A Vendor's Guide to Kobo

Disclosure and Confidentiality

Kobo Vendor Guide Contents

About Kobo

Kobo is a global eBook retailer that believes in supplying consumers with any book, anytime, anywhere, on any device. We believe the opportunity for eReading is global and we are focused upon rapidly expanding our global presence, both in terms of the content in our store and the customers that we reach. Kobo is currently available in more than 175 countries and counting, with over 2.3 million eBooks to browse. If you own the digital rights to your content - be it one title, a thousand titles, or more - we encourage you to consider selling your content through Kobo.

Please take some time to review the following Vendor Guide, it will provide you with information regarding Kobo's technical requirements, payment methods, security methods, and the submission of eBooks to Kobo.

Becoming a Kobo Vendor

Here's what you can expect to happen before your content is up and running on Kobo:

1. Once you have read through this document in detail, fill out the Vendor Questionnaire and return it to the Vendor Coordinator at content@kobo.com at your earliest convenience.

2. After receiving your completed questionnaire, we will use your information to assess the best way to make your content available through Kobo.

3. Once we have completed our assessment we will get in touch with you to discuss commercial terms and other important aspects of our contract.

4. After your contract is signed, we will provide you with the details of an FTP account where you can send us your files (including detailed instructions about how to upload content onto our server).

5. Next, your account will be transitioned to one of our content managers who will assist you with the file upload process and in managing your content at Kobo. Assuming that there are no problems with your files or the upload process, your content should be available for purchase on site within 3 weeks!

Content Matters

The purpose of this section is to provide you with some information regarding the files we need to receive from you in order to get your books into our store. To comprise one eBook offering, Kobo requires the submission of information within two separate files, a digital copy of the book itself and a file containing all the information about the book.

Book Files: We require our vendors to submit their content files (the book itself) using the ePub file format. Why? Because ePub files are adaptable; they allow us to distribute your content across the widest array of channels and supported devices.

Information Files: Though not as exciting or interesting as anything readers will find in your eBooks, Kobo also requires the submission of a separate metadata file. Metadata is critical for getting every eBook up for sale; right side up, with all the information readers will need to find it intact. Currently we accept two metadata file types, ONIX and Excel (though our preference is for ONIX).

Kobo Approved ePubs

The structure of your ePub will largely determine whether or not Kobo successfully interprets and renders your file. In general, if the ePubs have the text for each chapter/section in separate HTML files and they are valid up to a [version 2.0.1 checker](), then we won't have any issues processing them. Kobo can provide you with an example of a well-constructed ePub file if necessary!

When submitting an ePub file, we expect the following set of criteria to be followed:

- Each chapter/section within the ePub is separated into its own html/xml file
- All chapters/sections are respectively referenced within the OPF file
    - The **<manifest>** section should reference all the individual files representing chapter/section content
    - The **<spine>** section should then take the chapters/sections in the **<manifest>**, and be ordered in the way you want it to appear from beginning to end
- All chapters/sections are clearly defined within the NCX file with its corresponding title
    - Each **<navPoint>**, which represents a chapter/section, should have a corresponding title
    - Each **<navPoint>** should reference an existing file within the ePub
- Each ePub file is sent with a corresponding cover image
- The ISBN for the book is labelled in various areas;
    - ePub Filename (eg. 9781234567890.epub)
    - OPF, in the **<metadata>** section within **<dc:identifier>** (**<dc:identifier>**9781234567890**</dc:identifier>**)
    - Cover image filename (eg. 9781234567890.jpg)
- Use decimal entities in favour of character entities (use " in favour of ")
- Text encoding should all be in UTF-8 (this can be checked in the OPF, the first line should be **"<?xml version="1.0" encoding="UTF-8" ?>"**

The Importance of Metadata

Without properly configured metadata, your books won't go up in our store with the right title, author, price, description, etc. A successful upload of your content to Kobo requires metadata to be submitted in one of the following formats:

1. In the **ONIX** feed format (containing a .XML file extension, i.e. "filename.xml")
2. In an **Excel file** (please note, we only accept .xls files; not .xlsx, i.e. "filename.xls")

Kobo's preferred format for metadata is ONIX, international standard for computer-to-computer communication about books. However, for Vendors who are still transitioning into ONIX or are unfamiliar with metadata, Kobo can make available our own Excel metadata template after your contract is signed.

