Who:

The ISSN International Centre (ISSN_IC) has principal responsibility for the functioning of the Keepers Registry. ISSN_IC operates as an intergovernmental agency and was created in 1975 through a treaty between UNESCO and France. As the hosting country for this agency, the office is located in Paris where data is managed at an international level with participation from 93 member states who work with ISSN data to identify and describe serial publications and ongoing resources both in print and online, in any subject. The ISSN portal can assess the quality of ISSN identifiers and the archival status of registered titles. The archival status data is managed through The Keepers Registry which was acquired by the ISSN_IC in 2019 and was originally developed and operated through a joint effort by EDINA and the University of Edinburgh.

What:

The Keepers Registry is the sole global service tracking the preservation status of digital and digitized serial publications, including scholarly journals, and has three main purposes:

- To help publishers, librarians, and policy makers find who is looking after which e-journal, how and with what terms of access.
- To highlight the e-journals which are still “at risk of loss” and need to be archived.
- To showcase the organizations (the Keepers) which act as digital shelves for access over the long term.

As of May 2024, the Keepers Registry contained the archival status for 92,797 titles and had nineteen participating ‘archiving agencies’ or Keepers which act as long-term stewards of e-journals and other continuing digital resources and can report about the archived material using the ISSN. Each Keeper regularly provides the ISSN_IC with metadata on their holdings, including specificity of holdings deposited for safeguarding.
Where:

The Keepers Registry data portal may be accessed by either of two methods:

- The Keepers Registry browser interface is freely available to search by serial title or ISSN to locate archival status details.
- Launched in 2023, a new fee-based service called “Submit. Retrieve. Reuse.” allows users to upload a list of titles or ISSN to evaluate in bulk the archival status of a library’s e-journal collection and retrieve archival status data.

Why:

The Keepers Registry serves as both a tool for libraries and publishers to check the preservation status of e-journals in their collection and as a way of highlighting e-journal content that is at high risk for loss of access.

An e-journal not preserved in at least three archiving agencies is considered at a high risk of loss. Multiple preservation copies distributed geographically is a fundamental digital preservation principle. Three copies across three different archiving agencies is commonly accepted as safe. As of May 2024, just over 22,000 titles were deemed safe (archived by three or more Keepers).

The new service “Submit. Retrieve. Reuse.” allows users to upload a list of ISSNs to validate metadata for:

- Check the archival status of a batch of titles instead of searching title-by-title.
- Data maintenance projects, including unrecognized or invalid ISSN to enhance discovery, access, and collection development activities.
- Evaluate the digital preservation status of an e-journal to determine whether to weed print volumes from a collection, particularly for complex projects such as:
  - the selection and placement of print journals for off-site storage facilities;
  - repurposing stacks to free up physical space for alternative uses.
- Check the availability of post-cancellation access if an organization were to stop subscribing to an e-journal.
- Based on archival status, the library can measure confidence that long-term access to a title will continue even if access from the publisher should cease.
Archival status of open access journals can gauge reliability of long-term access.

How:

Keepers Registry browser interface is freely available. In the search box, type in either an ISSN or title.

“Submit. Retrieve. Reuse.”

Starting with a tabular list of ISSN identifiers with their corresponding titles, the file can be uploaded following an account set-up with the ISSN Sales Department. Returned data includes ISSN-L, names of preserving agencies and for each agency, years covered by preservation compared with years of publication, an assessment of archived content completeness per agency, which entities index this title, and data associated with the Directory of Open Access Scholarly Resources (ROAD).

The cost of the service is calculated on the number of unique ISSN submitted and the same entries can be resubmitted without additional fees to facilitate data cleaning activities.

Additional metadata incorporated in the output, in the form of an Excel document, includes key title, electronic and print ISSN, as well as print if there is an ISSN-L, the language, country, and frequency of publication.

A secondary service supports librarians with reviewing invalid ISSN, together with journal titles, to resolve the data mismatch. This component of the tool allows users to refine their journal title match given cataloging might include acronyms, incomplete titles, or other inconsistencies. As the service name implies, librarians can submit their list of ISSNs, retrieve the data and reuse it, as frequently as needed, with the goal of producing valid ISSN data output.

For more information:

To request any additional information, please contact the Sales department of the ISSN International Centre.

Conference papers:


- Bequet, Gaelle, Polchow, Michelle. “How can you use the ISSN portal to check the preservation status of your digital journals?” The Charleston Conference, Charleston, South Carolina, USA, 9 November 2023. YouTube
NASIGuides:

- Digital Preservation 101
- Talking Points and Questions to Ask Publishers about Digital Preservation

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