

Checklist of systems requirements for small publisher/ distributors

Introduction

This checklist is intended to outline the functionality that small, self-distributing publishers are likely to require in order to conduct their business efficiently and comply with accepted trade practice. It should be used in conjunction with other support materials available from BIC, the International ISBN Agency, the Publishers Association and the Booksellers Association.

1. Product information

The publisher should maintain a database of all titles, published and unpublished, to which an ISBN has been allocated, capable of holding as a minimum the fields mandated by the BIC Basic Standard.

This information may be held in a proprietary spreadsheet or database program or in a preconfigured publishing system. It should be networked to allow multiple users to input or correct data subject to considerations of accuracy, security and authority.

Ideally this system should hold a listing of ISBNs assigned to the publisher to permit rapid allocation to new titles.

The publisher should be capable of outputting product information to the data aggregators and key customers in the ONIX standard format, if possible.

Publishers should be capable of assigning THEMA classifications to their titles; should obtain a GLN/ SAN (Global Location Number/ Standard Address Number) and BIC Publisher Discount Code.

The publisher must be able to maintain the price, availability and BIC Discount Code for each of the titles they have listed in their bibliographic database. Any significant changes must be supplied to the data aggregators and key customers as appropriate. Changes of publication date which occur before publication are important and should be notified to interested parties.

2. Sales order processing

Customer set-up

The publisher should hold a file of all customers within its accounting system with their GLN or SAN.

When a customer record is first created, the publisher must set up the correct discount, pricing and credit terms before the first order is processed.

Order receipt

Alerts and notifications regarding new orders will depend on the type of service being used. Aside from services such as TeleOrdering and PubEasy, the publisher may also be able to receive orders by FTP or EDI from major customers.

The publisher must also be able to enter orders manually which are received via phone and email.

Orders will be stored in an order book database. This must capture as a minimum the following information:

Header level

Internal order number

Date and time order received

Order receipt method for later statistical analysis

Customer account reference

Customer delivery point

Customer's purchase order number

Line level

ISBN/EAN13

Allow substitution Yes/No

Backorder/record dues Yes/No

Customer's line reference

Order quantity

Promotional pricing code (if applicable)

Hotline flag (if applicable)

Order statistics should be used to compile demand figures for each ISBN and forecast reprint requirements. Note: this demand records sales from the publisher to the bookshop, not net sales out of the bookshop to the end customer.

Each order received should be acknowledged using the customer's preferred method or that provided by the system by which it was supplied.

Order release (for picking and despatch)

When an order is received, a credit check should always be performed. The order should be held if it takes the customer over the preset credit limit.

Orders should be checked against price and availability information held and then picked and packed. Any changes in price and availability status should initiate an order acknowledgement giving details of the change to price or availability.

Backorder/dues files should be checked regularly.

Some customers may require electronic delivery notes to be sent in advance of despatch. Delivery notes should be generated when the books are picked and packed or when the system produces the invoices, as long as a quality control check is done to ensure that delivery notes match actual deliveries.

3. Invoicing

The publisher should be able to use existing order documentation and data held as product information to create electronic invoices without rekeying.

The price must be taken from the price and availability inventory and the discount must be established by looking up the BIC Discount Code for each item and cross-referencing it with the customer. The only pricing information the publisher should be able to enter manually at invoicing time should be carriage costs or other surcharges.

If the publisher despatches the order via a carrier that supports tracking, it should be possible to enter parcel numbers and carrier information against the invoice so that this can be sent with electronic invoice.

The customer's preferences must be taken into account when invoicing.

Backorders (Dues)

The publisher must be able to re-acknowledge backorders if specified by the customer.

The publisher must be able to monitor the number of backorders to help plan reprints.

The publisher must be able to undertake the electronic order cancellation of any order line still on backorder. The process for receiving cancellations is essentially the same as for receiving new orders although the data message will specifically denote a cancellation rather than an order.

4. Returns and claims processing

If the publisher supplies books on a sale or return basis, it must be possible to receive electronic returns requests, allocate a returns authorisation number (RAN), send authorisations and receive returns despatch advice messages. The credit value should be calculated automatically by reference to previous sales invoices.

The system must also be able to support non-conformance (damaged or incorrect books etc.) returns and claims. Non-conformance claims which are accepted should automatically raise a sales ledger credit, which will be transmitted to the customer.

The publisher must be able to support the physical receipt of returns against a RAN and create and transmit the appropriate credit to the customer.

5. Accounting

Accounting functionality must be sufficient to service all the bookkeeping and accounting needs of small to medium sized publishers. The functionality should be roughly in line with that in Sage Line50, but it should be noted that Sage is a generic accounting system which is not tailored specifically to the book industry and small publishers.

The key functionality is as follows:

- Sales ledger
- Credit control
- Cash sales
- Purchase ledger
- Purchase order processing
- General ledger
- Bank records and bank reconciliation
- VAT management