These formats vary slightly in terms of the 'control' they allow when submitting and updating your eBooks. Excel metadata templates are unique for each retailer; not all retailers will require the same information or use the same column headings in their template. This means that you have to manually create an Excel file every time you submit your eBooks. If you use ONIX, you are able to create one file that can be sent to multiple retailers -- streamlining your workflow and making your operations more efficient. No matter which format you use to submit your eBook metadata, Kobo requires the following information; otherwise the upload of your eBook will fail:

Title	The name of the eBook itself
eISBN	This is Kobo's term which refers to the ISBN (international Standard Book Number) assigned specifically to the digital edition of your title
Contributor(s)	The author or editor name(s)
Description	A synopsis of the book providing a description of its contents.
Publisher	The name of the copyright holder of the work
Language	The language in which the eBook is written
Territorial Rights	The countries in which the book will be available for sale
Suggested Retail Price (SRP)	Vendors must provide their SRP prices in USD, CAD, GBP, AUD, or NZ currency. All other currencies should be listed with their associated country code under a separate field titled "Other Currency"
Publication Date	The date on which the book was first published, or the date on which the eBook was, or will be first made available
BISAC or BIC Code	Subject Categorization Codes

(See the "Excel Required Fields" table below for more detailed information concerning the requirements for completing Kobo's Excel metadata template)

ONIX Metadata

Using the ONIX standard ensures that all parties involved in the publishing of your eBook can understand the information you're sending. Most publishers use databases with an ONIX export option to create their ONIX files. You can also work with a data aggregator who will provide ONIX files as a data service. For more information, visit BookNet Canada's pages on Biblio Tools and ONIX 101.

Excel Metadata

If you decide to provide Excel metadata, we'll send you our *Excel Metadata Template* after you sign your contract with Kobo. The template has 5 tabs: (1) the metadata template which you will fill in, (2) an example of a completed metadata template (3) instructions for filling out each field, (4) Appendix A – a list of territory codes and (5) Appendix B – language, currency, and encryption codes.

If you are submitting your metadata in the Excel file format, please ensure that you include all of the following required fields:

eISBN	**The 13-digit ISBN for the eBook being submitted. Please note that this must be a unique ISBN – you cannot use the same ISBN that you have for the print version of your book.**
Title	The title as it should appear on site and within apps. Please do not append "A" or "The" to the end of the title, as it may interfere with search functions, e.g. "A Christmas Carol", NOT "Christmas Carol, A".
Contributor(s)	Contributor name formatted as: Firstname Lastname, e.g. "William Shakespeare" NOT "Shakespeare, William". Separate multiple authors/contributors using a comma, e.g.: "Christopher Marlowe, William Shakespeare".
Description	Full description of eBook as it should appear on site.
Publisher	Name of publisher as it should appear on site. This is what will appear on the eBooks' information page unless Imprint is specified (see below). Reporting is based on Account Holder ID, but the Publisher field aids in reporting for vendors submitting titles from multiple publishers.
Language	The two letter language code for the language of the title being submitted (e.g. EN). At this time, Kobo only supports English, French, Italian, Dutch, German and Spanish languages. We can process titles tagged with other languages, but they will not be searchable and can only be accessed via direct link.
Account Holder ID	The account holder ID given to you after your contract is signed, along with your FTP account details. This is a unique identifier that we use for tracking and reporting.
Monetization	Indicates whether your book is (0) free, (1) ad-supported, (2) for sale with ad support, or (3) for sale without ad support.

