Standard book numbering turns 50!

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In the days before Standard Book Numbering...

Bookseller to wholesaler

I’d like to order:
Charles Dickens: A Tale of Two Cities
Publisher – Nelson Doubleday
Format – hardback with deckle edge pages (blue and cream cover)
10 copies
What is the price?
In the days before Standard Book Numbering....

Wholesaler to bookseller

We have Charles Dickens: A Tale of Two Cities published by Classics Publishers in hardback with deckle edge pages with the red and cream cover available.

They are $5 each.

Please quote our number CP010567 if you want to order this book
In the days before Standard Book Numbering...

Maybe you would get what you wanted, maybe not..

At any rate, it took a long time just to exchange information
Then came SBN

WH Smith pressed for a “standard” book number to enable them to operate a computerised warehouse.

Prof Gordon Foster an ex wartime code breaker devised the calculation method for a 9-digit number
- Publisher identifier
- Publication identifier
- Check digit to validate
Then came SBN

Quickly taken up in UK

Publishers accepted it – numbering of backlist as well as new titles

Success quickly noted by...
SBN becomes ISBN

To make the system international, SBN changed to 10 digits and became an *International Standard* under ISO:

- Country/regional identifier
- Publisher identifier
- Publication identifier
- Check digit to validate

92-95055-00-4
SBN becomes ISBN

Since 1 January 2007 ISBN has been a 13 digit number:

- Increased capacity of available numbers
- Congruence with GTINs

- GS1 prefix (978 or 979)
- Country/regional identifier
- Publisher identifier
- Publication identifier
- Check digit to validate

978-92-95055-00-1
More countries, more ISBNs
More countries, more ISBNs
More countries, more ISBNs
Today...

151 agencies
200 countries
> 1.5 million publishers
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