

ONIX for Books

Product Information Message

Application Note: Audiobook products in ONIX

Right now, audio is one of the growth areas of the book publishing scene, with that growth concentrated in digital audio – the market for physical audiobooks on cassette or CD is contracting, but perhaps slower than the digital market is expanding.

The switch from physical to digital is also associated with a change of demographics – the typical audiobook buyer is no longer skewed so strongly towards older females – and perhaps also with a change in the most active genres.

Can I use ONIX to describe my audiobooks as well as my print and e-books?

Yes. ONIX allows you to give very clear details about audiobooks. Whether they are physical or digital products, there is a way to describe the product in a standard ONIX message or Product record – using either the latest version 3.0 or the old ONIX 2.1. And you can have a mix of print, e-, physical audio and digital-audio in the same ONIX data feed.

Most of the metadata for an audiobook – title, author, ISBN, subject and audience, promotional text, sales rights, cover image, pub date, distribution and pricing are all the same as for a typical hardback or paperback, but there are a few differences and a couple of extra data elements that are important.

So where do I start?

The most important data element in ONIX is <ProductForm>. Where a typical physical book might use product form code BB or BC (hardback or paperback), there are a handful of product form codes specifically for audio material. The most common are:

AB	Cassette
AC	CD-audio
AE	Audio disc
AJ	Downloadable audio file
AM	LP (analogue vinyl disc)

Code AC is specifically for so-called Red Book CDs (and very occasionally for SACD). AE is used for data CDs (so-called Yellow Book discs) carrying mp3 files.

What if it's a streamed rather than a downloaded audio file?

You can use code AO for an audiobook that is only available as a streamed file, or AN if available both streamed and as a download.

If it's digital audio, how do I specify the file type?

In ONIX 3.0, the file format is specified in <ProductFormDetail>. This is a repeatable field, so many different details can be listed for the same product. You might use:

AC	A101	CD-standard audio
	A102	SACD super audio format (this is very rare)
AE or AJ	A103	mp3 files
	A107	AAC files

Bear in mind that the file format should be the format of the final product, not of the file that you send to a digital file distributor – *that* file is ideally CD-quality audio in a WAV, AIFF or other uncompressed format, but is usually too large for commercial distribution.

<ProductFormDetail> is also used to describe whether the recording is mono or stereo. This could obviously apply to any of the file types:

A410	Mono (includes 'stereo' where the two channels are identical)
A420	Stereo
A421	2.1 Stereo (with low-frequency channel)
A451	5.1 Surround sound

It's not usually necessary to state the bit rate of mp3 or AAC files in the ONIX.

Should I list the narrator or performer?

Yes. You do this alongside the author of an audiobook, using the <Contributor> ONIX tag. So where you might have: ¹

```
<Contributor>
  <SequenceNumber>1</SequenceNumber>
  <ContributorRole>A01</ContributorRole>    <!-- written by -->
  <PersonNameInverted>Dickens, Charles</PersonNameInverted>
</Contributor>
```

you should also add:

```
<Contributor>
  <SequenceNumber>2</SequenceNumber>
  <ContributorRole>E07</ContributorRole>    <!-- read by -->
  <PersonNameInverted>Callow, Simon</PersonNameInverted>
</Contributor>
```

E07 is the conventional code to use for the ‘reader’ of a single-voice audiobook (even though there is a separate code E03 for ‘narrator’ – see below for how to use this).

The examples above are really only for demonstration – there should usually be much more information about each contributor, including fuller name detail, perhaps an ISNI or a proprietary identifier, a biography and so on.

What about multi-voice and dramatized recordings?

If there’s a cast of voices, you can use multiple contributors with the E07 code, but for dramatized recordings you can use E01 (Actor) and in addition you are likely to have a Director (D02), or you might use codes B05 or B22 to name the person that adapted or dramatized the work. And if a recorded performance has a narrator, *this* is where you use E03... Think Stephen Fry’s narration of the BBC dramatization of *Vanity Fair*, with Emma Fielding as Becky Sharp. Where there are multiple contributors, you use <SequenceNumber> to ensure they are listed in the right order.

If it’s a recording of a single voice performance that isn’t a ‘reading’ (for example a recording of a comedy show), then you could use E99 (Performer).

The other way you should distinguish dramatized performances (as contrasted with simple readings of a book) is using <PrimaryContent>: ²

01	Audiobook	for a reading of a book or other text
02	Spoken word performance	for a recorded drama or other performance

There are some specialized codes that can be used with <PrimaryContent> and <ProductContent> too:

13	Other speech	for recorded interviews
03	Music recording	for music (obviously), but including musical drama and opera
04	Other audio	other sound recordings (for example, CDs of birdsong)

My audiobook is in Spanish, but the reader is Argentine, so her accent means the book is suitable only for other Argentine listeners. Can I make it clear isn’t aimed at Mexican, Cuban or Iberian Spanish listeners?

