

Proposal for PCC consideration: PCC umbrella membership within ISNI

This proposal for consideration by the PCC Policy Committee is brought forward jointly by Michelle Durocher (Harvard Library) and Andrew MacEwan (British Library) from their perspectives as representatives of member institutions of both ISNI and the Program for Cooperative Cataloging.

Proposal: In support of the mission and goals of the PCC, as articulated in numerous sections of the PCC's [Vision, Mission and Strategic Directions](#) document, we propose that a PCC umbrella membership in ISNI is created in partnership with the ISNI International Agency (ISNI-IA) and its technical partner and Board member, OCLC.

PCC membership within ISNI, in the form of becoming a Registration Agency, would allow distributed access to the ISNI production system and tool sets so that PCC members are able to participate in creation of unique, persistent identifiers in an international, cross-domain context. Member benefits include: the ability to enrich and maintain metadata in ISNI through both transaction-level and bulk matching/loading, as well as access to APIs and other tools.

The PCC's [Vision, Mission and Strategic Directions](#) document clearly expresses several goals that are directly advanced by this proposal, anchored by the core language of the vision statement:

The Program for Cooperative Cataloging (PCC) community is an influential source of metadata expertise, experimentation, and training. The PCC community's data are trusted, integrated, and valued in the global data environment.

With ISNI having the reach and recognition that comes from its status as an internationally recognized standard through ISO, combined with the ISNI database having quality control structures organized and staffed by expert metadata practitioners,¹ a PCC membership in ISNI would be an ideal partnership to enlarge the PCC's global impact and provide an immediate opportunity to realize one of the critical elements of the PCC's linked data strategies: identifier management. With the PCC's commitment to data quality and data standards, member education and training, technical expertise, and its interest in partnerships beyond the boundaries of libraries, working within ISNI would provide a platform for PCC members to contribute their expertise to the broader information management ecosystem on the web.

¹ The ISNI Quality Team is made of metadata librarians from ISNI founding members: the British Library (BL) and the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF)

Summary benefits to the PCC to become members of ISNI

Membership in ISNI through the PCC provides PCC members with:

- a means to contribute to a globally-shared, internationally-recognized canonical data source of persistent unique identifiers for persons and organizations;
- a platform for identity management work that is distinct from traditional name authority work performed through NACO, but would complement current NACO workflows in a manner consistent with the goals of the PCC when it formed the Identity Management in NACO Task Group in the spring of 2016. Access to ISNI would provide PCC members with tools that allow them to mint identifiers for their own local needs, but also staying true to the values of the PCC by sharing that work with others;
- a channel to use its leadership to contribute to the technical and policy infrastructure that supports linked open data and will enable development of new services dependent on persistent, unique identifiers;
- simplified channels for PCC libraries to join ISNI and simplified access to bulk matching routines by using PCC member templates that would be developed for the PCC;
- PCC community support for working in ISNI by using the proven success of PCC standing committees (Standing Committee on Training; Standing Committee on Automation) to contribute their expertise to training, documentation and tool development;
- a metadata stewardship platform for PCC members to make assertions about their local affiliates or local areas of expertise such that the representation of those entities on the web can be cleaner for algorithmic matching and disambiguation. ISNI participation offers PCC members the opportunity to brand services that is of interest to many in the PCC, such as to help faculty steward their profiles on the web;
- reduced costs to join ISNI by becoming members as part of a collective.

Summary benefits to ISNI to have the PCC as an umbrella membership

A PCC umbrella membership provides ISNI with:

- an efficient way to bring into ISNI a large group of libraries who are committed, as is ISNI, to aligning its "activities and investments with those that will have the highest impact within the global data environment" (SD 2)
- a larger community of metadata experts to contribute to data integrity and maintenance;
- experienced colleagues from the PCC's standing committee with whom to partner on training and documentation, best practice workflows, tool development, standards, and priorities;
- a data pipeline to a community that can assist in diversifying and enriching ISNI with authoritative data about institutions, their institutional affiliates, and entities associated with uniquely held collections whose discovery metadata will need to include identifiers;
- lower costs associated with administering an umbrella membership for a large community of libraries as a single PCC data source in comparison to what would be involved with onboarding individual library members with variable source codes;
- opportunity to develop a simplified channel for libraries' batch projects through a single optimized template for the PCC rather than needing to perform testing and set-up to develop individual library specifications at the institution level.

