

## General Guidelines on Claims

This document is intended for use by anyone involved in improving the efficiency of the serials information supply chain, in particular, libraries, publishers and agents.

Claims are a headache for librarians, agents and publishers alike and, in an imperfect world, are unlikely to ever disappear completely. However, subscription agents and other information intermediaries are doing much to alleviate the problem by providing a prompt, accurate and comprehensive claims service, supported by regular progress reports.

Increasingly agents are facilitating access to their systems to enable libraries to make claims and monitor the progress of each claim online. Likewise, publishers are providing agents with up-to-date publication status reports and dispatch dates, increasingly in electronic format. This information enables agents to block premature claims and provide an immediate status report to the librarian, saving the library and the publisher time, and reducing the administrative burden of claims. Possibilities for communication of dispatch data to agents by publishers can be radically improved by using the [ONIX for Serials SRN](#) (Serials Release Notice) standard. The ASA strongly encourages use of this standard by publishers and agents, to convey both publication schedules and the dispatch or release dates of individual journal issues.

Two older standards already exist for communicating claims information between agents and publishers. These are the EDifact messages OSTENQ (order status enquiry, for making claims) and ORDRSP (order status response, for sending claims responses). To bring these channels up to date, ICEDIS intends to launch a Claims Management project at its October meeting in Frankfurt. One likely outcome is the production of a new generation of XML Claims and Claims Responses messages<sup>1</sup>.

### When to Claim

There can be no set formula for when and when not to claim. The best guide is the customer's experience of the release pattern of previous issues of the title being claimed. What is important is that claims should be done on a regular basis as many publishers have a time limit during which they will replace claimed issues free of charge. It is worth noting that in most countries, publishers and agents have a legal duty to supply or refund all the issues paid for in a subscription as for any other product purchased in advance.

The following schedule may be used as a very general guide to when librarians should claim for online and printed serials. In the case of printed serials, librarians are advised to make appropriate allowances for the country of origin of the publication for which they are claiming:

- Dailies - claim after ten days from access to/receipt of last issue.
- Weeklies - claim after two weeks from access to/receipt of last issue.
- Monthlies - claim after two months from access to/receipt of last issue.
- Quarterlies - claim after five months from access to/receipt of last issue.

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<sup>1</sup> This document will be updated to reflect these developments

## Reasons for Claims

There are many reasons for claims but these are the most common - in no particular order.

- The customer's original instructions were unclear.
- The agent has made an error.
- Inefficiencies in the publisher's office, e.g. failure to process payments correctly, incorrect address labels, and problems with multiple subscriptions
- Multi-year subscriptions with access cut off after first year. This is quite a common problem.
- Under-printing, i.e. the publisher has too few copies of a single issue to meet the needs of subscribers.
- Inefficient checking-in at the library, failure to record change of title, etc. (we would suggest this is not a suitable task for inexperienced or temporary staff).
- Poorly configured library management systems which generate premature or invalid claims.
- Industrial disputes, revolution, wars, sanctions and natural disasters etc

## Premature and invalid claims

Publishers maintain that a high proportion of missing issues eventually arrive or are subsequently found, and for this reason some of them automatically reject first claims if, from their records, it appears that the copy was correctly sent. Other publishers require proof of payment before they will deal with a claim. This is one of the reasons why agents discourage claiming direct.

Some parties – libraries and agents - have been known to claim excessively and even fraudulently. Publishers should of course be wary of any party making excessive claims. Members of the ASA have signed up to the ASA Guidelines on good practice which specifically condemns this practice. The ASA and its members are keen to assist publishers stamp out such dubious business practices wherever they can.

## Compensation for missing issues

The extension of a subscription to compensate for missing issues is a poor substitute for the issues themselves, as is a refund of that part of the subscription; neither of these options are favoured by librarians. If it is a particularly important journal most agents will try to obtain a second-hand copy, (although this may be a lengthy business).