



STONEBRIDGE

— CREATIVE TECHNOLOGIES —

2026 INDEPENDENT PUBLISHING REPORT

Independent Publishing & Retail Readiness Report 2026

How to assess an independently published book before bookstore submission

Prepared by Stonebridge Creative Technologies LLC

Research cut-off: September 21, 2026

CONTENTS

Report structure

- 01 Executive summary
- 02 What retail readiness means
- 03 Methodology
- 04 The retail supply chain: who controls what
- 05 The six components of retail readiness
- 06 Common failure points in already-published books
- 07 A remediation sequence for books already on sale
- 08 Retail Readiness Scorecard
- 09 Submission-readiness checklist
- 10 What no publisher or service provider can guarantee
- 11 The decision before submission
- 12 References

This report separates public-source industry findings from Stonebridge-created analysis. The scorecard is a diagnostic, not a retailer rule or guarantee.

SECTION 01

Executive summary

A book may be published, listed online and orderable through a wholesaler while still being unprepared for physical-store review. Publication, distribution and retailer acceptance are separate stages.

IngramSpark sends title data and availability feeds to distribution partners. Each partner decides whether and how to display a title, and availability does not guarantee that a retailer will list or order it.^[1] Barnes & Noble uses a separate purchasing review for store placement and says that changing return terms does not guarantee shelf placement.^[2] Books-A-Million's current public criteria for in-store or event consideration exclude print-on-demand titles.^[3]

For this report, retail readiness means that a particular edition is accurately identified, commercially workable, producible to the required standard, orderable through an accepted route and supported by a credible case for stocking. Readiness is specific to the intended retail channel.

The source review produced six working conclusions:

1. Retailer acceptance happens separately from distribution. Wholesalers and distributors can carry data and fulfill orders. Retailers retain control over listing, buying, stocking, placement and reordering.
2. Metadata carries the information needed to identify, market and trade a book. BISG divides it into bibliographic, marketing and commercial information used across the supply chain. Missing or conflicting data can obstruct discovery, ordering and merchandising.^[4]
3. An ISBN identifies a product and its publisher of record. Rights documentation is still required. Separate formats and materially revised editions generally require distinct ISBNs, and the imprint supplied to a platform must match the relevant ISBN record.^{[5][6]}
4. Bookstore-friendly terms carry real financial exposure. IngramSpark recommends trade-oriented discounts and returnability for broader bookstore availability, but return costs fall back on the publisher. ALLi advises authors to choose terms according to their actual physical-store strategy and capacity to absorb returns.^{[7][8]}
5. Automated production approval does not test every retail concern. A file can pass a platform's checks and still have typographic, editorial, cover-positioning or physical-proof defects. Printer-specific specifications must be followed, and a finished copy should be reviewed before retailer submission.^{[9][10]}
6. The scorecard organizes remediation. It cannot predict a buyer's decision. The Stonebridge Retail Readiness Scorecard is based on public criteria, but it is not a retailer rule, certification or acceptance guarantee.

SECTION 02

What retail readiness means

Retail readiness depends on several separate decisions and records. The table below shows what each stage confirms.

State	What it establishes	What it does not establish
Published	A version of the book has been released through at least one platform or channel.	That trade records are accurate, that other retailers can order it, or that a store wants it.
In a distributor or wholesaler catalog	Trading partners can receive a record and may be able to order the edition.	That every partner will display, accept or stock it.
Listed by a retailer	A product page or internal retailer record exists.	That a physical store holds inventory or that a buyer approved shelf placement.

State	What it establishes	What it does not establish
Accepted for store placement	A retailer or store has decided to carry the book under its own terms.	Permanent placement, a particular quantity, sell-through or reorders.
Physically stocked	Copies are held at one or more locations.	Visibility, front-of-store placement, staff recommendation or sales.
Featured or promoted	The retailer has given the book added exposure.	Continued promotion or a guaranteed commercial result.

Different organizations control each step. IngramSpark says that channel partners determine how availability is displayed, while Barnes & Noble describes a buyer review process for store placement.^{[1][2]} A distributor may make the book available; the retailer still decides whether to list or stock it.

A working definition

For this report, a print edition is retail-ready for a named channel when:

- the publisher has the rights and account authority needed to manage it;
- the ISBN, imprint, format and edition are correctly matched;
- bibliographic, marketing and commercial metadata are complete and consistent;
- the physical files and finished book meet the intended printer's and retailer's requirements;
- price, discount, print cost, publisher compensation and return exposure have been modeled;
- the book is orderable through a route the target retailer uses, or the retailer accepts another documented route;
- the submission materials accurately state what the book is, who it is for and why it fits the retailer's customers; and
- no claim in the submission depends on fabricated sales, reviews, rankings or demand.

This is a channel-specific definition. A book may be ready for direct online sale, but not for a national chain. It may suit local consignment while failing a wholesaler-based route. It may be accepted for an event but not for ongoing stock.

SECTION 03

Methodology

Research design

This is a structured review of public standards, platform documentation and retailer guidance available through September 21, 2026. It is not a survey of authors or booksellers, an analysis of retailer transaction data, or a statistical estimate of acceptance rates.

Sources were prioritized in this order:

1. identifier and metadata authorities, including the U.S. ISBN Agency/Bowker and the Book Industry Study Group;
2. public documentation from distributors, printers and retailers, including IngramSpark, Barnes & Noble, Books-A-Million, Amazon KDP and Google Play Books;
3. trade and independent-author organizations, principally the American Booksellers Association and the Alliance of Independent Authors; and
4. current industry publications for context and outreach planning, not as substitutes for a retailer's own rules.

