BIC and the e4libraries accreditation scheme

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Book Industry Communication

BIC (Book Industry Communication) is an independent organisation working for the book industry, committed to improving the efficiency of the trade and library supply chains, reducing costs and developing standards and methodologies to improve the automation of supply chain processes.[1] Their mandate includes libraries and they are funded not only by the Publishers Association and Booksellers Association but also by CILIP and the British Library. One of the sources of seed money when BIC was set up in 1991 was the British National Bibliography Research Fund (BNBRF), a trust established from ring-fenced capital when the British National Bibliography Ltd (whose main function had been to produce the eponymous weekly serial) was taken over by the British Library in 1973. As long ago as the 1980s BNBRF was supporting research into the issues of automation and the book supply chain.[2]

BIC is committed to creating an efficient supply chain for both physical and digital products in the trade and library sectors, working with all the relevant stakeholders to eliminate wasteful and time-consuming practices and implement solutions acceptable to all. BIC's reputation for impartiality among all parties in the supply chain makes it possible to reach agreement on dependable standards. For example, they have recently been involved in discussions with the book trade on use of ISBNs for e-books and have come to the conclusion that each digital version from a different platform needs its own ISBN.

BIC works to create and promote standards for the trading and discovery of digital content and has taken a leadership role in bringing together all sides of the industry to discuss and resolve issues in this area. It holds the secretariat of the BSI Working Group on Identifiers and Metadata Committee, BSI IDT/2/18, which is the UK committee holding the vote for standard numbers such as ISBN, ISSN, ISMN and the like. It works closely with and shares premises with the International ISBN Agency which coordinates all the national and regional ISBN centres worldwide.

BIC maintains bar coding standards for the industry and is working on standards for the structure and content of radio frequency identification (RFID) tags in library and trade applications. It supports the CILIP Working Group on RFID in Libraries which feeds into the BSI Committee on Computer Applications in Information and Documentation which I chair and which is the body holding the UK vote on the new ISO Draft Standard RFID in Libraries.

E4libraries accreditation scheme

BIC is the organisation behind the e4books project, which promotes the objective of a fully electronic supply chain in the book industry. It has now launched e4libraries, a similar campaign to modernise and automate the library supply chain that has been supported by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) and is therefore perhaps more focused on public libraries than academic or special libraries.

BIC manages industry accreditation schemes, which recognise excellence in the supply of product information and in the use of e-commerce to automate routine business transactions.

One of these schemes is being promoted in this article. One of BIC's aims in e4libraries is to improve the efficiency of the library supply chain through the application of technology and commitment to standards. Its remit covers public and academic libraries and its focus is on printed books and those resources delivered digitally.

The project is overseen by a steering committee of librarians and library experts and is chaired by Martin Palmer of Essex Libraries; its project manager is Simon Edwards, who wrote the scoping report for it.[3]

The e4libraries project seeks to encourage the library supply chain to use Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) and other useful technologies and exploit them for maximum benefit. The library supply chain has already invested in EDI and is an enthusiastic user of RFID, but more could be

done by establishing and adhering to standards and by improving the interoperability between systems in order to deliver the benefits of these investments. e4libraries also intends to consider the supply chain for ebooks and serials and the issues of the academic library supply chain. In EDI it hopes to promote the use of EDI right through the processes including quote, order, order response, order fulfilment and invoice, to the eventual update of the invoice details on the institutional financial system. To do this it needs to coordinate many agencies in the book trade, including library book suppliers, library system suppliers, bibliographic record agencies and libraries, both public and academic. It is also working in an environment of rapid change, with online book suppliers, Amazon, ebook reading devices, Web 2.0 and social networking – not to mention reductions in staffing leading to more self-service in libraries and the need for smarter and leaner processes in bibliographic services departments adding to the mêlée. The e4libraries scope therefore has to embrace a wide variety of related areas. This involves keeping a watching brief on the new technologies, providing a supporting role on library servicing standards where other organisations such as the National Acquisitions Group (NAG) or ISO have already developed the standards, and addressing and solving the issues of lack of take-up in some quarters of EDI and RFID standards.

One of the outcomes of this is a new accreditation scheme for organisations operating in the library supply chain. The e4libraries accreditation scheme is designed to enable these organisations to demonstrate their commitment to electronic trading and other beneficial library technology. Beneficial technology chiefly comprises full-cycle EDI or other forms of e-trading with stock suppliers. As far as libraries are concerned, efficiency is often supplemented by implementation of RFID systems where appropriate, and by efficient access to and use of bibliographic records, as well as the adoption of more efficient working practices in the supply chain. Those libraries seeking accreditation should also be able to demonstrate that they are themselves proactively keeping a watching brief on new technologies and are taking part in relevant activities such as membership of standards organisations and attending conferences and user group meetings.

The scheme is open to public library authorities, academic libraries, library consortia or individual special libraries; library stock suppliers; and to systems suppliers (primarily suppliers of library management and RFID systems) and other service providers active in this marketplace.

As stated in the documentation, successful organisations will be mentioned in publicity; but any unsuccessful applications and the information provided by all applicants and feedback to applicants remains strictly confidential. [4]

Accreditation is granted for the calendar year in which applications are reviewed and may be renewed annually provided that criteria applied each year continue to be met. Successful organisations will be given an accreditation certificate and will be encouraged to use the scheme logo on promotional and other relevant material.

The e4libraries accreditation scheme is a unique opportunity for libraries to demonstrate their expertise in the area of systems and library technology and their successes in implementing beneficial technologies which for many years have improved the services offered by libraries and delivered efficiency gains and cost reductions. It can help library technical services in justifying to their management that they are running efficient services and could be beneficial in other accreditation activities in which their parent institutions might be involved, such as ISO 9001 certification. So far in the university library sector, University of Bedfordshire library, University of Glasgow library, Middlesex University Learning Resources and University of Worcester library have received accreditation. Six library suppliers and five library systems suppliers have also been accredited.

At Middlesex University we have had RFID since 2004 at one of our campuses and are expanding it gradually to others. We have used EDI since the early 1990s, and are active in user groups. In the late 1990s we worked with the University of Bedfordshire Library (then University of Luton) and the University of Hertfordshire to pilot with Dawson Books 'Fastracq' for shelf-ready provision of books with accompanying catalogue records. Bedfordshire have also implemented RFID at one site with the remaining four sites due to move over in 2011; this will result in an increase in self-service usage even higher than the impressive 70+% they are achieving at the moment using barcodes. They were one of the pioneers in using book sorters that sort by barcode, and they now have three in operation for library items and two for student assignments. Bedfordshire are also going to start using Innovative Interfaces Quick Click ordering product with Dawson Books, which will streamline the process of ordering even further than the EDI shelf-ready model they

are using at the moment. University of Glasgow library was the pioneer in academic library use of RFID in the UK. Other universities out there have worked equally hard to improve the efficiency of their bibliographical services and could join these four accredited academic libraries.

More information and the full list of accredited organisations is available on the BIC website at http://www.bic.org.uk/e4libraries/15/ACCREDITATION-SCHEME/

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