



BIC ORDERING BEST PRACTICE

Frequently Asked Questions: Order Tracking and Visibility

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The Book Industry's Supply Chain Organisation

Product price & availability information:

1. What is 'price & availability'?

Otherwise known as 'P&A', this is the term used to describe the current recommended retail price and availability status of every book published. Each book has a lifecycle which may involve periods when the book is or is not available. The availability information should be clear and allow booksellers to make informed stock management decisions. There are recognised industry standards and best practice for communicating P&A information. TRADACOMS Code List 54 is one such standard. In the most recent update to this code list, several codes have been deprecated to remove ambiguity and confusion. The notes on the application and the interpretation of the remaining codes have also been reviewed for clarity and understanding.

2. Why is 'P&A' important?

There are millions of price and availability updates made to physical books in the UK and Ireland every year, yet booksellers, self-distributed publishers, distributors and wholesalers all cite P&A information as a common cause of queries. Knowing the current price & availability status of book products is critically important to reducing queries, proactive stock management and trustworthy customer service.

3. Where can I find 'price & availability' information?

P&A information is the responsibility of the distributor of each published book. Whilst some publishers supply their own product, it is much more common for distributors and wholesalers to supply on behalf of a range of publishers. The P&A information compliments the publisher's metadata for each product and is part of specific electronic data feeds to booksellers, data aggregators, library management systems and other industry organisations that rely on accurate information. It is also accessible on bibliographic databases and the most popular electronic order platforms.

4. Does accuracy really matter?

Yes, it does. All too often, incomplete or out of date information generates queries to distributor customer service teams. Not only does this undermine overall confidence in the metadata but leads to confusion and delays at a time when readers' expectations of bookseller efficiency and responsiveness are very high.

5. How often does 'price & availability' information change?

This varies according to the number of titles in the publisher's catalogue, sales performance, print runs and other commercial considerations. The larger distributors and distributors of the larger publishing houses will update price and availability information daily.

6. Help. I can't find 'price & availability' information for a specific product. What should I do?

If you know who distributes the title, contact the customer service team. Failing that, contact the publisher for clarification on distribution arrangements as well as price and availability information.

7. Help. What do I do as there is more than one source of information?

The most trustworthy source of price and availability information is the main distributor of a book.

Price or discount query:

1. What is the difference between 'price' and 'discount'?

The price is usually referred to as the published price of the book or recommended retail price (RRP). The discount is usually referred to as the trade discount offered by the publisher and is applied to the account each bookseller holds with each publisher/ distributor. There are other discounts that may be applied for one-off orders or sales periods. These are contracts agreed between the publisher and the bookseller.

2. Where can I find 'price' and 'discount' information?

There are many ways to view this information. Please refer to online ordering platforms such as PubEasy that include your personal price, or your P&A feed, your sales rep or the distributor for this information.

3. Why is the 'price' different to the 'price' shown on my EPOS system/ in the printed catalogue/ in online databases?

There are often different prices applied by the publisher for different markets. Please refer to them or contact the customer services team at the relevant distributor. Check that your EPOS system is up to date as well.

4. Why is the 'discount' different to the 'discount' I usually get?

If your negotiated discount rate has been set by the publisher with the relevant distributor, there should be no reason for this to change. Check whether any deal agreed with your sales rep or publisher has expired or not been set correctly. Do special terms apply for specific products or sales campaigns?

5. How often does 'price' and 'discount' information change?

The publisher sets the published price of a title. This may vary from time to time and cause the value of any negotiated discount to change. Price & availability feeds should update automatically. If you have noticed a change in your discount that you can't explain, please liaise with your sales rep to discuss why this might be.

6. Help. The information I have is incorrect.

Please refer to your publisher, sales rep or customer services team at the relevant distributor.

7. Help. I can't find 'price' and 'discount' information for a specific product. What should I do?

If you have already checked on the most popular online ordering platforms or your P&A feed, please refer to your publisher, sales rep or customer services team at the relevant distributor.

Timing or status of a print on demand order:

1. What is 'print on demand'?

This is a process whereby the publisher does not hold stock of a particular title but instead has an arrangement where the book is printed as required when a customer orders it. The printer then dispatches the book direct to the customer.

2. Is 'print on demand' the same as 'manufactured on demand'?
Yes, it is.

3. Where is my 'print on demand' order?

Such orders should be traceable via the publisher/ distributor in the same way as a normal warehouse stocked order, although you should expect the timelines for delivery to be longer.

4. Why is it taking so long to deliver my 'print on demand' order?

Because the book is being manufactured on demand, the turnaround time will be longer than a warehouse stocked order. Typically, the print on demand process adds between 2 and 5 days to the order fulfilment process. This can vary by printer and type of book (for example, paperback vs hardback).

5. Where can I find accurate information on my 'print on demand' order?

As indicated above, the publisher/ distributor should be able to provide up to date status on orders either by phone or through any online order tools they may provide.

6. Why aren't multiple copies of the 'print on demand' title printed and held in a warehouse like most physical books?

For books that sell lower volumes, it is more cost effective for the publisher to 'print on demand' rather than committing to the upfront printing of larger quantities to store in a warehouse.

7. Help. The quality of the 'print on demand' title is not what I expected. What should I do?

Contact the publisher/ distributor customer services team. They should be able to arrange a replacement.

Order status:

1. What is 'order status'?

When an order has been placed, the status will depend on the stage it is at in the order fulfilment process: pick, pack, despatch or deliver. The time taken to complete each of these stages will depend on the distributor, commercial arrangements with the bookseller and overall lead times. An order could remain at one status for any length of time and for different reasons.

2. Why is it important?

At the time of ordering, you should receive an acknowledgement to confirm the availability status of the order. If there is no stock available for supply, the acknowledgement will provide an answer code and an expected date for supply.

3. Where can I find 'order status' information?

Some suppliers respond at the time of ordering to confirm the availability and status details. You can also see this via the most popular online ordering platforms such as PubEasy. If you require further details, please refer to your publisher, sales rep or distributor customer services team.

4. Does accuracy really matter?

Accuracy of the information fed back to the bookseller at the time of ordering is important. It ensures you know the correct order status. When enquiring with your supplier it is also important to give them as much detail regarding your order to enable them to confirm the correct status.

5. What effects 'order status'?

Title availability is the main reason for the delay of an order. Your credit history with a supplier is also something to consider. If you have reached a set credit limit or your account is overdue, this should be fed back to you by the publisher/ distributor.

6. Help. The information I have is incorrect.

Please refer to your publisher, sales rep or customer service team at the relevant distributor.

7. Help. I can't find 'order status' information for a specific product. What should I do?

If you ordered via one of the online ordering platforms and you have already checked via that platform, please refer to your publisher, sales rep or the customer services team at the relevant distributor.

8. Despite checking the order status of an order, I've still not received it. What should I do?

If you have allowed time for the order to be delivered (dependent on the supplier, carrier and destination), then please refer to your publisher, sales rep or the customer services team at the relevant distributor.