

## ISNI - International Standard Name Identifier

**Zanfir Ilie, PhD**

Manager of V. A. Urechia Library of Galati

**Abstract.** Choosing a single authorized form for a name to represent all the headings of a creator is a very difficult task for a librarian, if we take into account the fact that, throughout time, a creator could use several names, pseudonyms, literary pseudonyms, stage names, etc., in their various phases of the creation process, for the various fields in which they created or for the positions they held. Although the form variants point to the favoured one, researchers have come to the conclusion that another problem that hinders the identification of a creator is homonymy, which can cause confusion among users.

**Keywords:** ISNI, standard, creator, collectivity, identifier, V. A. Urechia Library of Galati, Romania.

Assigning a unique identifier to every person and collectivity, a number that could clearly point to a creator, has concerned the librarians' world ever since 1961, when The Paris Principles (Statement of Principles, 1961) were adopted; section 5.2 stipulated when multiple index cards could be used, that is *when variant forms of the author's name or of the title occur, an entry for each book under a uniform heading, consisting of one particular form of the author's name or one particular title, or, for books not identified by author or title, a uniform heading consisting of a suitable substitute for the title, and 5.3 appropriate added entries and/or references.*

Nowadays, when there are numerous online databases, when resource categorizing has already become a tradition with the large libraries of the world, specialists found it necessary to introduce a proper standard. That was the reason why in 2006 The International Standards Organization (ISO), through its technical committee 46, subcommittee 9, started discussing the International Standard Name Identifier (ISNI) which they published on March 15<sup>th</sup> 2012 as ISO 27729:2012 – an international standard meant to uniquely identify a name publicly used by creators involved in the entire media, creation, production,

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management, and content distribution industry. ISNI is a sixteen-digit number, its digits being divided into four interspaced blocks, of which only the last is a control one. This digit does not have its own significance, it is randomly provided by the system. When instead of the last digit one finds an *x*, *x* stands for 10 because the algorithm is from 1 to 10, and the total number of digits is limited to 16. Therefore, any ISNI number which includes an *x* is not a wrong or uncertain one. ISNI uniquely and unrepeatably identifies an identity that works in several creative fields, thus becoming a useful tool for librarians both in the disambiguation process and in removing confusions.

*Public identity* refers to a person who is related to a single name when they work in various fields of activity.

The screenshot shows the VIAF search interface. The search results for 'Martin, Jacques, 1921-2010' are displayed. The results include various forms and a network diagram of related identifiers. The network diagram shows a central node for 'ISNI-0000000120330240' connected to numerous other nodes representing different forms and identifiers. The results list includes:

- Martin, Jacques, 1921-2010
- Martin, Jacques
- Martin, Jacques, 1921-
- Martin, Jacques (French illustrator and writer, 1921-)
- Martin, Jacques (comics)
- VIAF ID: 115197539 (Person)
- Permalink: <http://viaf.org/viaf/115197539>
- ISNI-test: 0000\_0001\_2033\_0240

The network diagram shows a central node for 'ISNI-0000000120330240' connected to numerous other nodes representing different forms and identifiers. The results list includes:

- 200 1 1 [Martin, Jb, Jacques, Jf, 1921-2010](#)
- 100 1 1 [Martin, Jacques, Jd, 1921-](#)
- 100 1 1 [Martin, Jacques, Jd, 1921-](#)
- 100 1 1 [Martin, Jacques, Jd, 1921-2010](#)
- 200 1 1 [Martin, Jb, Jacques, Jf, 1921-2010](#)
- 100 1 1 [Martin, Jacques, Jq, French illustrator and writer, 1921-](#)
- 100 1 1 [Martin, Jacques](#)
- 100 1 1 [Martin, Jacques, Jd, 1921-2010](#)
- 100 1 1 [Martin, Jacques, Jd, 1921-2010](#)
- 100 1 1 [Martin, Jacques, Jd, 1921-2010](#)
- 100 1 1 [Martin, Jacques, Jd, 1921-](#)
- 100 1 0 [Martin, Jacques](#)

ISNI is very important when it comes to differentiating between homonyms. For example, the TV man Jacques Martin (ISNI 0000 0000 7359 228x) bears the same name as the well-known cartoonist Jacques Martin (ISNI 0000 0001 2033 0240) and, in this case, it is natural for their ISNIs to be different.

As a matter of fact, when a person or a collectivity uses several public identities, in the same field or various fields (the real name as well as the pseudonym/pseudonyms), without regularly using a certain name for a certain field, the database must provide information regarding the collocation of works/shows in a single place, and the system must assign the same identifier to

every variant used by the creator. Thus, Louis Poirier –the real name – and his pseudonym, Julien Gracq – the favoured form – have the same ISNI - 0000 0001 2143 4842.

