

BIC Ordering Best Practice Glossary of Terms

Copyright © 2022 Book Industry Communication Limited



The Book Industry's Supply Chain Organisation

Many book supply chain professionals have spent the better part of their working lives in the industry and take it for granted that common terms, acronyms and abbreviations will be readily understood by everyone - those new to the industry as well as more experienced colleagues.

That isn't always the case. Indeed, during the course of Book Industry Communication's Ordering Best Practice project, it has become apparent that some terms mean different things to different people. Not only that. Some abbreviations can have more than one meaning.

Given that a well-oiled supply chain is based on accuracy, efficiency and responsiveness, BIC has taken the opportunity to compile a list of key supply chain and order related terms. This brings much needed clarity to and raises the profile of the transactions, processes, standards and concepts that keep our industry moving. We would like to thank individual contributors as well as organisations such as EDItEUR for their glossary suggestions.

The glossary will evolve over time to meet the changing needs of the industry. BIC welcomes feedback and contributions from users. Please contact BIC via email: info@bic.org.uk or telephone: +44 (0) 20 4558 1506.

Accessible: Not excluded on the basis of a disability. A similar amount of time and effort is required to perform a task. It enables and empowers and is not frustrated by poor design or implementation.

Actual Selling Price. The retail price charged to the end consumer.

AI: Advance information sheet. A document giving details about a book that is to be published in the future. The AI sheet is usually created well in advance of publication date and is used by sales reps and agents. It AIs inform trade buyers' pre-orders.

ANSI X12: American National Standards Institute X12. This is a North American EDI standard still commonly used.

API: Application Programming Interface. These allow applications to talk to one another. In our industry, BIC Realtime APIs facilitate the exchange of a range of 18 message types. However, the range of APIs extends beyond the BIC message set.

ARN: Authorised Returns Note. This is used as part of the returns process. When booksellers want to return quantities of unsold stock, the ARN is the publisher's official authority approving return of the stock.

ASN: Advanced Shipping Notice. An electronic document providing detailed information about a pending delivery. It is an electronic version of a packing list.

BA: The Booksellers' Association. An industry members association and founder member of BIC.

Back List: A published book that has been on sale for at least 6 - 12 months.



Back order: An order for an item that cannot be fulfilled immediately. Refers to a published title rather than one not yet published.

Batch.co.uk: A business providing a suite of payment, returns and data services, delivered online by the Booksellers Association.

Best practice: A set of principles that govern a concept, process or way of working and are recognised as delivering the best results. Best practice may become the standard or default over time.

BIC: Book Industry Communication. An independent organisation founded by the Publishers Association, Booksellers Association, the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals and the British Library to promote supply chain efficiency through e-commerce and the application of standard processes and procedures. Not for profit.

BIC Codes: A subject classification scheme used in the UK, though no longer being developed. It is being replaced by Thema. The BIC scheme will be made obsolete by February 2024.

BIC Realtime: A set of 18 standard messages (APIs) enabling computers to communicate with each other via the internet in real time, requesting information and receiving a real time response.

Billing address: The address associated with the customer's account and to which billing/ financial related information and documentation should be sent.

BISAC Subject Codes: Book Industry Standards and Communications Subject Codes. A North American subject classification scheme. Administered by BISG.

BISG: Book Industry Study Group. Working for a more informed, empowered and efficient book supply chain in the United States of America. Not for profit.

BookNet Canada: Develops technology, standards and education to serve the Canadian book industry. Not for profit.

Bookplate: A decorative label stuck or laid in the front of a book. It may state the owner's name or be signed by the original author or illustrator.

Book Trade: The publishing, buying and selling of books. The term usually refers to the b2b community, comprising professionals and organisations.

BSI: British Standards Institution. A standards body and certification organisation.

Catalogue Services: A curated collection of book metadata usually provided by third parties specialising in data aggregation.

CBMC: Children's Book Marketing Classifications. For marketing purposes only.



CILIP. Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals. BIC founder member. The UK's library and information association.

Client Publishers: A publisher, or publishing group that doesn't have its own distribution operation but uses a recognised distributor instead. Some, but not all, distributors may be owned by a publisher, leading to confusion. Distributors will also distribute for third party publishers.

