BIC Basic recommendations for the provision of product information

Introduction

The availability of accurate and up-to-date product information is accepted as being of universal benefit to the book trade, leading to increased sales, greater business efficiency and the saving of time and money, and it is in the interests of all those involved in the supplying of books to readers to maximise this benefit:

> **publishers** by ensuring that correct information is supplied to bibliographic agencies and other recipients at the time appropriate to a title's publication date and necessary for the fulfilment of their obligations to their customers, and that it is corrected and updated immediately when changes to the information occur;

> **data aggregators** by ensuring that information received is accurately and speedily processed and made available to users as promptly as possible;

> and by **booksellers** and other intermediaries by using their best efforts to employ the most accurate and up-to-date sources of bibliographic information.

Expensive and time-consuming inaccuracies are commonly the result of time delays between decisions being implemented by publishers and that information becoming available to aggregators' customers. Speed of transmission between publisher and agency and agency and bookseller is therefore of itself bound to enhance accuracy; and for this reason it is important that communication is fully electronic and trade-wide standards adopted for all aspects of data provision.

Publishers

Publishers are responsible for submitting product information on all new titles and for ensuring its continuing accuracy throughout a product's life as an active title.

Recommendations for publishers for new titles and new editions:

Publishers should nominate a senior staff member to take executive responsibility for data provision.

Those delegated to provide product information should be made aware of the importance of their role and have a personal knowledge of the titles for which they are responsible (in a large divisionalised company, this is likely to be different individuals for each division).

Publishers are recommended to maintain a title database containing as a minimum

sufficient product information to enable a record comprising the BIC Basic data elements to be created. Publishers should use such a database to provide electronic delivery of information to data aggregators in an agreed form, ideally using the ONIX for Books standard, and keep it updated, at least weekly, throughout the period leading up to publication.

Publishers are advised to exercise strict controls over which individuals are granted access to editing rights in order to minimise the possibility of conflicting or inaccurate information being supplied to data aggregators.

Publishers are encouraged to set firm publication dates and recommended retail prices on a consistent timescale which enables them to supply confirmed new title data at an appropriate time to meet aggregators' obligations to their customers; this should ideally ensure that a reliable BIC Basic record is provided in sufficient time for a title record to be available to end users four months ahead of publication.

Publishers are strongly recommended to supply product information for digital versions and titles made available on demand as part of their regular data provision, and within the specified timing parameters, if at all possible. A separate ISBN should be assigned to each separately traded product, including each digital format traded in the supply chain.

Publishers are strongly recommended to take the necessary action to avoid the risk of conflicting information from their own in-house records and those of their distributors being provided to aggregators. Because of the deficiencies of most distribution databases for holding accurate bibliographic data, companies with their own distribution centres will probably need to create an interface which protects the consistency of information held within two separate systems, whilst companies using third party distributors may decide to ask recipients to disregard data supplied from distribution databases until the title in question has been delivered and the transactional elements (price, availability status, weight) of the record can be confirmed. In any event, however, publishers are advised not to delegate responsibility for the supply of bibliographic information to distribution companies or use data from distribution databases for this purpose except under close supervision.

Publishers are responsible for the accuracy of the final bibliographic record and are strongly advised to check with care all validating data provided by agencies for this purpose. Copies of bibliographic records in publication date order may be useful in establishing priorities for checking.

Publishers should liaise with aggregators over titles which because of timing constraints cannot meet normal data provision timetables.

Recommendations for publishers for published titles:

Publishers should take continuing responsibility for accurate transactional data by making arrangements for their distributors to provide regular updating information on a daily basis to meet aggregators' requirements.

Publishers should ensure that aggregators are informed of any change in distribution arrangements relating to all or part of their lists which might lead to incorrect transactional data being inadvertently supplied.

Data Aggregators

Aggregators are responsible for the compilation and quality of the record, and the timely processing of new title and update information, and for systems support for those supplying data by electronic means.

Recommendations for data aggregators:

Aggregators should be prepared to accept publishers' own classification of their titles using the BIC standard classification system and material changes should not then be made to classifications without consultation.

Similarly, if publishers are to be held responsible for the accuracy of the records relating to their own titles, only minimal changes to material supplied should be made without consultation.

Aggregators should not exceed four weeks from receipt of data for the creation and availability of a basic record; or a maximum of 24 hours for the incorporation of price and availability changes supplied electronically.

Aggregators should encourage electronic delivery of information by offering appropriate systems support.

Aggregators should encourage publishers to check the accuracy of bibliographic records, in appropriate cases by submitting bibliographic records created for validation, especially in the month leading up to publication.