



# **BIC Digital Audiobook Best Practice**

## **Sustainability Checklist**

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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.

With thanks to Andri Johnston, Digital Sustainability Lead at Cambridge University Press & Assessment, for her support and guidance.

A journal article published by Andri and colleagues at Carnstone summarises the impact of digital publishing on sustainability at Cambridge University Press & Assessment. This was a useful point of reference.

### **What does sustainability mean?**

In BIC's Digital Audiobook Best Practice Project, we have defined sustainability as:

*"... balancing the economic, societal and environmental needs of the planet, both now and in the future. There is a heightened awareness of how our behaviours as consumers, employees and private individuals can adversely impact the planet."*

### **Who controls sustainability?**

Sustainability encompasses more than just environmental concerns. As supply chain professionals involved in content creation and distribution, we need to consider our roles as consumers and private individuals. So, it seems obvious that no single entity is in control. Sustainability requires collaboration. It's a team effort.

### **Points to consider**

Rather than concentrate on how to measure sustainability, this document focuses on those aspects of digital audiobook content creation, management, discoverability and distribution that impact sustainability.

Evidence suggests that digital publishing produces fewer carbon emissions than traditional print publishing. That said, as digital publishing evolves, the use of audio and visual content will grow. Data volumes will be larger than those associated with straightforward eBooks.

Here is BIC's checklist of useful points to reflect on when trying to enhance the sustainability credentials of your current digital audiobook supply chain:

- 1). The human ear cannot distinguish the highest quality uncompressed, lossless audio.
  - a). What does the optimum user experience sound like?
  - b). Is there another lossless or lossy format that will do the job as well?
  - c). What are the implications for your preferred audio file format?
  
- 2). Uncompressed and lossless files require greater bandwidth, potentially increasing transfer, storage and cloud processing costs.
  - a). Is this necessary?
  - b). Are the current processes around file management as efficient as they could be?
  
- 3). Our industry's approach to metadata management usually means updating whole product records quite frequently, even if only limited data elements within the record have changed.
  - a). Do records need to be updated so often, particularly if downstream partners do not always apply those updates?
  - b). Do ONIX block updates provide a more efficient and sustainable way of updating product records?

[continued overleaf]

4). Can cover images and other supplementary materials be optimised for the end consumer? Optimised does not necessarily mean of the highest quality. What impact will that have on sustainability and the consumer experience?

5). Think about what the most robust audio format is for your business needs. Optimum audio quality as well as file durability for on-going supply and reproduction matter.

6). Harnessing recognised industry standards and best practice to aid automation could remove ad hoc and/ or manual processes, as well as positively impact sustainability. Think of the resources required to manually check the status of digital audiobook assets and metadata on individual reseller and retailer platforms and websites: hosting services, communications networks, the internet and viewing devices to name but a few.

7). 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. Ensure that all files are relevant to the product. Discard or archive superfluous files to reduce storage overheads.