

e4books campaign reaches e-Day

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UK book trade achieves massive growth in e-trading

Back in 2004, a target date was set for the UK book trade to move to a fully electronic supply chain. That target date, or 'e-Day' as it was named, was 1st May 2008. Now, as e-Day finally arrives, the e4books campaign has announced the remarkable results of four years' hard work.

The last four years have seen spectacular growth in e-trading (the electronic delivery of orders, invoices, returns and similar business messages). Figures made available today by Book Industry Communication's e4books campaign show that booksellers, distributors, publishers and wholesalers have all adopted e-trading in an extraordinary shift never before seen in the book industry.

Huge increases in e-trading volumes have been recorded for all major services from traditional EDI to state of the art web services:

- Penguin is the first distributor to make e-trading mandatory for orders and returns
- Nielsen BookNet has migrated more than 10,000 smaller suppliers to web delivery of TeleOrders, reducing paper, improving efficiency and customer service
- Over 500 booksellers are now registered for Batch Returns
- WH Smith now trades electronically on 100% of orders, 95% of invoices, 94% of delivery notes, 80% of order acknowledgements and order cancellations; and through implementing the industry returns initiative for more than 80% of all returns, it has reduced its administration costs by half
- PubEasy has announced 12,000 booksellers around the world using their service and a new affiliate (Turnaround) just in time for e-Day
- Dramatic increases in e-commerce have been achieved by wholesalers by adopting innovative new technologies
- Macmillan Distribution are now processing 95% of returns electronically and reporting significant improvement in the operational process.

Bookselling chains have increased their electronic ordering and invoicing volumes from around 40% to over 90% and for once independents have not been left out. Because of the availability of free services from Batch, PubEasy, Nielsen BookNet and the major wholesalers, independent booksellers have also registered order and invoice volumes over 80%.

The huge increases in electronic orders, invoices, order acknowledgements and returns are not only delivering operational efficiencies and cost savings: they are also contributing to a significant reduction in the book trade's carbon footprint, which is an increasing concern for the industry.

Peter Field, CEO of Penguin UK and a key supporter of the project says: 'The necessity of lowering supply chain costs is a vital component of our strategy which tends to get forgotten in today's publishing environment. The e4books project has been invaluable in focussing attention on this crucial aspect of our business.'

Book Industry Communication's Executive Director, Peter Kilborn, said, 'The E4books campaign will continue to promote e-commerce, monitor progress and help book businesses

keep on making gains from new technologies as these emerge. The new slogan, coined by Fraser Tanner of Batch, will be: "No paper but the book!"

'E4books is an example of how a book trade campaign can really deliver the goods when the whole trade gets on board,' said Simon Edwards, BIC's e4books consultant and author of the original e4books report. 'We had a clear goal and the strong likelihood that technology was going to move in the right direction, but even so a lot of hard work has gone into this very satisfying result.'

E4books has had the backing and support from the whole industry, notably the PA and BA, Nielsen BookNet, PubEasy, VISTA International and Waterstone's – who, with BIC, have provided funding – and has been endorsed throughout by the BA/PA Liaison Group. It has worked closely with the Independent Publishers Guild and with the Small Business Forum of the BA to bring e-commerce to smaller companies and has in a short space of time been able to engage industry players of all sizes through its successful accreditation scheme.

This week a further nine companies have been accredited, making a total of 80 including 14 with special Commended status, accounting for over 75% of the book industry. Newly accredited for 2008 are Cambridge University Press, NBN International, Pan Macmillan, Freeway Commerce, Summersdale Publishers and four independent booksellers: Applebys Bookshop in Morpeth; J. L. Nobbs in Haslemere; Palas Print in Caernarfon and Pengwern Books in Shrewsbury. The full list of accredited companies is available on the e4books website (www.e4books.org).

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