Commodity Code: Required for customs declarations, a commodity code is a sequence of numbers made up of six, eight or ten digits. The code determines customs duties and other charges levied on goods, as well as any preferential treatments, restrictions or prohibitions that may apply. More information is available on the gov.uk website. The commodity code for import into the UK for some printed books is 49 01 10 00 00. Different types of books may have different codes. Other countries have different (though often closely related) coding schemes.

Confirmation Order: An EDI order message sent back to the vendor in response to a Quotes message, confirming that the library does wish to purchase the proposed items.

Consumer Advance Order. An order placed for a book before the book's publication date.

Core stock: A selection of titles chosen by a bookseller that are considered 'never out of stock' lines for their specific shop. These will be chosen either by sales importance or on the basis that 'it would be embarrassing not to have it, if asked'.

Cost price: The retail price less the discount. This represents the price paid by a book retailer or wholesaler. It may also be the set price agreed between the retailer and supplier, which the retailer will mark up (e.g., unpriced stationery or non-book items). The cost price is what the retailer pays the supplier.

Country Code: A two-character alpha code used when making customs declarations. The code list is available on the gov.uk website.

Credit Note: An official legal document, similar to an invoice, itemising a credit applied to a customer's account for books either returned, not supplied, supplied in error, damaged or with a defect.

CS: TRADACOMS Code List 54: Order Acknowledgement Code: Status uncertain: check with customer service.

Currency: Depending on business location and commercial considerations, purchasing and invoicing may be available in more than one currency.

Currency Code: A three-character alpha code used when making customs declarations. The code list is available on the gov.uk website.



Customer Master: The master file held by a distributor's credit services team. It holds such information as billing address, delivery address, release dates, key contacts and discount information.

Delivery address: The address to which ordered goods should be delivered.

Delivery note: Sent with a consignment of books, detailing the consignment's contents. It is used to verify the completeness and accuracy of the consignment.

Digital Immigrant: Someone born or brought up before the widespread use of technology.

Digital Marketing Resources: Copyright point of sale provided by publishers for electronic use. These may be free to use and could be images for social media or images to print out for in-store displays.

Digital Native: Someone born and brought up with the widespread use of technology. A digital native takes technology for granted as it is part of their everyday lives.

Distributor: Supplies books to retailers, wholesalers and libraries on behalf of publishers. The publishers are not necessarily owned by the distributors.

Due: A book order that has been recorded but not yet fulfilled.

Due Date: The date on which a supplier's invoice is due for payment or for a supplier to apply a credit note to a customer's account.

EDI: Electronic Data Interchange: A structured, technical format for the exchange of time, business or financially critical transactions in an automated and standardised form between computers. Transactions are processed in batches rather than in real time.

EDIFACT: Electronic Data Interchange for Administration, Commerce and Transport. The UN standard for electronic data interchange of time, business or financially critical transactions in an automated and standardised form between computers.

EDItEUR: A membership-supported organisation that develops standards such as ONIX, Thema and EDItX for the global book supply chain. Not for profit.

EDItX: Developed jointly by EDItEUR, BIC and BISG, these are XML document formats meant to mirror and extend the functionality of existing EDI messages for the book industry.

EDN: Electronic Delivery Note. Interchangeable with an ASN. An electronic document providing detailed information about a pending delivery. An electronic version of a packing list.

Email: Electronic mail. Widespread, free form format of communication.



Electronic Point of Sale (EPoS): Tills and stock control systems. Unfortunately, some organisations call this PoS for Point-of-Sale systems, which can be confused with Point of Sale material for books (paper advertising such as posters and display bins).

EORI Number: Economic Operator Registration and Identification Number. Required by importers and exporters to clear goods through UK Customs.

EPoS (Electronic Point of Sale): As above.

Escheatment: Transfer of assets to the state after a given period of dormancy, particularly in North America. The property becomes the state's and is liquidated.

EX: TRADACOMS Code List 54: Order Acknowledgement Code: Digital product ordered.

Firm sale: Book product that cannot be returned under a sale or return agreement.

Front list: The range of forthcoming and recently published titles that publishers are actively selling and promoting to the book trade. Soon after publication they will become publishers' backlist (q.v.) titles while newer books replace them.

Fulfilment: An EDI message from the vendor to the library containing the item level data for automatic addition to the catalogue, including the item barcode number. This can be done as a separate Order Response message or as part of the Invoice message. Also referred to as Catalogue Services on some LMSs.