Alignment with PCC Goals

Several priority areas articulated in the PCC Vision, Mission and Strategic Directions document are in direct alignment with this proposal for a PCC membership in ISNI:

Leadership for linked data

While the PCC document includes text throughout that points to its linked data aspirations and commitment, there are several key statements in Strategic Direction #2 and #3 which speak most forcefully to these points. In SD2, the PCC has articulated an interest in aligning its "activities and investments with those that will have the highest impact within the global data environment." Partnering with an organization like ISNI, which has a critical relationship with the most heavily utilized linked data service platform on the web, VIAF, we propose is a sound direction.²

The cornerstone statement of support is however in SD3 and its sub-sections:

SD3: Provide leadership for the shift in authority control from an approach primarily based on creating text strings to one focused on managing identities and entities.

3.2 Partner with other agencies, projects partners, and communities (e.g., W3C, ISNI, ORCID, code4lib) to explore models for and to build the infrastructures necessary to host the cooperative management of identities.

3.4 Investigate options and develop a plan to expand community participation in the creation of identifiers and authority data.

Tools and platforms

PCC is a member organization made up of institutions with common goals and a commitment to quality, shared metadata, but its member organizations have differing sizes, scales, resources and technical capabilities. Providing PCC members with common tools that enable adoption of best practice workflows and standards is a service to PCC members, and one to which the member libraries look to the PCC to provide.

ISNI provides a contributor platform which ISNI members are already using to perform identity management work, both on a transactional level and in batch. PCC members of different sizes and scales of complexity want and need one or both of these approaches. Engaging with ISNI as a PCC community, rather than as individual members, will allow PCC libraries to prioritize tool developments as a collective and thereby help focus the efforts of ISNI developers and technical partners on the highest impact enhancements and functionalities necessary for the PCC community. The PCC Standing Committee on Automation may find this to be a very effective channel for some of its tool development work.

² See the discussion paper: *A Global strategy for authority metadata and identifiers: lessons learnt from VIAF and ISNI and how to build a sustainable future*, written by the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF) and the British Library (BL).

Training and education

Strategic Direction #1 focuses on equipping the PCC community with an understanding of linked data and references the centrality of identity management as one of the PCC's goals in the transformation of authority control to identity management. The PCC Standing Committee on Training is a vehicle through which PCC members would be able to learn how to work with ISNI tools. The PCC has recognized success in offering training programs and developing documentation that leads to community best practices. Providing shared training infrastructure and offering guidance on identity management activities within ISNI would be a service to the community and also have the effect of lowering internal costs to libraries beginning to participate in ISNI.

Lowering the barrier to participation in the PCC and expanding the PCC community

The PCC has articulated a desire to expand the PCC community by being more inclusive of other metadata communities. Many institutions, both libraries and cultural heritage organizations with whom libraries work, are interested in engaging in identity management activities and would benefit from doing so as part of a community. The PCC is seen by some as an exclusive organization with a high barrier to entry. Identity management work is an opportunity to provide a more inclusive program offering to a broader community of libraries.

In SD1, the PCC states: "Engaging in the broader information environment will require new knowledge and skills, an understanding of practices in other metadata communities, and the development of strategies for optimizing library data on the web. To meet these needs, the PCC will identify and incorporate learning resources, experimentation opportunities, and expertise within and beyond those already present in the PCC."

If this proposal is endorsed, the following next steps would require deliberate attention:

1. The PCC makes a formal approach to ISNI-IA to achieve Registration Agency status.
2. The PCC develops an implementation process, including defining roles for appropriate members of the PCC governance structure, such as Standing Committees and the Identity Management in NACO Task Group. Areas of focus include communication, outreach, and documentation/templates to enable PCC members to engage easily in ISNI experiments and workflows.
3. The PCC engages with OCLC on a sustainable and affordable subscription model that leverages the scale of PCC membership to mutual advantage in lowering costs.
4. The PCC considers what type of relationship it wants in relation to the ISNI Board; for example, would the PCC like to engage with the ISNI Board in discussing a PCC Board seat to formalize participation in the ISNI governance structure?
5. PCC engages with the national libraries' and OCLC dialogue that has already been initiated at IFLA to help foster a coherent international engagement in "operationalizing" ISNI-VIAF services within OCLC's suite of services to libraries.