



# BIC Ordering Best Practice

## The Value of Advanced Shipping Notices

**Copyright © 2022 Book Industry Communication Limited**

**Prepared by: Stephen Long, Book Industry Communication Limited, May 2022.**



*The Book Industry's Supply Chain Organisation*

An 'ASN' or 'advanced shipping notice' is an electronic document generated by distributors and wholesalers that provides information about upcoming deliveries of books to booksellers. It's the electronic version of the delivery note usually found in the box. Each ASN will relate to one consignment. It isn't an invoice, so there is no discount or cost price information. Nor does it provide the order status of backordered lines that can't yet be fulfilled.

ASNs do require both the sender and receiver of the document to have technical capabilities. The wholesaler or distributor needs to generate an electronic version of the paper delivery note, either from scratch or by spinning the inbound order or subsequently generated invoice into an ASN in a recognised electronic standard such as EDI or EDItX, or some other mutually agreed format. Likewise, the recipient of the ASN needs to receive the ASN, translate or interpret the data and use the information to populate the relevant fields in its EPoS system, accounts package or receiving software. ASNs that don't conform to an agreed or recognised standard are described as corrupt and cannot be processed, undermining the whole point of the electronic transaction.

Triggered at the point that the stock consignment leaves the supplier's warehouse, the value of the ASN is that it literally provides advance notice of deliveries that are on their way to the bookseller. The ASN is available to the bookseller prior to the consignment of stock arriving. It removes the need to manually input much of the product and transactional metadata such as ISBN13 and quantity required to update stock on hand information.

ASNs represent an efficient way for booksellers to compare the contents of a consignment received with an electronic delivery note on screen. They scan each book's barcode and see a running total of each ISBN as it is matched against the ASN. Once all books are checked in, any shortages are highlighted and can be readily reported to the supplier via manual or electronic means depending on system capabilities.

Physical and online bookstores are facing even more pressure to be efficient and responsive with limited resources. ASNs are a valuable way in which to help booksellers receive and merchandise stock speedily and accurately.

Ordinarily businesses will prioritise the processing of ASN accompanied deliveries over those requiring manual intervention. Whilst it is easy to check smaller consignments of stock against a paper delivery note, multi box consignments require greater effort and organisational skill.

Service providers such as MVB and Batch Ltd support ASN and invoice solutions. Key distributors and wholesalers such as Hachette Distribution UK, Gardners Books and Macmillan Distribution Ltd offer ASNs. These are a must for bookselling chains including Waterstones, as well as independents.

As a bookseller, if you aren't currently using ASNs to manage goods in processes, consider what capabilities your EPoS, stock management or accounts system requires to start doing so. Remember that regardless of your own system's capabilities, third parties may offer standalone and/ or web-based solutions that can help improve goods in efficiency.

If you are already using ASNs to speed up goods in processes, ask yourself whether there is even more value to be gained through extending the number of suppliers that provide ASNs to your business. Booksellers and suppliers alike are keen to reduce their reliance on paper invoices and delivery notes. Electronic versions can be delivered independently (and ahead) of stock consignments arriving at their destination. Receiving and merchandising stock quickly improves availability and maximises sales opportunities, potentially reducing returns.



Don't overlook issues with the accuracy and availability of ASNs where you are a recipient. Whilst these represent a very small percentage of the overall value and volume of ASNs handled every day, missing or corrupt shipping notes do have an adverse impact on efficiency.

Common issues such as missing or delayed ASNs, as well as ASNs with cancelled orders, excess quantities and substitute items can all be addressed and resolved in collaboration with your book supplier.