GLN: Global Location Number. A thirteen-digit number used in the supply chain to identify a specific business address/ location. This replaces the need for a lengthy/ imprecise postal address.

GS1: A group of independent, not for profit standards organisations operating in 150 countries. BIC is licensed by GS1 to convert SANs to GLNs in the UK and Ireland.

HK: TRADACOMS Code List 54: Order Acknowledgement Codes: Paperback out of print: hardback available.

IB: TRADACOMS Code List 54: Order Acknowledgement Codes: In stock.

Imprint: A brand within a publisher. The publisher is the legal entity, whereas the imprint is not. An imprint will specialise in a specific range of books, e.g., Classics, Children's, Sci Fi or Lifestyle. Often (but not always) imprints share the same editorial and marketing teams. Often hardback and paperback editions of a book will be published under different imprints yet remain owned by the same publisher.

Invoice: A legal document itemising the books provided with details of the amount owing and discount applied.

Invoice address: The address associated with the customer's account and to which financial related information and documentation should be sent.



Invoice Total: The total amount, inclusive of taxes, surcharges, goods and services payable on an invoice.

IP: TRADACOMS Code List 54: Order Acknowledgement Codes: In print and in stock.

IPG: Independent Publishers Guild. An association for the independent publishing sector in the UK and Ireland.

IRI: Industry Returns Initiative. The standard aimed at automating and streamlining the returns process, whereby most books are purchased on a sale or return basis.

ISBN: The International Standard Book Number. A thirteen-digit product identifier for books. Administered by the International ISBN Agency. Publishers apply for ISBN allocations through their local ISBN Agency. Used for book discovery, ordering and tracking sales, the ISBN is unique to a specific title, edition and format combination.

ISNI: International Standard Name Identifier. An ISO standard used by numerous libraries, publishers, databases and rights management organisations around the world. It uniquely identifies persons and organisations involved in creative activities.

ISO: International Organization for Standardization. An independent, non-governmental organisation with a membership made up of national standards bodies.

ISTC: International Standard Text Code. A numbering system for the unique identification of text-based works. This is no longer an active standard.

LMS: Library Management System. An LMS manages the inventory and functions of a library.

MCD: Metadata Capabilities Directory. Created and administered by BIC. This is a directory for BIC members to share information about their metadata activities with other participating members.

MD: TRADACOMS Code List 54: Order Acknowledgement Codes: Manufactured on demand.

Metadata: A set of data that describes and gives information about a book product.

Negative invoice: A type of credit note, used to correct a payment error. Also known as a negative balance invoice. Considered a legal document. Specific to North America.

New title: A new book that has not yet been published or has been published within the last three months.

NISO: National Information Standards Organization. A United States not for profit organization that develops, maintains and issues technical standards for content publishers, libraries and software developers. Licences BIC to allocate SANs in the UK and Ireland.



NK: TRADACOMS Code List 54: Order Acknowledgement Codes: Item not known (cannot be traced).

NQ: TRADACOMS Code List 54: Order Acknowledgements: Not stocked: will try to fulfil as a special order.

NYP: Not yet published. Refers to a new publication with a future publication date.

OA: TRADACOMS Code List 54: Order Acknowledgement Codes: On order from abroad.

OB: TRADACOMS Code List 54: Order Acknowledgement Codes: Normally stocked item that is temporarily out of stock.

OF: TRADACOMS Code List 54: Order Acknowledgement Codes: This format out of print: other manifestation available.

ONIX for Books: XML format for sharing bibliographic data.

OO: TRADACOMS Code List 54: Order Acknowledgement Codes: On order from publisher.

OOS: Out of Stock. See POS.

OP: Out of print. A book that is no longer available to order (from the publisher or the publisher's main distributor). A recently completed BIC Task & Finish Work Group was charged with agreeing, documenting and promoting best practice for the treatment of out-of-print products for all organisations in the book industry. The current definition is: 'A book that is completely unavailable from the publisher and is unlikely to become available again with this ISBN. There may still be stock available in the book supply chain.'

Open Order: An unfulfilled order.

OR: TRADACOMS Code List 54 Order Acknowledgement Codes: This format out of print, other manifestation pending.

Order acknowledgment: An electronic transaction sent in response to a book order, confirming receipt of that order and the order status.