The screenshot shows a search interface for the VIAF database. At the top, there are dropdown menus for 'Select Field' (Personal Names) and 'Select Index' (All VIAF), followed by a search bar containing 'Poirier, Louis, 1910-2007, Wirklicher Name' and a 'Search' button. Below the search bar, there is a list of search results for 'Gracq, Julien, 1910-2007'. The first result is highlighted and includes a thumbnail of a book cover, the name 'Gracq, Julien, 1910-2007', and various flags representing different languages. Below the list, there is a section titled 'Preferred Forms' which contains a list of different name variants with their respective language codes and flags. To the right of the 'Preferred Forms' list is a circular network diagram showing connections between various language variants. At the bottom right, it says 'German National Library DNB-118541188'.

When in various fields the same person or collectivity regularly uses different names (the real name and the pseudonym/pseudonyms), the ISNI system must provide different identifiers, if the database includes sufficient information about that person (the different collocation of works/shows) in order to offer a separate identifier, linked to every identity used by the creator. In this case, the solution is to check the ISNIs of the two forms favoured by the creator, known as *see also*. For example, Stephen King, ISNI 0000 0001 2144 6296, also wrote as Richard Bachman - ISNI 0000 0001 2021 3263 – to hide his prolificity.

The screenshot shows a search result for 'King, Stephen, 1947-' in the VIAF database. At the top, there is a search bar with 'All Fields', 'All VIAF', and 'King, Stephen, 1947-' entered, and a 'Search' button. Below the search bar, there is a book cover for 'STEPHEN KING LA TORRE OSCURA II' with a price of 5,96 €. To the right of the book cover, there is a list of names in various languages: 'King, Stephen, 1947-....', 'King, Stephen', 'King, Stephen (Stephen Edwin), 1947-', 'King, Stephen, književnik', 'King, Stephen f. 1947', '1947 קינג, סטיבן', 'Кинг, Стивен, 1947-', and '1947 كينج، ستيفن'. Below the names, there is a VIAF ID: 97113511 (Personal), a Permalink: <http://viaf.org/viaf/97113511>, and an ISNI-test: 0000 0001 2144 6296. Below the names and identifiers, there is a section titled 'Preferred Forms' with a list of names in various languages and scripts, each preceded by a small flag icon. To the right of the 'Preferred Forms' list, there is a circular diagram showing the ISNI number 0000000121446296 1394-4444 and its connections to various national identifiers, represented by lines radiating from a central point to a circle of flags.

One can say that, when in various fields the same person or collectivity uses on a regular basis different names (the real name and the pseudonym/pseudonyms), the ISNI system must provide different identifiers, if the database includes sufficient information about that person (the different collocation of works/shows) in order to offer a separate identifier, linked to every identity used by the creator. In this case, the solution is to ask for references from every ISNI of the two forms favoured by the creator, known as *see also*. For example, Stephen King, ISNI 0000 0001 2144 6296, also wrote as Richard Bachman - ISNI 0000 0001 2021 3263 – to hide his prolificity and avoid any doubts regarding the intellectual quality of his writings.

**VIAF**  
Virtual International Authority File

**Search**

Select Field:  Select Index:  Search Terms:

 **Bachman, Richard, 1947-....**   
**Bachman, Richard**   
 VIAF ID: 14790462 (Personal)  
 Permalink: <http://viaf.org/viaf/14790462>  
 ISNI-test: 0000 0001 2021 3263

Preferred Forms

-  100 1 \_ |a Bachman, Richard
-  100 1 \_ |a Bachman, Richard, fd 1947-
-  100 1 \_ |a Bachman, Richard, fd 1947-
-  100 \_ \_ |a Bachman, Richard
-  100 1 \_ |a Bachman, Richard
-  100 1 \_ |a Bachman, Richard
-  200 \_ |a Bachman fb Richard ff 1947-....
-  100 1 \_ |a Bachman, Richard



Windows taskbar: Start, T Series for Windows I, IS, VIAF Cluster - Mozilla..., Doha\_VIAF.doc - Open..., RO, 13:32

Examples: Prince, Princeton University, Ken Follett, Follett, Ken User id: ISNI | [log in](#) | [log out](#)

shortlist **title data** search history 1

results search [or] (ISNI Number (ISNI:)) 0000000120330240 | 1 hits

labels sources data | marc21

**Please help us improve this record**

If you have any supplemental information about the identity listed here, please click in this box to go to the contribution form.

**Thank you in advance!**

**ISNI:** 0000 0001 2033 0240

**Name:** D. \*\*\*  
 Jacques Martin  
 Jam  
 Jam (Pseudonym)  
 Marleb  
 Marleb (Pseudonym)  
 Martin, .  
 Martin, J.  
 Martin, Jacques  
 Martin, Jacques ((comics))  
 Martin, Jacques (French illustrator and writer, 1921-)  
 R. P. D. \*\*\*  
 R. P. Dom (Pseudonym)

**Dates:** 1921-2010

**Creation class:** a  
 Cartographic material  
 Computer file  
 cre  
 Language material  
 Projected medium  
 text

**Creation role:** author  
 conceptor  
 contributor  
 creator  
 draftsman  
 illustrator  
 scenarist

**Related names**

**Titles**

**Notes:** Wikipedia

**Sources:** VIAF BNC BNF BNF DBC DNB JPLG LAC LC NKCC NLI NTA NUKAT PTBNP SUDOC

Therefore, we should take into consideration the fact that assigning an ISNI number is based on comparing and contrasting the information provided by the contributors. The details – names, bio, titles – used by a creator for his various contributions should be set against certain algorithms, thus allowing for the assignment of one or more ISNIs depending on the data coming from analyzing the creator's activity (music, sciences, fiction, cinema, showbiz, etc.) as well as the involvement of the data providers that are entitled to do this (companies representing creators, libraries, distributors, etc.)

