

ORCID and ISNI: Strategic Partner MOU

Persistent identifiers for researchers and scholars are essential for supporting the connection between researchers and their contributions, improving discoverability, and ensuring interoperability between research systems.

Both the ISNI International Agency and ORCID are not-for-profit, international organizations engaged in assigning unique identifiers to individuals.

The ISNI International Agency, under contract to ISO, is charged with continuously administering, governing and developing the ISNI database and services in response to the needs and requirements of all ISNI stakeholders. The ISNI identifier is a global standard for identifying the millions of contributors to creative works and those active in their distribution, including writers, artists, creators, performers, researchers, producers, publishers, aggregators, and more across the global information supply chain. It is part of a family of international standard identifiers that includes identifiers of works, recordings, products and right holders in all repertoires, e.g. DOI, ISAN, ISBN, ISRC, ISSN, ISTC, and ISWC.

ORCID is an open and interdisciplinary community-based effort to provide a self-claim registry of unique researcher identifiers. To ensure the identifier links researchers with their works, ORCID works with the research community to embed these identifiers in workflows, such as manuscript submission, grant application, and dataset deposition. ORCID is unique because of its direct relationship with researchers and with organizations throughout the research community.

ORCID and ISNI are separate, independent organizations that assign identifiers to individuals and are using the same identifier format. As announced in our [joint statement on interoperation](#), ORCID and ISNI are agreed on the need to aim for interoperation through linking identifiers and sharing public data between the two systems. As a first step in responsible collaboration the two organizations agreed to allocate to ORCID an exclusive block of 16 digit identifiers which will not be used by the ISNI assignment system. This will prevent the same 16 digit number being assigned to different people. In addition, ORCID and ISNI are committed to investigate the feasibility of a shared identifier scheme for a single identifier to represent an individual in both the ORCID and ISNI databases.

ORCID and ISNI are jointly developing tools to allow the two systems to interoperate, including linkage of identifiers between systems and exchange of metadata. In addition, ORCID and ISNI are committed to ensuring interoperability in technical oversight and communication.

With this MOU we commit to further dialog and cooperation between ISNI and ORCID on the following topics:

- (1) Reciprocal representation on Technical Steering Groups, with Janifer Gatenby currently serving on the ORCID TSG and Laura Paglione to serve on the ISNI equivalent.
- (2) Regular strategic conversations at the leadership level, in particular at least quarterly coordination meetings involving Laure Haak, Executive Director of ORCID, and Laura Dawson and/or Andrew MacEwan of ISNI, and at least annual conversations between the ORCID and ISNI Board Chairs.

- (3) The option for coordinated press releases regarding upcoming features for the research community
- (4) The use of mutually agreed language for description of each other's assignment processes in all external communications, and in particular that the organizations are jointly working toward interoperability along the lines outlined in this MoU. The agreed descriptions should highlight the differences and synergies between the two systems.

Whilst continuing to work on technical interoperability ISNI and ORCID will collaborate on an internal working paper outlining how a shared identifier system would work addressing both technical and business issues. An early draft of the paper should be presented to the respective ISNI and ORCID Technical Groups by June 2014 at the latest, covering at least the first 3 questions listed below, for consideration of next steps. Pilot case studies will be identified as the preferred methodology to test hypotheses in answering these questions.

Key questions for the internal working paper to answer are:

- (1) What are the benefits of ISNI and ORCID sharing an identifier rather than just linking the IDs and sharing metadata?
- (2) Is a shared identifier between the two systems technically feasible? Are there any examples of existing systems with a shared identifier?
- (3) How would ID assignment work with a shared identifier?
- (4) How will data be exchanged between the systems, and at what frequency?
- (5) Are changes to the ISNI and ORCID systems required? How would an end-user express a preference for which identifier is displayed?
- (6) Can the ISNI assignment processes be made complementary with the ORCID researcher registration process?
- (7) What are some possible business/membership models (e.g. membership fees, data processing costs, resolution of business conflicts)?

January 2014

_____ Andrew MacEwan, Secretary, ISNI Board



_____ Laure Haak, Executive Director, ORCID