



BIC Task & Finish Working Groups
Project Briefing Document

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1. PURPOSE

Most product metadata is trusted by recipients. The data is used or deployed usually without intervention. Weights and Dimensions data is not trusted and is re-measured by each recipient causing wasteful duplication when the data could have been correct at source. Where the data is trusted, any errors that do occur can lead to poor customer service and increased shipping costs. The purpose of this Task and Finish Working Group is to seek solutions to this problem.

2. BACKGROUND

Following a workshop on Weights and Dimensions in 2016, the BIC Physical Supply Chain Committee suggested that some more analysis be undertaken to see if there is potential for a BIC project to improve and streamline the flow of weights and dimensions metadata in the book supply chain.

The basic issue is that in spite of considerable progress made with the supply of sophisticated metadata via ONIX, which includes the supply of weights information (the weight of a book) and dimensions information (the height, width and depth measurements of a book) this measurement data is not trusted and at several stages of the supply chain, the weights and dimensions are re-measured by each recipient of the books. The question is why is this data not trusted when most other metadata supplied is trusted?

Accurate weights and dimensions data can now be used to enhance and automate supply chain processes. This data is used in warehouse picking processes e.g. to calculate carton fill, check on picking accuracy and limit the number of books in boxes for health and safety (weight limit) reasons and increasingly it is used to establish in advance the price of shipping for printed books purchased online. Note that an error with this weight or dimensions data can increase the price of packaging and shipping/postage and this can lead to losses for online retailers.

The BIC Weights and Dimensions Task & Finish Working Group will look at these issues and seek solutions, reporting back to the BIC Physical Supply Chain Committee with recommendations.

3. PROJECT DEFINITION

3.1. PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The project team which looked into the feasibility of this T&FWG recommended some next steps. The T&FWG will want to evaluate and agree these:

- a. Best practice documentation be agreed and documented by way of a Project with a small Task and Finish working Group. The Operational Board agrees with this approach but has stipulated the project should be

short term. There is a small amount of funding allocated to this piece of work, which should be completed by December 2018 at the latest.

- b. Project Briefing document to be drawn up by Simon Edwards and Karina Luke and signed off on by the T&FWG and the Physical Supply Chain Committee.
- c. Within this Project Briefing document, mention should be made of some further development of the “trusted Printer” concept currently developing between some publishers and their printers. The development of the “trusted printer” concept will not be a deliverable of the project but it may be referred to in the Best Practice Guidelines.
- d. The project should consider if “triangulated data” i.e. from three sources involving distributor data and data from a major wholesaler, could be fed to Nielsen and other data aggregators to load into the metadata supply chain flagged as ‘trusted data’.
- e. Consideration to be given to eventually including ‘Adherence to BIC’s Weights and Dimensions Best Practice’ in the BIC Product Data Excellence Accreditation scheme and/or BIC SCEA (Supply Chain Excellence Award) accreditation scheme.

In addition to the above the following points are possible objectives of the project:

1. Undertake analysis of W & D data from different sources to understand which data is accurate and can be trusted
2. Explore the concept of the Trusted Partner for Printers by which some publishers have worked with their major printers and put in place quality control processes for W&D data with improved systems and on-going spot checking leading to the establishment of trusted suppliers for W&D data.
3. Analyse the opportunity to roll out this “Trusted” concept across the supply chain
4. Look for solutions to the problem of W&D data inaccuracy and work with relevant stakeholders such as data integrators, printers, distributors, publishers and retailers to establish robust guidelines for the implementation of identified solutions.
5. Report recommendations to the BIC Physical Supply Chain Committee.

3.2. PROJECT SCOPE

1. Weights and Dimensions only affect printed books so digital will not be in scope unless the analysis applies to a combined physical and digital workflow.

However, the Best Practice document should make brief reference to the requirement for digital products to not show W&D information.

2. W&D data is part of product metadata and is supplied in ONIX so this project will need to refer to ONIX guidelines and work with Editeur.
3. The project scope will include printers and their processes which are one source of W&D data.

3.3. OUTLINE PROJECT DELIVERABLES AND/OR DESIRED OUTCOMES

The main project deliverable will be a Best Practice document. This document will need to be signed off by the BIC Physical Supply Chain Committee.

Depending on time and resources available, other deliverables may include analysis reports showing W & D data from different sources. However these will not be the primary deliverable(s).

A further deliverable is a marketing document to suggest ways in which the agreed Best Practice can be promoted to the industry.

Another possible deliverable would be a BIC Bite on W&D.

