BIC Bites

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Introduction to Pricing in ONIX

The clear communication of pricing between publishers, data aggregators, retailers and other interested parties is a key process for businesses. A full range of pricing information can be provided by a publisher within an ONIX message, expressing either simple or more complex price models, market- or even customer-specific pricing. However, other sources of price data may also need to be taken into account, including any price and availability feeds from third-party suppliers (e.g. a distributor).

Basics of Pricing

Although a wide variety of price data can be expressed in ONIX, the structure of *how* these prices are expressed follows some underlying rules. Each price composite (the ONIX XML tags which form the full data element comprising a Price) will normally include at least:

- the Price type (what kind of price it is, e.g. RRP, FRP (fixed retail price), wholesale, library, agency pricing)
- the Price amount and denomination (the Currency)
- any appropriate Tax details (and this can include mixed rates for book / audiobook bundles if necessary)
- the Territory (the country or countries where the price is valid)

If a product is going to be made available in a particular country, pricing for that country should be included within the ONIX message.

More complex price composites may also include:

- relevant trade discount terms (expressed as a percentage, or more likely, coded for confidentiality)
- Dates when the price is valid (e.g. this is a price that will be applied from some date in the future)
- Price type qualifiers, for example limiting the customer type for which the price is intended
- Price conditions (e.g. simultaneous or prior purchase of another product [perhaps for bundling])
- Constraints and licensing (particularly for digital products, including rentals)

Price composites are *repeatable* for each supplier of the product, and within each separate market, which allows a variety of prices to be supplied within a single product record. This enables the publisher to communicate all the information their customers might be looking for, at once, rather than sending separate information to each customer depending on their specific needs. Each customer can then identify the price that applies to *them*, and ignore the others. This could be done automatically by the system which ingests the ONIX metadata. It is important that there is no ambiguity within the prices, and that no two prices apply to exactly the same circumstances.

The ONIX Price composite

The <Price> composite within Block 6 of ONIX 3.0 and 3.1 is where the information about individual prices is located within the overall ONIX Product record. For one single product, it's common to have multiple Price composites, either with the same type of price covering different geographical territories and currencies served by the supplier, or with different types of pricing. Remember too that there can be multiple suppliers within a single market, and the product's sales rights may allow distribution and sale in multiple markets.

One price can be used for multiple countries, assuming the same price applies, but if relevant pricing is omitted, this can cause confusion within the supply chain. However, individual prices do not *have* to be supplied in the local currency for each country: the price quoted may simply be the price that forms the basis of B2B transactions. For example, on a product for which a UK publisher is exercising World rights, they may choose to supply two recommended retail prices – for home and export sales – but both denominated in Sterling, with territories that together account for the whole world, as overleaf:

```
<Price>
    <PriceType>02</PriceType>                          <!-- 'Home' RRP including tax -->
    <PriceAmount>9.95</PriceAmount>
    <Tax>
        <TaxType>01</TaxType>                          <!-- VAT -->
        <TaxRateCode>Z</TaxRateCode>
        <TaxRatePercent>0</TaxRatePercent>             <!-- at zero percent -->
        <TaxableAmount>9.95</TaxableAmount>            <!-- Taxable amount plus -->
        <TaxAmount>0.00</TaxAmount>                    <!-- Tax amount = Price amount -->
    </Tax>
    <CurrencyCode>GBP</CurrencyCode>                   <!-- Pounds Sterling -->
    <Territory>
        <CountriesIncluded>GB IM</CountriesIncluded> <!-- Valid for United Kingdom and -->
    </Territory>                                       <!-- Isle of Man -->
</Price>
<Price>
    <PriceType>01</PriceType>                          <!-- 'Export' RRP excluding tax -->
    <PriceAmount>8.95</PriceAmount>
    <CurrencyCode>GBP</CurrencyCode>                   <!-- No tax detail, as it varies -->
    <Territory>                                        <!-- from country to country -->
        <RegionsIncluded>WORLD</RegionsIncluded>       <!-- Valid everywhere except -->
        <CountriesExcluded>GB IM</CountriesExcluded> <!-- United Kingdom, Isle of Man -->
    </Territory>
</Price>
```

These two Price composites above include little more than the minimum information, but adding further detail increases the specificity of the price. For example, a product for the trade usually includes trade discount detail. The academic market may need to express Library or Licence pricing in a variety of currencies. This would be done by repeating the Price composite for each independent price, changing the codes used to describe the Price type, and adding tags to include extra information about any associated terms of use. Supplying all the relevant information for each price enables resellers to look for precisely the price that applies to them or their end customers.

Price changes

As well as communicating the *current* price for a product, the Price composite also allows *future* prices. This is done by including the date the current price ends, or the date from which the new price is effective, within the Price composites for each of the two prices in question. The dates are *inclusive* so if one ends on the 27th of the month, the other begins from the 28th.

Free of charge products

Free-of-charge products often still need to be supplied with a Price composite, but it is *never* correct to do this by supplying <PriceAmount> as zero. Instead, a different tag should be used: <UnpricedItemType>. This tag can be used *in place of* a <Price> composite if the product is always free in all circumstances, or *within* a <Price> composite, so it still communicates all other restrictions (for example, a product can be free-of-charge for Canada, but conventionally priced in all other territories).

Further Information

There is a great deal more information available about pricing and how to communicate prices for different business models in ONIX 3.0 and 3.1 from EDItEUR via its website at https://www.editeur.org, in particular the Application Note *Pricing in ONIX 3.0*, parts 1 and 2 (DOI:10.4400/wctk) and the *ONIX Implementation and Best Practice Guide* (DOI: 10.4400/zuim). BIC also runs occasional *Pricing workshops* and intensive training including the ONIX *Essentials* and *Advanced* courses.

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