



BIC Digital Audiobook Best Practice

Good File Management

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June 2023 Version 1.0

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This document is one of a set that Book Industry Communication has produced. Together, these provide a detailed standards and best practice overview of the digital audiobook supply chain.

BIC strongly recommends that you download and read the full set of documents. These currently comprise:

1. Supply Chain Diagram
2. Glossary, including
 - a. Terminology
 - b. Organisations
 - c. Roles and Responsibilities
3. Metadata Requirements
4. Good File Management
5. FAQs
6. EDItX Business Case
7. Sustainability Checklist
8. Accessibility Checklist

A single document including all of the above is also available.

One of the major challenges in the digital audio supply chain is how to optimise the management of the digital asset, the related metadata and any supplementary material, collectively, the digital audiobook. Usually, this is the responsibility of the publisher (or originator) of the audio asset and product information.

“Good file management” extends beyond the publisher’s obligations to the asset and product metadata. It involves ensuring the publisher’s compliance with the submission requirements of their audiobook platform partners, resellers, retailers and other intermediaries. Whilst BIC doesn’t capture and maintain these submission requirements in detail, it does highlight the common issues that can be easily avoided. See below.

Each asset, product record and set of related collateral will have files and folders in which everything resides. Where these files are currently in the supply chain will give a good indication of what will happen to them on the next stage of their supply chain journey. This assumes that there will be no unforeseen issues, errors or delays requiring correction and update.

Inevitably, there will be ad hoc problems to address. Stakeholders need to be aware of the potential implications for managing assets, product information and collateral.

The purpose of this document is to establish and describe what “good file management” looks like from the point at which a studio hands over the digital audio master files to a publisher, through to the final product being available for sale, loan, download or stream by the end consumer via a platform, retailer, reseller or vendor.

“Good file management” is the set of principles that governs the management of digital assets, the related metadata and any support materials. It will deliver the best results and is recognised as doing so.

Different organisations will have different criteria for establishing and measuring these results. For example:

- Productivity
- Costs
- Organisation
- Automation
- Collaboration
- Security
- Accessibility
- Accountability
- Consistency
- Sustainability

[continued overleaf]

“Good file management” recognises that there are various stages in the lifecycle of the digital audiobook. These include file creation, distribution, acceptance and quality assurance. The latter happens at various stages in the audiobook’s lifecycle and may necessitate a partial or complete update of the audiobook, including metadata and supplementary materials, if specific requirements are not met.

Good File Management Principles

The “good file management” principles laid out below recognise that the digital audiobook supply chain comprises a wide variety of businesses with different organisational structures, workflows, dependencies and resources.

- 1). Agree and be consistent in file naming conventions, such as *ISBN_FILE#.FILE TYPE*. Put the file name inside the ONIX record where possible. At a minimum, file names should contain the ISBN of the asset.
- 2). In addition to master files, consider how many lossless and lossy file types are needed to meet downstream partners’ requirements.
- 3). Keep digital assets, the related metadata and any supplementary materials together in one folder. This may include asset manifests, cover images, pdfs, sidecar files and sample files.
- 4). Ensure that all files are relevant to the product. Discard or archive superfluous files.
- 5). Reflect updates to digital assets, the related metadata and any support materials as soon as possible after the updated files have been made available.

Ensure downstream partners accept and apply these updates (or replace files) in a timely manner, in their entirety and in the right order. This ensures that no partner gains an unfair competitive advantage. Archive earlier versions of files.

Remember that it is common for all files in an audio asset to be replaced, even if changes have only been made to one of the files in the asset.

- 6). Use ONIX block updates where the metadata sender and recipient have the capability to use these, rather than sending full records.
- 7). Ensure quality control takes place. Feed back any issues before the audiobooks are made available to digital distributors, platforms and vendors. This avoids the need to retrospectively apply updates or replace files later.
- 8). Ensure that legacy files, those subject to quality control or works in progress do not enter the supply chain. Use version control to establish that only final (confirmed) master files are available and accessible. All corrections and specific submission requirements such as bit rate and file formats need to be accounted for.
- 9). Be clear about expectations such as quality assurance, delivery mechanisms and timescales.
- 10). Use secure storage and transfer methods. Consider the implications of digital piracy.
- 11). It is possible to embed metadata in digital asset files. Users must remember that whilst this product information may be minimal, it will still require regular update and validation to

ensure that any changes to the full product record are accurately reflected in the embedded data. This will avoid potential conflicts should there be more than one source of product information.

12). Consider the aftercare needs of downstream partners. You may wish to monitor the status of audiobook assets. Is the product showing the correct availability status? Is the product information up to date? Take action where shortcomings are found. This helps ensure the best experience for the end consumer.

Much of this ad hoc, manual work can be removed by the adoption of the EDItX Inventory Status Report.

Audiobook Requirements

Detailed submission requirements will vary by trading partner. Below are the most common requirements. These should be agreed in advance between the sender and receiver of the digital asset, metadata and related collateral:

- All tracks of the audiobook should be in the same format (such as mp3, wav, etc.).
- All tracks of the audiobook must have a consistent bit rate and depth.
- All tracks of the audiobook must have a consistent sampling rate and meet the trading partner's requirements (usually 44.1kHz).
- Tracks of the audiobook may not be a combination of mono and stereo files. Mono files are strongly recommended for single voice recordings and stereo for multi voice recordings.
- Files (component parts) must be named in accordance with and match the associated file manifest (Block 8 in ONIX or an Excel/ CSV document). The convention used should adhere to the trading partner's requirements. Where files are numbered, file numbering sequences must be consecutive. Beware of characters to avoid in file names such as colons and slashes.
- Track duration (minimum and maximum) requirements will vary by trading partner and may also be dependent on the type of audiobook (e.g., poetry) or the track content (e.g., introduction). It is common to have an upper track limit of ~79 minutes. The actual track duration of any file should match that included in the metadata.

Some recipients have specific requirements about:

- Maximum length of seconds of silence.
- Relative loudness.
- Average and peak volume.
- Noise floor limits.
- Accessibility and high contrast audio.

Image Requirements:

- Image files are usually supplied in the jpeg format.
- Image colour space must be RGB (screen standard). Embed an ICC colour profile if possible.
- The minimum pixel specification is 2,400 x 2,400, although this is vendor dependent.
- Images must be square.