



# newsletter

The management  
Newsletter for all  
industries involved  
with bar-code  
scanning and  
related  
technologies.

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Coincidentally, two related communications....

....crossed our desk one day last week. One was the ANA Newsletter No. 9 (published by the Article Number Association of the UK). The other was a letter from Safeway Stores to one of their suppliers. They were related because each addressed the problem of meeting UPC printing specifications from different points of view.

- The explicit ANA statement, by Richard Wilson (Harlands of Hull), Chairman of the ANA Publicity Committee, is in line with the position of the Uniform Product Code Council (SCAN Jan 81). Here are some excerpts from the ANA statement:

"It is the intention of the ANA, EAN and UPC systems that the required dimensions and tolerances in the final printed symbol should not have to be directly specified as such. Instead the specification...lays down the conditions to be fulfilled at each stage of the production process. Scanning equipment should then be capable of reading a symbol produced in accordance with the conditions. Printers should not be expected to give specific guarantees on the readability of printed symbols. Any printing defects which arise should be handled under the normal commercial relationship between printers and their customers.

"Suppliers of consumer goods should not be expected to give guarantees on scanability to their trade customers....Verifiers are measuring devices. Because the specification is framed in terms of procedures and not dimensions, verifiers can give misleading results. Rejection of a code by a verifier does not prove the symbol is out of specification, nor does acceptance of a code by a verifier prove that the symbol is in specification....The EAN memorandum of agreement specifically absolves manufacturers from any obligation to obtain checking equipment. The only true test of a printed symbol is that it will decode on retailer scanning equipment....It is far more important to consider that the whole concept of article numbering and bar coding is on a voluntary basis...

"...I do not believe that it would help our cause if we endeavored to tie ourselves down to strict specifications, liabilities and guarantees, with the ultimate threat of legislation. The German industry has moved in this direction with the result that there exists considerable mistrust and acrimony between retailers, manufacturers and packaging printers."

- The second communication was a letter from Safeway to one of their manufacturer/suppliers of products. It stated the results of five samples tested by the chain on their verification equipment. All of them were judged "out of spec". The letter concluded "It would be most helpful if you would notify us of the date when scannable UPC symbols will be available (next print date)".

Comment

*We have read and reread the statements by the UPCC and the ANA and have failed to find a defensible position on this issue. How can anyone use as a reference a specification "framed in terms of procedures and not dimensions"? How can a printer live with: "the only true test of a printed symbol is that it will decode on retailer's scanning equipment"? Whose scanning equipment? (Hold the press while I run down to my neighborhood supermarket to test a symbol, and if that item is not in his data file, tough luck!) And since no two scanners function exactly alike, the test results are meaningless.*

*These are real day-to-day business operating problems. Sophisticated devices have been designed to measure symbol dimensions. The entire industry has been instructed for seven years that the true test of a symbol is that it meet dimensional and color specifications and not that the printer follow antiquated procedures that have been rejected by everyone who knows anything about printing bar code symbols. The Printability Gauge, for example, went the way of the horse and buggy years ago and has been abandoned by every knowledgeable printer we know.*

*We suspect we may have fallen into the hands of the lawyers who are trying to get everyone to stick their heads in the sand. The industry deserves better than this!*

The ANA (UK) announced....

....the appointment of A. C. Nielsen, Ltd., as the central clearing house in the UK for sales and market research data collected from retailers operating EPOS equipment. This appointment is in furtherance of the EAN memorandum of agreement which states "all concerned in the manufacture, distribution and retailing...should be able to avail themselves of the basic data collected by the automatic cash registers."

This method of data collection by one central agency is unique to the United Kingdom and provides that manufacturers and suppliers will have access to data on their respective products. No distributor may enter into any separate and exclusive agreement which would prevent his providing basic data to the central clearing house. Nor will the EAN clearing house, in this case Nielsen, have exclusive rights to the data. The individual manufacturers and distributors would still be free to negotiate on an individual basis for data with the retailers.

The ANA also announced a one-day conference on article numbering, bar coding, and scanning, scheduled for March 26, 1981 at Queen Elizabeth Hall. Donald Harris, ANA Chairman will be the conference chairman and the conference will include sessions on all aspects of automated retail scanning and a current status report of UK progress.







