsletter contacted me with the wish to write "a bit for the newsletter, in a style of your liking, professional experience with ISMN". My first thought was to say no and kindly thank him for the invitation as I am not an easy writer, but then I changed my mind as this might be the occasion to give a short survey of my work with international identifiers. I cannot do without starting with the ISBN as it was my first one and led to a very good cooperation with publishers in my country.*

# OVER 20 YEARS WITH ISMN

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„THERE ARE A LOT OF  
SWEET MEMORIES  
OVER THE PERIOD I  
WORKED FOR ISBN  
AND ISMN“

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**by Alenka Kanič,**  
*former Director of  
the National ISMN  
Agency, Slovenia*

The ISBN system was well established long before I started to work at the National and University Library in Ljubljana forty years ago. I was in charge of cataloguing, mainly Slovenian and then Yugoslav books, which at that time did not carry ISBNs. Yugoslavia in those times was in a difficult financial situation, the import being rationalized although in Slovenia buying books and journals abroad was extremely well organized and coordinated and Slovenian inter-library loan service was flourishing. This is just to say that we did not meet ISBNs every day and knew little about it.

The ISBN system was introduced to the Yugoslav book market in 1985, being operational in 1987 and the Yugoslav Bibliographic Institute in Belgrade was acting as the Yugoslav national ISBN Agency. With the disintegration of Yugoslavia in 1991, at the time the common multinational country, into several nowadays independent states on the Balkan Peninsula, separate national agencies in these countries were established. All national ISBN agencies in the region work under the auspices of national libraries, ours too, and with the development of the ISMN system national ISMN agencies were born consequently. My first attendance to the ISBN panel meeting dates back to autumn 1992. As the representative of the newly set up national agency I had a lot to learn and when back home to implement that knowledge to the work of our agency. I probably had not yet completely gone through all the traps of ISBN when in 1994 most participants of the ISBN panel meeting got familiar with ISMN for the first time, another numbering system on the market, this time in the field of notated music. In ISMN Newsletter from November 1994 we can read "Slovenia only reported one music publisher. Therefore they are not going to establish an ISMN agency."

That was it, no agency until 1999! From 1994 until 1999 the situation on the music market in Slovenia changed a lot. Just as it was the case with ISBN, national ISMN agency in Slovenia was conceived on the initiative of music publishers, especially one very persuasive music publisher, and the consent of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia. Private initiative was on the march, publishers of all kinds grew up as mushrooms, music publishers, too. Established in 1999,

today Slovenian National ISMN Agency is fully operational, although the market continues to be very, very small with the number of music publications being stable over the years, between 130 and 150 titles each year only. The National ISMN Agency works hand in hand with the ISBN Agency, both precataloguing for the needs of our national cooperative COBISS system. In order to offer better services to our publishers a very good cooperation has been established between the agency and the Music Department of the National and University Library.

Initially the national ISMN Agency in Ljubljana had been assigned two prefixes, and when almost twenty years later we ran out of identifiers, an additional range was kindly allocated by the International ISMN Agency in Berlin. Several identifiers have been reserved to identify occasional music sheets. Sometimes individuals and institutions have the occasion to publish one title only. With the improvement of the structure of the database we have changed that policy, too, and tend to identify each publisher with its own prefix, as it often happens that in a lapse of some years they publish another title.

What is an ISMN? There is certainly no need for old veterans, like we all are, to explain that acronym, but it is interesting to read in the first two copies of ISMN Newsletter that it "may justly be considered a subset"<sup>1</sup> to ISBN or "...ISMN which basically is an extension of the book numbering system"<sup>2</sup>, but we all know that ISMN is much more than that.



Alenka and Renata 2019

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„THE NATIONAL  
ISMN AGENCY  
WORKS HAND IN  
HAND WITH THE  
ISBN AGENCY“

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with Hartmut in South Africa

Words such as subset or extension to ISBN were the right ones to be used at the time of introducing ISMN to the publishing industry, but today ISMN is considered as equal to any other identifier and it is largely used for its defined purposes. Since 1993 the family of international identifiers such as ISBN, ISSN and ISMN has been enlarged by other new ones, according to new media on the publishing market and I am sure new ones are bound to come out in the future.

Definitely ISMN is one of the very concise and irreplaceable identifiers for notated music, perhaps not yet the most widely known and recognized as such, but together with other international identifiers they form a big family of important and persistent identifiers used in the publishing industry, libraries, bibliographic data and scientific citations.