3.4. CONSTRAINTS

The project needs to recruit suitable stakeholders such as 2 or 3 distributors, 2 or 3 printers, at least one data aggregator, a systems vendor, possibly someone in a liaison role from Editeur and at least one major bookseller. A wholesaler which requires W&D Data for a CDF function would also be useful.

This project must be short term, with focused effort designed to move quickly and come up with the appropriate Best Practice document. There will be a project plan with quite ambitious timescales and frequent meetings to ensure progress.

The project will require a chair preferably an industry figure, possibly from a printer or big publisher.

It will be necessary for several large organisations to be willing to provide files of W&D data (in confidence if necessary) as this data will be the basis of the analysis of the issue. It may also be necessary to test or sample/spot check some books or the output from the measuring system at a retailer, distributor or printer. It will be necessary to fully understand the problem and know where the errors are occurring in order to write the Best Practice document. Considerable research has already been undertaken and the project should therefore be careful not to duplicate this.

3.5. INTERFACES

The T&FWG will need to report to the BIC Physical Supply Chain Committee. The T&FWG will need to have a link to the BIC Metadata Sub-Committee as W&D are part of product metadata. A further link towards the end of the project would be to

the TEC committee to provide a brief for promoting the solution and suggesting ways to ensure engagement.

4. OUTLINE BUSINESS/INDUSTRY CASE

It has not been possible to accurately quantify the on-going cost of inaccurate W&D data and the cost of repeated re-measuring. As the group recruits suitable members, it would be helpful if they could estimate the cost of this issue for their organization so that the group can build up a picture which could then be extrapolated across the supply chain.

The cost is certainly increasing as W&D data is more widely used e.g. in shipping books for online retailing or calculating suitable shelf locations in warehouses. It may be that accurate W&D data could lead to more innovation in these areas.

5. QUALITY EXPECTATIONS

The key success factor is for this group to first publish Best Practice documentation and then if time and budget allows to recommend some practical steps to solve this issue. The BIC Physical Supply Chain Committee will then be able to agree next steps with regards promoting this Best Practice across the industry.

6. ACCEPTANCE CRITERIA

The deliverables must contain one or more practical solutions to this issue. They must be cost-effective and credible.

7. RISKS

There is no overt risk from this project apart from possibly reducing BIC's credibility and reputation in the event that this issue is not addressed, and/or the Best Practice document is considered impractical.

8. OUTLINE PROJECT PLAN

The BIC Physical Supply Chain Committee and the BIC Operational Board have set a deadline for this project as December 2018.

The project costs are limited to consultant's fees and expenses, BIC staff time, possibly room hire etc.

9. BUDGET/COSTS

BIC Consultant's fees will be incurred by Simon Edwards during this project.

The fees are estimated as follows:- T&FWG Meetings and Conference calls

- Preliminary face-to-face meeting in August 2018: 2 hours
- 4 conference call meetings in September, October, November and December 2018: 8 hours

- Up to 4 Sub-Group meetings to be held (via conference call), if required.
- Some analysis time on the W&D Data and the time taken to write reports and other deliverables.

10. AUTHORITY RESPONSIBLE

Executive Director, BIC.

11. PROPOSED TASK & FINISH WORKING GROUP LEADER/PROJECT MANAGER

The Proposed Chair of the group is (TBC)

Temporary Deputy Chair will be Simon Edwards, BIC Consultant. (Another member can be appointed at any time but over the last few years, setting up an efficient T&FWG has sometimes been dependent on finding volunteers for the roles of chair and deputy chair. It might help a member agree to be chair knowing that there is an experienced deputy chair to assist).

12. CUSTOMERS AND USERS

The main stakeholders are BIC, publishers, retail booksellers, distributors, printers, data aggregators, wholesalers, online booksellers, and possibly shipping companies, freight forwarders etc. Some trade bodies might be interested in this work such as the Publishers Association or Independent Publishers Guild.

W&D data is supplied in ONIX which is managed by EdItEUR, so this project should be of interest to EDItEUR.

There are possible differences in the ways that books are measured and W&D data is stated in different markets so it could be that BISG in the US (for example) would be interested in this project.

Providers of measuring systems could be additional stakeholders affected by this project.

There are stakeholders such as online booksellers, who may not be members of BIC or who may not want to be involved with this project but they could benefit from its success.

13. REPORTING

The T&FWG will report to the BIC Physical Supply Chain Committee. Additional liaison with the BIC Metadata Sub Committee and EDItEUR may be appropriate.

The budget/costs information should be for the Executive Director, progress of deliverables will be for the BIC Physical Supply Chain Committee. This project requires a fairly tight deadline and frequent meetings and reporting perhaps on a monthly basis.