Number of Free Chapters	The number of chapters (after front matter, known as "Openers") that you would like to offer as a free sample. "1" chapter is the default offering.
Licensing	Indicates whether or not you have copyrights for your content.
Territorial Rights (Country Code)	Leave blank to indicate world rights or enter 2-letter codes for territories in which you have the rights to sell your content.
Suggested Retail Price (SRP)	Kobo requires, at the very least, one of the provided currency fields to be filled out. This data needs to be formatted as a number with two decimals and no dollar sign.
Publication Date	Content publication date arranged by year, month, day (YYYY-MM-DD).
BISAC Code	At least one BISAC code is required.
DRM	The default for this field is "yes". If do not want DRM, enter "no".

Book Cover Images

Kobo requests that eBook cover image submissions use the *eISBN.jpeg* naming convention. We currently support two methods for submitting Book Cover images:

1. For book submissions in all formats: external image file in PNG or JPG format, with a minimum width of 500 pixels. Book Cover file should be named as [eISBN].jpg (or .png). For example: *9781234567890.jpg* is an external Book Cover submitted with *9781234567890.epub*

2. For book submissions in ePub format: internal image file included into ePub/OEB archive. The location of the internal eBook cover should be specified in the guide section of the book's OPF (Open Packaging Format) file, according to the OPF standard. For example:

   ```
    <guide>
   <reference type="cover" title="Book Cover" href="images/RomeoAndJuliet_cover.jpg" />
   </guide>
   ```

Upload Process

Once you've signed a contract with Kobo, you will receive login details for your SFTP (Secure File Transfer Protocol) folder via e-mail within 5-10 business days. There are four components to your login details: Host, Username, Password, and Port. Once we have completed the Vendor sign up process, we will provide a detailed step-by-step FTP upload guide to assist with the upload process.

If you do not already have an FTP program, we recommend Filezilla as it is compatible with both PC and Mac operating systems and offers the greatest transparency in its settings.

File Conversion Services

Although ePub is fast becoming the publishing industry's standard for digital publication, a great deal of digital content still exists in alternate digital formats, like: Doc, PDF, RTF, InDesgin, OEB and XML. To help transition content with these formats into a more 'mobile' friendly and adaptable file type, Kobo offers access to a competitively priced conversion service. If you would like to receive more information about conversion, please make a note of this in your questionnaire and we'd be more than happy to send you an overview of our ePub conversion service.

Aggregation Service Providers

If our technical requirements are beyond your capability or understanding, or you only have a few books that you'd like to get published quickly and efficiently, you should consider working with a digital aggregator. The following aggregators are currently distributing content to Kobo and can deliver your content directly to us as well, allowing you to avoid any technical uncertainties:

- Smashwords (US)
- Author Solutions (US)
- eBookit (US)
- Book Pod (Australia)
- Book Hub (US)
- Fast Pencil (US)
- eBook Partnership (UK)
- Book Baby (US)
- Bookmasters (US)
- National Book Network (US)

Money Matters

Once we have had a chance to review your Vendor Questionnaire and research your publishing program, we will determine the commercial terms available for your content. The following section does not discuss these royalty options, as that occurs at a later stage of the Vendor signup process.

Suggested Retail Price

Kobo asks all vendors to provide a Suggested Retail Price (SRP) for the territories you are granting us rights to sell your content in. As mentioned within the "Importance of Metadata" section, we ask our vendors to provide prices in either: USD, CAD, GBP, AUD, NZ, EU or "Other Currency". If an eBook does not have a SRP for a territory in which it can be sold, it will be priced according to a conversion rate that is reflective of a fair market conversion of the USD value – a value that is reset according to a schedule that best maintains synchronicity with market conditions. Although it is not a mandatory field – Kobo highly recommends the submission of a USD SRP to help facilitate those types of sales.

Payment

Vendors have the option to receive payment in the currency of the country where a sale has transacted (as long as the SRP has been set in that currency and it is a currency that we support) or in the currency of the country where they are located. After your contract has been signed, we'll put you in touch with our finance department and they'll work with you to determine a method of payment that best suits your needs.

Tax

Even we can't avoid the 'T' word. We ask that you set your SRP with the after tax cost in mind. We abide by the tax rules in the countries where we are registered (CA, UK, AU, US) and according to our contractual relationship. Kobo is responsible for transactional taxes, while the vendor is responsible for taxes on payments received.