Working my whole life in the library, I personally have no experience with the use of the ISMN on the market, but librarians definitely do use it for exact and unambiguous identification of a publication in the field of notated music. One of the tasks of the National Library is collecting legal deposit copies of what is published in the country and outside it as long as it goes under the scope of patrimony, also in the field of music. The agency, following its duties defined in the ISMN Users' Manual and in the contract signed between the International ISMN Agency and the national agency, has to keep evidence of all individual ISMNs assigned. In national libraries it is most often done by collecting data for the national bibliography. Identifiers are assigned at the time of precataloguing; at this point the agency very often encounters different problems. In case a publisher publishes notated music only, this publisher is assigned its own prefix and given in advance also a range of individual ISMNs to be allocated to different music sheets. The problem arises when a traditional book publisher publishes notated music, too, and is registered in ISBN and ISMN databases. In this case ISBNs are assigned instead of ISMNs as very often notated music is published under the form of a book, bound sheets of paper, with its own proper title page and adequate colophon. The mistake can be corrected if such a publication goes through the process of precataloguing and of course if the cataloguer is aware of it. Most often he/she is not and consequently ISMNs are not used according to the standard. The same applies even if the publication goes through the process of precataloguing but there is not sufficient information about it. In such cases, librarians are in daily contacts with publishers either by e-mail or by phone.

Many problems arise with publications for young children in music schools. I believe this is the case because not enough material is being published by more professional music publishers so teachers are left to use their own imagination. Most often such school manuals and workbooks are created and self-published by the teachers themselves. Those publications contain some text about instruments, some pictures, some lyrics and some notated music, maybe in three equal parts: text, picture and notated music. Some even allow children to colour the pictures. So far so good, but when we come to official book portals accepting ISBNs only and to taxation (VAT), music publishers face problems. At the same time music teachers face another problem: for professional promotion in the career in the field of education most regulations are written by the ministries recognizing ISBNs only. Because of that all it is much easier for them to apply for ISBNs instead of ISMNs.

Fortunately, enough teachers do not face problems with their personal bibliography as ISMNs are accepted by the national COBISS (bibliographic) and SICRIS (research) systems as an equal and sustainable identifier. And it just goes without saying that in this often unclear situation every fault is on the librarian! These problems have to be handled with great care, sensitivity and diplomacy having in mind the international identifiers, publishers, authors and national regulations.

On the occasion of the annual panel meeting, hosted in spring 2003 by the National and University Library in Ljubljana, Slovenia, I invited the staff of the International ISMN Agency to have dinner at our home. I sent my son with the car to the airport to take the guests, expecting two, to their hotels and then to our home. Soon came a phone call: »Mum, there are three of them! What should I do?« The answer was: »If they are together, bring all three.« And since then a certain young man from Germany has never forgotten to send his regards to my son and best regards go the opposite way too. On the same occasion we just discussed how safe our guests felt walking in the night along the banks of the Ljubljanica River, and how lucky we were to live in such a safe country, but only a night later one of them complained for being charged almost twice as much as usual by the taxi driver. That's life, too!

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<sup>1</sup> *ISMN Newsletter*, No. 1, May 1994

<sup>2</sup> *ISMN Newsletter*, No. 2, November 1994

There are a lot of sweet memories over the period I worked for ISBN and ISMN I can never see them separately. They are brothers, ISBN being the big brother, ISMN being the younger one. All that the big one has, also has the young one, but nevertheless they are two individuals, living their own lives and must be regarded as such. It is very useful that the two AGMs are organized consecutively as members of one community can profit from the other one, especially in the case one persons does not cover both identifiers. Still a lot has to be done in promotion. This promotion is not that much a task of the International ISMN Agency as it is the task of national agencies as they know the best their own market and the publishing scene. /

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„THEY ARE BROTHERS,  
ISBN BEING THE BIG  
BROTHER, ISMN  
BEING THE YOUNGER  
ONE“

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# CONCLUDING REMARKS

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## LOOKING BACK AGAIN...

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**by Dr. Hartmut  
Walravens,**  
*Chairman Int. ISMN  
Agency*

At previous AGMs I emphasized the desirability of targeting the ISMN activities more at the commercial music sector. So far the International Agency was kept busy laying the foundations of the system, i.e. winning members who number their publications. Only when a “critical mass” of numbers exists it is attractive for publishers to apply the ISMN for practical purposes. And if that is the case, then more publishers will use the numbers, and it will soon become a success story. We only have to look at the development of ISBN - then we will know what the future should be ...