Yes. You could use something like this:

```
<Language>
  <LanguageRole>01</LanguageRole>
  <LanguageCode>spa</LanguageCode>
</Language>
<Language>
  <LanguageRole>08</LanguageRole>
  <LanguageCode>spa</LanguageCode>
  <CountryCode>AR</CountryCode>
</Language>
```

¹ These examples are illustrative and may not be complete

² <PrimaryContent> is for the most important content of a product, but secondary content can also be listed using <ProductContent>. In ONIX 2.1, <ProductContent> is used for all content, whether primary or secondary

Language role 01 means the book is written in Spanish, and language role 08 is the language of the audio. Of course they are the same, but the extra role makes it clear that although the *written* book might be suitable for Cuban or Mexican readers – broadly, any Spanish reader – the *audiobook* is more specifically Argentine.³

You mentioned ‘adapted’. My audiobooks are abridged

Because many audiobooks are abridged, it’s important to ensure the consumer knows what they are buying. So it’s always best practice to state whether it’s abridged or unabridged. In ONIX, these use the <EditionType> tag, so you might have:

```
<EditionType>UBR</EditionType> <!-- unabridged -->
```

Use code ABR for abridged.

Now, abridgement is just one type of adaptation. Edition type code ADP can also be used, for dramatizations, novelizations and other adaptations. It’s good practice to ensure that all audiobooks use one of these three codes.

What else is important?

Just as printed books have an extent, the running time of an audiobook is important to potential buyers and listeners. The simplest and most important way of specifying the running time in ONIX is this:

```
<Extent>
  <ExtentType>09</ExtentType>
  <ExtentValue>645</ExtentValue>
  <ExtentUnit>05</ExtentUnit>
</Extent>
```

The example above shows an audiobook that’s 645 minutes long. You could also specify the same amount of time as 10.75 hours (the Extent unit code would be 04), or as 01045 (unit code 15 – HHHmm).

If you wish, you can break down the running time into introductory matter, the body of the audiobook and any following content such as credits, just as a printed book comprises prelims, body and end-matter – but its only worth doing this if the prelims and end matter make up a large proportion of the total running time. You would use multiple repeats of the <Extent> structure, with Extent type codes 13, 14 or 15 respectively. And if your audiobook is on CD, or maybe as a set of mp3 files that correspond to CD tracks, then it’s also possible to specify how many tracks there are. Conventionally each track is three to five minutes, so it’s a kind of ‘proxy’ for the running time, but this should wherever possible be provided *in addition to* a conventional extent in minutes.

My 11 hour audiobook is on ten CDs. Do I need to do anything special to list the number of discs?

Yes. At the very least, you should list your product in the usual way (ignoring that it comprises several components), and add a <ProductFormDescription> data element that says ‘10 discs’. But the recommended practice is (also) to describe your product as a *multi-component product* (that is, using <ProductComposition> code 10) and you then use <ProductPart> and <NumberOfItemsOfThisForm> to specify how many components there are:

```
<ProductComposition>10</ProductComposition>
<ProductForm>SA</ProductForm>
<ProductFormDescription>10 discs</ProductFormDescription>
<!-- some tags omitted -->
<ProductPart>
  <!-- discs not individually identified -->
  <ProductForm>AC</ProductForm>
  <ProductFormDetail>A101</ProductFormDetail>
  <NumberOfItemsOfThisForm>5</NumberOfItemsOfThisForm>
</ProductPart>
```

³ In the strictest sense, the composite using code 01 is unnecessary for an audiobook, but recipients may not be ‘looking for’ code 08, so including both is ‘belt and braces’

You should also think about how your product is packaged. This uses the `<ProductPackaging>`. If the ten CDs are in a single plastic case, then you might include something like this:

```
...
<ProductPackaging>19</ProductPackaging> <!-- rigid plastic case -->
<ProductFormDescription>10 discs in plastic case</ProductFormDescription>
...
```

However, there could well be multiple layers of packaging, for example, each of the ten CDs in individual jewel cases, then all ten are packed in a single board slip-case, which is then shrinkwrapped:

```
<ProductComposition>10</ProductComposition>
<ProductForm>SD</ProductForm> <!-- shrinkwrapped -->
<ProductPackaging>19</ProductPackaging> <!-- rigid plastic case -->
<ProductFormDescription>10 discs in jewel cases</ProductFormDescription>
<ProductPackaging>11</ProductPackaging> <!-- slip case -->
<!-- measure tags omitted -->
<ProductPart>
  <!-- discs not individually identified -->
  <ProductForm>AC</ProductForm>
  <ProductFormDetail>A101</ProductFormDetail>
  <ProductPackaging>05</ProductPackaging> <!-- jewel case -->
  <NumberOfItemsOfThisForm>5</NumberOfItemsOfThisForm>
</ProductPart>
```

Remember that the product measurements should be the overall dimensions of the product including packaging (*ie* should, in this example, be the outer dimensions of the slip case).

How can I 'link' my audiobook to the printed copy or e-book?

By using `<RelatedProduct>`, just as you would link the hardback to the paperback, the 2nd edition to the 3rd (and the 1st), or the illustrated to the non-illustrated. In the record for the audiobook, you could have:

```
<RelatedProduct>
  <ProductRelationCode>06</ProductRelationCode> <!-- other format -->
  <ProductIdentifier>
    <ProductIDType>15</ProductIDType>
    <IDValue>9780001234567</IDValue> <!-- ISBN of other format -->
  </ProductIdentifier>
</RelatedProduct>
```

If 9780001234567 is the paperback, you'd use another repeat of the same structure to link to the ISBN of the hardback, and a third to link to an e-book version.

Is that it?

All the other metadata is more or less like that for a printed book – and is often more or less identical to the ONIX for the equivalent hardback or paperback. You should include all the usual data for marketing collateral, sales rights, pricing and so on in the same way as you would for a book or e-book.

EDItEUR
6/8/2017
Updated 5/6/2018