Sales Reporting

Sales reports are provided monthly as an Excel file via e-mail and include the following information: Date of Purchase, Country of Purchase, Quantity, eISBN, Author, Title, List Price, Net Due, and Currency.

Security Matters

Kobo takes a number of steps to prevent your content from being copied, saved, distributed and reproduced.

Digital Rights Management (DRM)

Content is currently made available to Kobo customers in four ways: (1) via our mobile Client, (2) via our web Client, (3) via Adobe Digital Editions (as both an ePub and PDF) and (4) via our desktop Client. Each channel has unique security and technical capabilities, as explained below:

Mobile*
eBooks read on one of Kobo's mobile service clients are stored in the device. This allows users to have ongoing access to content, even without a mobile network connection. Access to the content requires the user to have a Kobo app installed on the device, as well as a valid login and password to 'unlock' the encrypted files. Files with DRM switched 'on' are blocked from cut/copy/paste functionality.

Web*
eBooks read on one of Kobo's web service clients require an online connection at all times and are not downloaded to the customer's computer. Instead, they are pulled from the customers 'cloud' library. As with mobile access, a valid login and password are required for unlocking and reading content. Kobo eBooks are displayed online using our eReading Service Client via the Adobe Flash viewer. If requested, this service can also be used to prevent users from copying or printing content. Furthermore we have introduced a throttling mechanism to prevent bulk content downloading – if a script attempts to access the site too fast, we will display a CAPTCHA, requiring the user or script to prove they are human before continuing.

Adobe DE & Adobe Content Server
Kobo eBooks can also be downloaded as encrypted ePub and PDF files using Adobe DE and Adobe Content Server. This allows them to be read on a 'supported' device of choice, provided that Adobe continues to prove that it is just as secure as the methods described above.

Desktop
eBooks read on the Kobo desktop applications are stored on the PC or Mac. This allows users to have ongoing access to content, even without an Internet connection. Access to the content requires the user to have the Kobo desktop application installed on the computer, as well as a valid login and password to 'unlock' the encrypted files. Files with DRM switched 'on' are blocked from cut/copy/paste functionality.

*   *Both mobile and web versions of Kobo's eReading Service Clients employ encryption and hash algorithms to protect the content in transit and locally on mobile devices. As indicated above, a unique key is assigned to each user and to each mobile device or web session. That key is used to encrypt content before being sent to the client, preventing users from taking content off the device and loading it into other devices or systems. Kobo uses the 128-bit version of the Advanced Encryption Standard (AES) of the US Government - the successor to the earlier DES standard.*

Datacenter Security

The Kobo eReading Service was designed and architected by team members of Chapters.Indigo.ca, Canada's premier online book retailer. Building on that expertise, we have applied modern security principles and selected a leading hosting provider for our Kobo eReading Service Clients and database. The Kobo Inc. datacenter employs a number of security mechanisms to protect your content on our servers:

- Access is limited to authorized users and these users are granted only the minimum access required to perform their role
- Network facilities are protected by:
  - A firewall to prevent intrusion
  - Encrypted VPN access from Kobo's office to our Data Centre
- Physical access is protected by a two-factor authentication process:
  - key-card and biometric authentication and
  - closed circuit video surveillance of the entrance and exit points
- Hosts are secured by regular testing, monitoring and patching

Territorial Rights

eBooks made available through Kobo.com require territorial rights. Territorial rights allow or restrict content from being viewed or purchased in specific countries. An eBook's associated metadata must specify a list of countries in which the content may be legally purchased or a list of countries where such sales are restricted. Each list is composed of a country's two character ISO codes (US, UK, etc). A valid list of country codes can be found here.

