BIC has defined and administers a standard method of communicating publishers’ discount group
codes as part of an EDI message. A discount group code, which is an attribute of a product, is
converted to an actual discount rate by means of a look-up table which is specific to an individual
trading agreement. The look-up table is communicated directly between the trading partners by
non-EDI means.

The discount group code must have a component which identifies the publisher, or more generally
the issuer of the code if a number of publishers are included in a single discount group scheme; and it
must have a component which identifies the discount group. To ensure uniqueness, the
publisher/issuer component must be assigned by a controlling agency. The discount group
component is then at the discretion of the publisher/issuer.

Proposed format

The format for a BIC publishers’ discount group code is a fixed-length eight character code in three
parts:

Character position 1       Block code: a single letter identifying a block of codes managed
                          by a designated controlling agency. In the present case, A =
                          BIC. The inclusion of this initial character allows for the
                          possibility that the code might be taken up more widely, and
                          that (e.g.) a US agency might emerge.

Character positions 2 to 5   Publisher code: a four-letter code, mnemonic as far as
                          possible, assigned by BIC. This format allows 26⁴ or some
                          450,000 unique codes.

Character positions 6 to 8   Discount group code: a three-character code, which may be
                          numeric, alphabetic or alphanumeric, determined and assigned
                          by the publisher/issuer. If a one or two character code is used,
                          it should be left justified and the remaining character
                          position(s) should be space(s).

Example: AMACM122          Macmillan discount group code 122.

Administration

Publisher/issuer codes are assigned on application to the BIC office. The following information is
required for code assignment:

Name of publisher/issuer
Name and contact details of responsible person at the publisher/issuer
Expected scope of application (e.g. “All imprints of XYZ group”, “All overseas imprints
distributed in UK by ABC”).

BIC maintains on its website a list of publisher/issuer codes as they are assigned. This is held
separately from the BIC Tradacoms code lists so that there is no need to treat new publisher/issuer
codes as requiring a new BIC code list version number.
Use in EDI messages

There is an existing data element in the Tradacoms Price & Availability Update message (in RPR TERM) which can carry a publishers’ discount group code in the correct form. Similar provision is made in the EDIFACT PRICAT message and in ONIX.