

Data aggregators and their services

Nielsen BookData

Nielsen BookData (formed from the merger of Whitaker Information Services and Book Data) is the UK's leading bibliographic data aggregator and provider of product information to the UK book trade. Publishers who want to promote their books with full information pay a subscription, typically on a per title basis. Smaller publishers may consider it adequate to list their titles with a free basic record. At the very least you should ensure that they list your titles and that they are accurate. Note that Nielsen BookData reserves the right to amend some fields for data consistency and quality reasons. For example, the author must conform to British Library authority files, and the subject classification applied to your books may be the classification that the Nielsen BookData editor believes is right for your book.

Many publishers provide information on new books to Nielsen BookData via paper on Advanced Information or "AI" sheets or increasingly AI sheets attached to emails. This is not full e-commerce and the AI sheet still needs to be scanned and edited by the agency. Some publishers report delays in getting their books onto the database so it may be worth asking Nielsen BookData how long it should take and whether you can speed it up, e.g. by subscribing to their services and supplying your information electronically. It is crucially important to have the details of your book on Nielsen's products and on the databases of companies who source data from Nielsen, for example wholesalers, Internet and chain booksellers. You should ask Nielsen how best to supply your information and how quickly that information is likely to reach their products and your customers.

It is worth asking Nielsen BookData where your information goes and what sort of markets will have access to it. If these markets are important to your business then you should consider how you can get the most complete information about your books onto their database and out to your target market. You should see this activity as an important preliminary part of your marketing strategy for every book which will be sold through the book trade.

You could also ask them for a way of checking that your information has been received and processed correctly. This could be as simple as asking them for the name of one of their local customers who takes their CD-ROM or online product and whom you can ask to check to see if your details are correct. This is well worth doing even if you are using the free service. You could subscribe to one or more of their products and services and many publishers have a CD-ROM subscription or access to one of their online services. From time to time issues crop up, often raised by authors who find their books are listed as not available on a certain chain or Internet bookshop. Being able to track the bibliographic information from the publisher to Nielsen and out to their customer can help in finding out where the error has occurred and in putting it right.

Nielsen BookData PubWeb

This is a subscription web service for publishers and it enables you to search the Nielsen BookData database, check your existing titles for accuracy and key in new titles in advance of publication. Please note that once you have input a new record you can amend the information but after the publication date this service may not allow you to directly update price and availability information unless you

are the book's UK distributor. All publishers should look at Nielsen BookData's subscription services for publishers and consider the benefits of having a full rich record on their database.

Bowker

RR Bowker, the predominant US data aggregator, has set up local data collection from UK publishers and provides a full bibliographic service to the UK book trade alongside their global bibliographic products for the US, Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. It is important to ensure that information about your titles is supplied to Bowker as well as to Nielsen BookData, and that backlist data is represented accurately. Bowker currently has an online service called BowkerLink and this can be used to supply your information to Bowker. If you sell your books in the USA or other international markets you should contact Bowker to see how they can help to increase your title visibility and your sales in these markets.

Bowker has clear guidelines on how they prefer to receive publisher data but they also accept a wide range of other methods. For more information visit www.bowker.co.uk.

Bowker's policy is to charge booksellers for use of their data via services such as CD-ROMs and online services such as Globalbooksinprint.com. Bowker does **not** charge publishers for providing bibliographic data/product information.

It would be worth asking Bowker which customers they sell their data to. This would tell you the relative importance of providing your data to Bowker in a timely manner.

ONIX

ONIX is the international book trade standard for the supply of rich product information and is the preferred method of receiving data for both Nielsen BookData and Bowker. It is particularly suitable for larger businesses which have a sophisticated product database. To find out more, visit www.editeur.org.

Various proprietary software solutions may become available which will facilitate the transmission of ONIX messages from smaller publishers to Nielsen BookData and others. This will enable smaller publishers to have all the advantages of ONIX in terms of completeness and timeliness.

Before deciding to invest in the necessary systems and infrastructure to enable you to provide ONIX outputs you should consult BIC to find out which organisations are ONIX compliant and able to receive and use your data. Also ask these organisations if/when they want your data in ONIX format.