A Kobo customer's country of origin is determined by either their billing address or their IP address. If a visitor has provided Kobo with valid billing information and Kobo has successfully verified the user's billing address with our payment processing provider, then the user's country is determined by their billing address. If a user is not logged into their account, or if their billing address has not been entered or cannot be verified, then the user's IP address is mapped to its country of origin. Kobo is able to perform IP to country mapping with 99.8% accuracy. In the event that Kobo is unable to determine a user's country of origin, the user will only be able to view content which is unrestricted in all territories. The same process, with regards to determining a user's country, is used for those accessing Kobo content through mobile devices.

As an additional layer of rights management, eBooks are only available for sale in 'rights' allowed countries (the countries where you have publishing rights).

Frequently Asked Questions

If you have a question that is not answered below or on our Author & Publisher page, please do not hesitate to ask!

What is metadata?

At a high level, *metadata* is defined as data about data. For an eBook, metadata is the collection of data about the book's data (like its title, ISBN, author, publisher, BISAC codes, language, etc.) which makes it an integral part of ePublishing. Metadata is also an important aspect of an ePub file. Without metadata, the ePub cannot be uploaded to our site. Kobo accepts metadata that is submitted using Excel or ONIX.

What is ONIX?

ONIX for Books is the international standard that provides a format for exchanging and communicating eBook metadata. For more information about ONIX, please visit the links below.

- Booknet Canada ONIX Overview
- Editeur ONIX Overview
- Editeur FAQs

What is a BISAC subject code?

The BISAC Subject Codes List, also known as the BISAC Subject Headings List, is a standard classification scheme used to categorize books based on their topical content. BISAC Codes are an integral part of publishing electronic books. For more information about using BISAC codes, please visit the following links:

- Tutorial and FAQs
- Complete BISAC Subject Headings List 2010

What is an ISBN?

The following link is useful for understanding what an ISBN is:

- FAQs about ISBNs

Why do I need an ISBN?

Kobo requires that all vendors have legitimate IBSN numbers for their eBooks (Kobo uses the term *eISBN* for eBook ISBN numbers). The eISBN must also be unique to the digital version of your content. Similar to how Hardcover texts have a separate ISBN from their paperback counterparts, the eBook version of your content requires a unique identifier as well. eISBNs are a requirement of a number of our international retail partners and the inclusion of an eISBN enables your book to be available from all of our eBook retail partners.

How can I get an ISBN for my content?

Depending on where in the world you are located, there are different agencies that can supply you with an ISBN number for different costs.

Canada	Publishers based in Canada can get an ISBN from *Library and Archives Canada* for free. How to Apply
United States	The *United States ISBN Agency* is the only official source authorized to assign ISBNs to publishers based in the United States. Prices for ISBNs range from $100 USD to $1000 USD, depending on the number of ISBNs you purchase. About the agency and downloadable user guides Pricing
UK and Ireland	The *Neilson UK ISBN Agency* is responsible for assigning ISBNs to publishers based in the UK or Republic of Ireland. Prices for ISBNs range from £118.68 to £576.48, depending on the number of ISBNs you purchase. FAQs for New Publishers Pricing
Europe	To find the agency that is responsible for issuing an ISBN in your country or region, visit the *International ISBN Agency* website. To find the institution responsible for issuing ISBNs in your country, follow the "National Agencies" link on the left hand-side of the page and then use the dropdown menu to select your country.
New Zealand	*The National Library of New Zealand* provides ISBNs to publishers based in New Zealand for free. General information
Australia	Publishers based in Australia can obtain ISBN number from the *ISBN Agency Australia.* Prices for ISBNs range from $40 AUD to $2,750 AUD, depending on the number of ISBNs you purchase, plus a $55 AUD publisher registration fee. General information and pricing

Why do my files need to be in ePub?

Kobo proudly supports EPUB; an eBook standard that optimizes our users' experience and allows them to read a Kobo-purchased eBook on their smartphone, tablet, computer as well as our Kobo eReaders!

Should I work directly with Kobo or go through an aggregator?

If you are new to the ePublishing world and you're not quite sure how to create ePubs or operate an FTP system, it may be beneficial for you to work with an aggregator. We have a long-standing relationship with a few digital aggregators who can easily and efficiently deliver your content to us.