But before we try to look into the future, let us look back. As I probably belong to the few eye-witnesses around who have accompanied the ISMN from the very beginning let me go back to the early 1990s. By that time the British chapter of IAML (International Association of Music Libraries) had developed a proposal for an ISMN which was modeled upon the ISBN but made allowance for a few music specifics. Alan Pope, Malcolm Jones and Malcolm Lewis were trying to launch the system with ISO but apparently did not get enough support. The (British) Music Publishers Association was interested but apparently did not want to (or could not) take it on. So Alan approached me with the proposal which made perfect sense, and I agreed: “Let us try”. The ISMN became an ISO work item but there was opposition. There were critics who claimed that the ISBN would be sufficient for all practical purposes. And they were right - in theory. But there were countries where the bibliographical agencies refused to deal with music as they did not have experience enough with music (and were not interested)

- like the UK. They let themselves be persuaded, however, that standard numbering is not a lofty idea but a practical matter and one could not neglect the practicalities. Also, there was a historical rift between book and music publishers, and there was doubt whether these would ever be able to cooperate - they were speaking different languages.

At an ISO working group meeting held at Ottawa it turned out that the bone of contention was something else. American music publishers had also thought of an ISMN but they were keen on having a more intelligent type of thing which encoded bibliographic details, e.g. linking parts to a score. Arnold Broido (Presser Co., Bryn Mawr) supported this idea while the British colleagues theirs, of course.

I tried to explain that the ISMN was - yes - a dumb number but useful, ideal for computers which were fast and efficient but not particularly intelligent. ISMN had a function like a telephone number which identified a phone. But hardly anybody would want to analyze a number - the goal was to dial and reach the other party, not an exegesis of the number. Therefore a dumb number was ideal for the purpose. At the end of the day, we were all a bit exhausted - all arguments had been exchanged but there was no compromise in sight. The next morning did not look very promising; Arnold was not yet there. Would he be as adamant as on the previous day? Enter Arnold. He beamed at us: "A glorious day? Isn't it?" - "Did you sleep well, Arnold?" - "Yes, indeed. And this morning I reviewed the arguments, and I came to the conclusion that you are right. The shorter and simpler the number - the better!" We were all relieved. The ISMN standard made quick progress, and it was published in English and French by December of 1993.

The first hurdle was taken. But the next one was only partly taken - the International ISBN Agency (which was among my responsibilities) was allowed to run also the ISMN provided there would not be any additional costs! That was the decision of the Berlin State Library which then maintained the ISBN Agency. The practical implementation was therefore not easy. Fortunately, the ISMN system and infrastructure were very similar to ISBN, and so the work was covered by the existing staff, and through our cooperation with K. G. Saur Publishing we could use funds of our joint publishing projects for necessary hardware or occasional part time help. But one had to be diplomatic about it..

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***"ISMN IS VERY IMPORTANT. WE JUST CANNOT LET IT GO BUST!" FRANCOIS LEDUC***

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The ISMN was soon implemented in Central Europe, a traditional music production region. The Frankfurt Buchhändler Vereinigung (Booksellers Association) which ran the ISBN Agency for the German-speaking area also took over ISMN responsibility and started a *Music in Print* publication. They had experience with the *German Books in Print* and used the same software. But it soon turned out that the music publishers were not willing to pay for entries in the *Music in Print*, which made the business model totter. When the company got into financial turbulences (not because of ISMN!), it was restructured and got rid of all unprofitable activities. Thus they gave up the ISMN agency and *Music in Print*, and ISMN was in a deep crisis. Finally, the German Music Publishers Association was persuaded to adopt ISMN. They even were building a *Music in Print* (which was called IDNV), a good-looking, remarkable achievement, which was self-financed by the small company that created it. But when ISMN had to be turned into a membership organization without being able to profit from public support, the fees for the German-language area were high, owing to the concentration of music publishers in the area. They would not pay that much. But how can you run an operation like ISMN on *less* than a shoestring?



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*„HOW CAN YOU  
RUN AN OPERATION  
LIKE ISMN ON LESS  
THAN A  
SHOESTRING?“*

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Fortunately our French colleague François Leduc offered to cover the difference, which was gladly accepted. When I asked him: “François, that is extremely good of you. But your association is not so rich either. How can you manage?” – He said: “ISMN is very important. We just cannot let it go bust!” I was impressed by this kind and far-sighted decision.

In Central Europe, the ISMN Agency (based near Cologne) covered Germany, Austria and German-speaking Switzerland. I tried to alleviate the burden of the (German) Agency by contacting the national libraries of the three countries. The national libraries (in the annual meetings of which I usually took part) were also involved with bibliographic standards. So I tried to get some subsidy from them. But they refused. One argument was that *one* ISMN agency covered the whole region but there were *three* national libraries. That did not seem to fit, and they could **not** “sell” this concept to their financial administrators. So I suggested to have ISMN Agencies in all three countries. Again a refusal, this time from the (German) Music Publishers Association.