Order cancellation: A book order that has been cancelled prior to fulfilment.

Order reacknowledgement: An electronic transaction updating a previously sent order acknowledgment when the order status changes again before the order is fulfilled.

Order response code: Contained in an order acknowledgment, this gives additional information on the action taken (based on commercial and/ or specifically agreed criteria).

P&A: Price & availability. Defines the status of a book, usually in the form of a data feed from a distributor or wholesaler. P&A information complements the underlying metadata of a book and should be updated as the underlying status and metadata changes.



Packing List: Information about a shipment. Used in international trade. Includes dimensions, weight and contents.

Packing Note: Describes the contents of a consignment of stock. It has limited information and is not as detailed as an invoice. The principal use is for receiving stock and identifying any shortages/ damages. It can also be referred to as a packing slip.

Packing Slip: Similar to a packing note.

Payment Terms: The criteria regarding payment included on the invoice at the point at which the stock is billed. These are usually agreed in advance between buyer and seller for books being bought on credit.

PK: TRADACOMS Code List 54: Order Acknowledgement Codes: Hardback out of print: paperback available.

POD: Print on demand. Individual copies or small numbers of books printed to order using digital technology.

Point of Sale (POS): Posters, banners and other marketing materials that often appear on invoices/delivery notes but are free of charge.

Point of Sale (POS): Also known as the 'checkout', particularly in North America, or a shortened version of EPoS (Electronic Point of Sale).

PQ: TRADACOMS Code List 54: Order Acknowledgements: Price query: available, but query whether price stated in order is acceptable.

Pre-order: A pre-order (noun) is an order for a book that has had a publicity campaign urging retail customers to order in advance of publication. Pre-order as a verb is an impossibility, but it has become a way to describe an advance order.

Profit margin: The difference between the price at which the bookseller buys and sells a product (cost price vs. actual selling price).

Pro Forma Invoice. In the UK, an invoice marked 'pro forma' means that payment for the goods is required in advance of the goods being supplied. Credit terms are not available. The invoice will describe the goods, the amount payable and other key information about the transaction such as delivery address.

Pubeasy: A self-service, online platform facilitating book discovery, ordering, order tracking and price & availability queries.

Publication Date: The date on which a book is officially published. This can be any day of the week, but often this is the first or third Thursday of a month. Often booksellers put books out as soon as they are received, even if they arrive before publication date. If this is not allowed the book will be placed under a sales embargo.



Publisher: A business responsible for bringing books to the market. Publishers will usually have their own editors, marketing and publicity teams and a unique stable of authors.

Publisher out of Stock (POS): When UK publishers use this, no one knows exactly what this means. It might mean reprinting; it might mean permanently unavailable. It is only meaningful when UK/US publishing groups that sell books from the US are out of stock, i.e., more are coming from America.

Publishers Association: A member organisation for the UK publishing industry.

Publishing Group: A publishing conglomerate that is composed of a few or even many individual publishers that act independently of each other but share central services (premises, payroll, HR, Field Sales, Distribution and Accounting). Often one or two of the Publishers give their name to the Publishing Group. Often the Publishing Group gives their name to their distribution centre.

Quotes: An order record sent by the supplier to the library Acquisitions system. An EDI Confirmation Order will be sent in response, either after manual acceptance on the Acquisitions system, or automatically on receipt. Quotes are used for orders which do not originate on the library Acquisitions system, for example raised from trolleys/ baskets completed on the supplier's website by authorised library staff, or for Supplier Selection orders.

RAN: Returns Authorisation Number. The official document reference sanctioning the return of specified quantities of specific books.

Recommended Retail Price. The suggested retail price used in business-to-business transactions. Also known as the suggested retail price.

Rep: As in sales representative. Sells front and backlist titles on behalf of publishers to retailers and wholesalers in a specific area or in a particular market segment.

RF: TRADACOMS Code List 54: Order Acknowledgement Codes: Refer to other publisher or distributor.

RP: TRADACOMS Code List 54: Order Acknowledgement Codes. Reprinting.

RR: TRADACOMS Code List 54: Order Acknowledgement Codes: Rights restricted: cannot supply.

Reprint: Reprinting copies of a book when the initial or previous print run is exhausted.