ISNI has not been created to provide bio-bibliographic information about a certain person but, through its links, to point to other systems where one can find such details, if the user needs them. For libraries, the information is provided by the Virtual International Authority File (VIAF). A mere click on the ISNI in the VIAF database will provide the necessary information: the various names of the creators, the types of resources they contributed to, the jobs they had in the fields they worked in and the information sources.

The *V. A. Urechia* County Library of Galati, Romania, introduced the Authority Control as early as 2005 in order to remove the redundancy and ambiguity of a library catalogue. This service proves to be ever more useful enabling the libraries' online catalogues to offer their users authorized information. Sitting in front of a computer, the information consumers can consult both the library's catalogues and pertinent information referring to credible and valid sources. Getting the respect they deserve, users will come back to the library whenever they need to, either to make up a bibliography, to research a certain topic, or to update and improve their knowledge.

Completing the authority notes requires thorough research and a very good command of the library science notions of Authority Control for the person or collectivity headings, as well as of the various ways in which the authorized form and name variants can be defined, classified, and achieved. The lack of information, the uncertainty or vague use of terminology can lead to the total confusion of the scientific information consumer, to say the least.

Coming back to our topic, ISNI includes the public registrations (ISNI) of more than 9,260,000 **identities**, 8,67 million of them being persons (2,590,000 are researchers) and 592,275 organizations. The ISNI database is a resource from various fields, with contributions from more than 29 establishments and databases, as well as 40 national libraries with corresponding research centres, including VIAF.

The international establishment that administers the ISNI is ISNI-AL, a non-profit organization, founded by the ISO to supervise the authority registrations and the database. In January 2014, The National Library of France became the

first library in the world to include an ISNI Registration Agency for Persons and Organizations, appointed by the ISNI International Agency, alongside Bowker – which above all (but not exclusively) registers the names of persons and publishing establishments, and Ringgold – which first of all (but not exclusively) registers the names of organizations. A registration agency provides the interface between ISNI applicants and the ISNI assigning agency. It is worth mentioning that the agency does not provide services to persons who want ISNIs but to the content-creating establishments it cooperates with. When it comes to creators, this number is assigned when the published resource is processed in the database, if the establishment that initiates the description cooperates with an ISNI agency.

One of the inhabitants of Galati/Romanians that have an ISNI is Mr. Vasile Ghica, due to the fact that he has been included in the Library of Congress/NACO database with four titles, and with one title in the German National Library database, the two libraries providing information for VIAF.

The screenshot shows the VIAF search interface. At the top, it says "VIAF Virtual International Authority File". Below that is a search bar with "Search" in orange. The search criteria are: "Select Field: Personal Names", "Select Index: All VIAF", and "Search Terms: Ghica, Vasile". A "Search" button is to the right. Below the search bar, the results for "Ghica, Vasile" are displayed. It includes flags for Romania, USA, and Germany, followed by "Ghica, Vasile". Below this, it lists "VIAF ID: 20090952 (Personal)", "Permalink: http://viaf.org/viaf/20090952", and "ISNI-test: 0000 0000 3768 9949". There is a section for "Preferred Forms" with three entries: "100 1 \_ †a Ghica, Vasile", "100 1 \_ †a Ghica, Vasile (undifferentiated)", and "100 1 \_ †a Ghica, Vasile". To the right of these forms is a diagram showing three nodes (Romania, USA, Germany) connected to a central node (ISNI-test) with the number "ISNI-0000000037689949". Below the diagram, it says "ISNI-test" and "ISNI-0000000037689949". At the bottom, there is a section for "Selected Titles" with one entry: "1. Sursuri migdalate, 1989: (2)".

From a professional point of view and in accordance with the objectives of the IFLA (KNIGHT, Bonnie M), which wants to create a model of a viable collective catalogue, available on the Internet and capable of providing information to all the libraries in the world, thus achieving an online visible memory of the world

– based on the collocation of authority registrations – the V. A. Urechia Library of Galati, Romania, does focus on this type of service. In fact, we should keep in mind that both the Authority Control and the bibliographic one are two ways of finding information, but the latter is virtually impossible without a professional Authority Control. True, it involves hard research and continuous training as, to quote LeBoeuf: *Authority Control is certainly our forte and we shouldn't give it up, not even for a short time, no matter how "expensive" this service might seem ... This is a "sine qua non" condition if we really want to surf a library (ISNI)*. I think that a national project, coordinated by the National Bibliographic Agency, that is the National Library of Romania, and meant to involve all libraries which have Authority Control, could be a desideratum for us, librarians, who serve with devotion and professionalism the library users.

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