Checklist of systems requirements for small publisher/distributors

Introduction

This checklist is intended to outline the functionality small self-distributing publishers are likely to require in order to conduct their business efficiently and comply with accepted trade practice. It should be used in conjunction with the Booksellers Association document *Life Cycle of a New Title: Best Practice Guidelines*.

1. Product information

The publisher should maintain a database of all titles, published and unpublished, to which an ISBN has been allocated, capable of holding as a minimum the fields mandated by the BIC Basic standard.

This information may be held in a proprietary spreadsheet or database program or in a preconfigured publishing system. It should be networked to allow multiple users to input or correct data subject to considerations of accuracy and security.

Ideally this system should hold a listing of ISBNs assigned to the publisher to permit rapid allocation to new titles.

The publisher should be capable of outputting product information to the data agencies and key customers in the ONIX standard format, if possible.

Publishers should be capable of assigning BIC standard subject classifications to their titles; and should obtain a GLN (Global Location Number) and BIC Publisher Discount Code.

The publisher must be able to maintain the price, availability and BIC Discount Code for each of the titles they have listed in their bibliographic database. Any significant changes must be supplied to the data agencies and key customers as appropriate. Changes of publication date which occur before publication are important and should be notified to interested parties.

2. Sales order processing

Customer set-up

The publisher should hold a file of all customers within its accounting system with their GLN or SAN (Standard Address Number).

When a customer record is first created, the publisher must set up the correct discount, pricing and credit terms before the first order is processed.

Order receipt

The publisher will receive email alerts from Nielsen BookNet Web when new orders are available for collection from the NBN web site.

The publisher may also be subscribed to the [PubEasy Exchange](#) system. This places the publisher's books on the PubEasy service and enables booksellers to place orders for them. The orders are received via email from PubEasy.

The publisher may also be able to receive orders by FTP from major customers.

The publisher must also be able to enter orders manually which are received via post, phone and fax, including annotated catalogues, reps' dockets etc.

Orders will be stored in an order book database. This must capture as a minimum the following information:

> *Header level*
>
> Internal order number
>
> Date and time order received
>
> Order receipt method (web service, Teleordering, PubEasy, EDI, manual entry) for later statistical analysis
>
> Customer account reference
>
> Customer delivery point
>
> Customer's purchase order number
>
> *Line level*
>
> ISBN/EAN13
>
> Allow substitution Yes/No
>
> Backorder/record dues Yes/No
>
> Customer's line reference
>
> Order quantity
>
> Promotional pricing code (if applicable)
>
> Hotline flag (if applicable)

Order statistics should be used to compile demand figures for each ISBN and forecast reprint requirements. Note: this demand records sales from the publisher to the bookshop, not net sales out of the bookshop to the end customer.

Each order received should be acknowledged using the customer's preferred method or that provided by the system by which it was supplied.

Order release (for picking and despatch)

When an order is received, a credit check should always be performed. The order should be held if it takes the customer over the preset credit limit.

Orders should be checked against price and availability information held and then picked and packed. Any changes in price and availability status should initiate an order acknowledgement giving details of the change to price or availability.

Backorder/dues files should be checked regularly.

Some customers may require electronic delivery notes to be sent in advance of despatch. Delivery notes should be generated when the books are picked and despatched or when the system produces the invoices as long as a quality control check is done to ensure that delivery notes match actual deliveries.

3. Invoicing

The publisher should be able to use existing order documentation and data held as product information to create electronic invoices without rekeying.

The price must be taken from the price and availability inventory and the discount must be established by looking up the BIC Discount Code for each item and cross-referencing it with the customer. The only pricing information the publisher should be able to enter manually at invoicing time should be carriage costs.

If the publisher despatches the order via a carrier that supports track and trace, it should be possible to enter parcel numbers and carrier information against the invoice so that this can in the future be sent with electronic invoices and despatch notes.

The customer's preferences must be taken into account when invoicing.

Backorders (Dues)

The publisher must be able to re-acknowledge backorders if specified by the customer.

The publisher must be able to monitor the number of backorders to help plan reprints.

The publisher must be able to undertake electronic order cancellation of any order line still on backorder. The process for receiving cancellations is essentially the same as for receiving new orders although the data message will specifically denote a cancellation rather than an order.

4. Returns and claims processing

If the publisher supplies books on a returnable basis, it must be possible to receive electronic returns requests, allocate a returns authorisation number (RAN) and send authorisations and receive returns despatch advice messages. The credit value should be calculated automatically by reference to previous sales invoices.

The system must also be able to support non-conformance (damaged or incorrect books etc.) returns and claims. Non-conformance claims which are accepted should automatically raise a sales ledger credit, which will be transmitted to the customer.

The publisher must be able to support the physical receipt of returns against a RAN and create and transmit the appropriate credit to the customer.

Industry Returns Initiative

5. Accounting

Accounting functionality must be sufficient to provide all the bookkeeping and accounting needs of small to medium publishers. The functionality should be roughly in line with the relevant functionality in Sage Line50, but it should be noted that Sage is a generic accounting system which is not tailored specifically to the book industry and small publishers.

The key functionality is as follows:

Sales ledger

Credit control

Cash sales

Purchase ledger

Purchase order processing

General ledger

Bank records and bank reconciliation

VAT management