There were also good news but one sometimes needed considerable patience. I had been in good contact with the South African State Library (= national library) as I knew the director well and had also organized an international newspaper conference in Cape Town. But I could not persuade him to start an ISMN agency. Then he retired, and I had to wait for another decade, almost until his successor’s retirement, until the agency was established. The first ISMN was assigned to the printing of the South African national anthem. In Iran negotiations went smoothly. I think it was after I had given a lecture at the Tehran Book Fair that both ISBN and ISMN agencies were established.

The situation in the Netherlands turned out to be difficult. They had a Dutch Music Centre, a splendid organization that took over the ISMN responsibility. But soon afterwards it was disbanded, by a decision of Parliament which axed half of the cultural expenditures. It was impossible to find a successor under the circumstances. A publisher was willing to do the work but maintained to be unable to pay membership fees. I appealed to the Dutch IAML chapter, and to the national librarian whom I knew – at least he did not say no. But before the matter could be explored further he retired (or changed jobs) ...

Let me conclude this short review by mentioning the situation in the US. While I was extremely grateful to Arnold Broido for having agreed to the British ISMN proposal, I could not get him (in his function of president and successively vice-president of the International Music Publishers Association) to launch the ISMN in the US. Whenever I contacted him, he replied: "Our publishers do not understand ISMN!" and: "You must write something!" - I replied: „I wrote several things!" - "Yes, you must write something else!" - I was a bit unhappy about the situation and wrote to some people in the US music sector about ISMN. Then I received an irate call from Arnold: "If you think you can get around me you are wrong!" My contacts had apparently called Arnold immediately: "Who is this guy with ISMN?" As there were three music publishers associations in the US (with whom I did not have contacts) I finally set my hope on a neutral (?) institution, namely the Library of Congress. I knew Donna Marcum, then Associate Librarian of the Library (she actually ran the library, while the Librarian was a scholar, not a librarian) as I chatted with her on an annual basis when we met at the Conference of Directors of National Libraries. "What do you think about ISMN? Could the Library take it on?" - "We will see. Maybe." It must have taken ten years or so, when I received the answer: "Yes, I think we can do it." I was really pleased, particularly when I learnt that Donna was about to resign. So I rushed through the formalities. Only later I heard that it had not been easy either to get the project pushed through in the library, in addition, the department head who should be in charge, Sue, had refused to take it on. Only when a cost neutral solution could be found she might be persuaded. That was actually done by means of a splendid software application, an online registration system for music publishers. When a year or two later we had our AGM at the Library of Congress and the application was shown in public, my ISSN colleague Regina Reynolds congratulated me and asked: "I have been trying for years to get something like that. How did you manage?" I gave her an arch smile: "By patience, just patience." There is no fee for ISMN in the US, by the way. Thank you, Donna, for your kind and far-sighted decision.

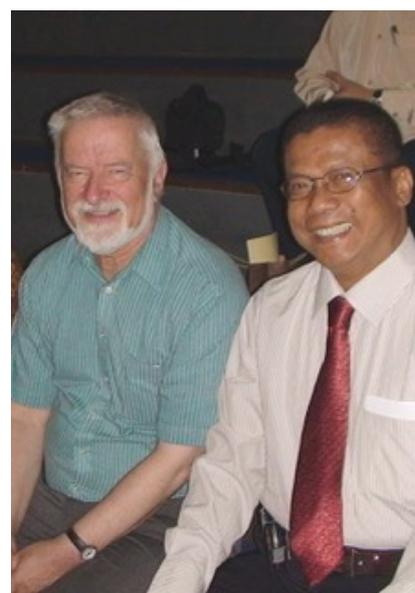
I pointed out already that a motivated music publisher might be a good choice to promote the practical applications of ISMN. An important project would be a restructuring of IDNV to form a web based service, using a unicode character set. This is absolutely necessary if it shall be a successful tool for worldwide use. Fortunately, efforts are already being made in this direction.

The so-called ISO TC46/SC 9 identifiers form a network which allows the linking of data, e.g. between ISMN and ISWC (International Standard Work Code) and ISNI (International Standard Name Identifier), and ISRC (International Standard recording Code). This might give ideas for a future enhancement of ISMN applications. //

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## *"WHO IS THIS GUY WITH ISMN?"*

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Yogyakarta 2018



Vienna 2016



***Impressions  
Of  
ISMN***