Sales Embargo Date: A strict prohibition on the sale of a title or fulfilment of a pre-order. Similar to 'strict on sale date' in the US. Usually applies to a very limited number of titles where early selling is prohibited by an agreed contract.



SAN: Standard Address Number. A seven-digit number used in the supply chain to identify a specific business address/ location. Replaces the need for a lengthy/ imprecise postal address.

SCEA: Supply Chain Excellence Award. A BIC accreditation scheme enabling organisations to demonstrate their supply chain efficiency and capabilities.

Shipper: A company that handles goods on behalf of a bookseller or supplier where consolidation, specialist handling or international transport is required.

Signed Copies: Books that are sold having been signed by the author (or illustrator). See also Bookplates and Tip Ins.

SOR: Sale or return. The basis on which most book stock is ordered by booksellers and wholesalers. Unsold stock can be returned for credit within an agreed time period.

SSCC: Serial Shipping Container Code. A unique identifier for a consignment (such as a pallet) of books. SSCCs can be applied to any logistics unit right up to container load. Allows for speedy receipting.

Special order: An order for a book title that requires more research/ effort to source. Not considered core stock or a bestseller.

Standards. A recognised and authoritative set of guidelines. A point of reference.

Statement address. The address to which a document summarising all financial transactions (sales and returns) between a distributor and bookseller in a given period is sent. The transactions will be aged according to the agreed credit terms.

Subject classification: How a book is categorised either in a retail store, online or in a warehouse. There are bespoke, local as well as international schemes in use in the book industry.

Subscription Order (trade advance order). Booksellers' advance orders for new titles not yet published.

Superseded ISBN: An ISBN that has been replaced by another, for the same title.

Teleordering: A UK based service that uses clearing house principals to electronically sort and route retailer and wholesaler orders (so they don't have to) to the correct publisher, distributor, wholesaler or library specialist.

TH: TRADACOMS Code List 54: Order Acknowledgement Codes: Temporary hold (e.g., to investigate a query on terms).

Thema: An international subject classification scheme for the book trade. Used to improve merchandising, discovery, sales and market intelligence.



Tip Ins: Title pages that are printed and sent to the author to sign, independent of the book. These are inserted into the book when bound by the printer. In the past, a tipped in page was often an illustration on special paper. Covid-19 isolation meant authors couldn't sign books easily, so Tip Ins rose in popularity.

TO: TRADACOMS Code List 54: Order Acknowledgment Codes: Only available to order (non-stock item).

TRADACOMS. Trading Data Communications Standard. A UK EDI standard that is still commonly used, though now superseded by EDIFACT. Used for the exchange of time, business or financially critical transactions in an automated and standardised form between computers.

TRADACOMS Code List 54: A document listing the various price & availability and order acknowledgement codes as well as their descriptions. The codes are used in P&A feeds and order acknowledgments to clarify the status of book products.

Trade Advance Order (subscription order). Booksellers' advance orders for new titles not yet published.

Trade Discount. As per the agreed commercial terms with the publisher, this is the percentage discount off the retail price that the bookseller is entitled to.

Trading Partner Agreement. This is an agreement between two parties (bookseller and supplier) for the physical supply of book and book related products. The agreement covers key commercial and operational aspects of the supply arrangement including how and when deliveries will be made, applicable costs and discounts.

TU: TRADACOMS Code List 54: Order Acknowledgement Codes: Temporarily unavailable but expected to be available again soon.

UC: TRADACOMS Code List 54: Order Acknowledgement Codes: Unavailable and may or may not become available again.

UKSLC: UK Standard Library Categories. A BIC maintained library subject classification scheme.

VAT: Value Added Tax. A consumption tax added to goods and services. Physical and digital books in the UK attract VAT. This is currently levied at 0%. Most physical and digital audiobooks attract VAT at the standard rate of 20%.

VAT Number: Value Added Tax. A unique identification number that is assigned to every business for the purposes of charging or reclaiming VAT.

Wholesaler: In the book industry, a business that has the attributes of a distributor and a retailer, and often acts as an intermediary between the two. Sources stock for quick order fulfilment. Not just large quantities of the faster selling titles, but wholesalers also source slower selling, specialist titles.



XML: Extensible markup language. A set of codes or tags that describes text in a digital document. The structured human/ computer readable format is used in the book industry for the latest standards such as ONIX, EPUB, EDItX and some application programming interfaces.