Claims were included only when the source directly supported them. Platform-specific rules are identified as such. Recommendations were not converted into universal requirements. When sources reflect different risk tolerances, such as aggressive trade terms versus a conservative approach to returns, both positions are presented.

Public-source findings and Stonebridge synthesis

The report uses two evidence classes:

- Public-source industry findings are attributed to the organization that publishes the rule, definition or recommendation.
- Stonebridge synthesis includes the retail-readiness definition, decision framework, remediation sequence and 100-point scorecard. These are original analytical tools built from the cited criteria; they have not been adopted or endorsed by the cited organizations.

No confidential client records, unpublished retailer communications or proprietary Stonebridge outcome data were used. Stonebridge's live bookstore-services page was reviewed only to understand the company's existing distinction between distribution and retailer acceptance. Its public historical acceptance figure was excluded because the underlying title-level records were not available for independent review. This report makes no first-party percentage claim.

Scope and limitations

The primary scope is U.S. print trade distribution and bookstore consideration for independently published books. Some identifier principles are international, but national ISBN agencies, tax rules, product-safety obligations, pricing practices and retailer procedures differ by country. Platform rules can change after publication. Authors and publishers should verify the target channel's current requirements before changing files, identifiers, prices or return settings.

The report does not assess the literary merit of a title, provide legal or tax advice, or promise retailer acceptance. It also does not rank distributors or publishing-service providers.

SECTION 04

The retail supply chain: who controls what

Participant	Common controls	Usually outside its control
Author/rightsholder	Rights granted, manuscript approval, author identity and cooperation.	Retailer buying decisions and a distributor's catalog processing.
Publisher/imprint	ISBN assignment, metadata, files, list price, territorial rights, distribution route, discount and returns elections, marketing plan.	Whether a retailer lists, stocks, displays or reorders the book.
Printer/print-on-demand platform	File validation, manufacturability, available formats, production and fulfillment within its specifications.	Editorial quality, demand and store acceptance.
Distributor/wholesaler	Catalog ingestion, data feeds, ordering route, fulfillment, reporting and return administration under its terms.	The final display or inventory decision of each retailer.
Online retailer	Product-page eligibility, displayed availability, merchandising, search visibility and consumer ordering.	Physical placement in another retailer's stores.
Chain or independent bookstore	Local or centralized buying, quantities, placement, events, consignment, returns and reorders.	The publisher's rights chain and upstream file accuracy.

IngramSpark assigns these decisions separately in its availability documentation. It sends title data and availability status to partners, while each partner decides whether and how to display a title.^[1] Barnes & Noble also separates bibliographic listing from store-placement review. Its current guidance says returnability does not guarantee that a store will agree to placement or an event.^{[2][11]}

SECTION 05

The six components of retail readiness

1. Publisher identity, rights and account control

The first task is to establish who controls the edition and who can change it.

The ISBN identifies a particular title or edition from a particular publisher. Bowker states that an ISBN also identifies the publisher to contact for ordering and warns that an ISBN obtained from another company may not identify the publisher accurately.^[5] KDP requires the title, author and publisher details entered during setup to match the record for a publisher-owned ISBN.^[6]

Five forms of control need to be checked separately:

- Copyright ownership concerns rights in the work.
- Publishing rights concern the authority to publish and distribute a particular edition in defined territories and formats.
- ISBN ownership or assignment identifies the publisher of record for that product.
- Platform account control determines who can update files, metadata, prices and territories in that system.
- Imprint is the publisher name associated with the ISBN and displayed in the trade record.

These forms of control can belong to different parties. An author may own copyright while a publisher controls the ISBN and distribution account under a contract. An ISBN record does not by itself settle every rights question.

Before retail submission, the responsible publisher should be able to produce:

- the publishing agreement or a documented self-publishing rights statement;
- the ISBN assignment record for each edition;
- a list of platform and distributor accounts and their administrators;
- final interior, cover and source files;
- permissions for third-party text, images and endorsements where required; and
- a clear process for approving corrections and metadata updates.

If a service provider controls the only editable files or the only distribution account, the book may be operationally dependent even if it is already on sale.

2. ISBN, imprint and edition integrity

Each retail record should identify one edition and format without ambiguity.

Bowker defines the ISBN as the identifier for one title or edition from one publisher.^[12] The International ISBN Agency and major platforms apply separate identifiers to distinct formats; KDP states that paperback and hardcover editions require separate ISBNs, and IngramSpark requires an ISBN for each distributed format.^{[6][13]}

For every active edition, verify:

Field	Verification question
ISBN-13	Does it validate, and is it assigned to this edition and format?
Publisher/imprint	Does the record match the name used in distribution and on the copyright page?
Format	Is the record correctly designated as paperback, hardcover, ebook or another product?
Edition	Do materially revised editions use an appropriate new identifier?
Title/subtitle	Do the cover, title page, copyright page and metadata agree?
Contributor names	Are spelling, sequence, roles and pen names consistent?
Publication date	Is the same date or release status supplied throughout the active chain?
Physical details	Do trim size, page count, binding and weight match the manufactured book?

BISG warns against using title and subtitle fields for extraneous marketing language and says those fields should match the title page.^[14] A keyword-stuffed subtitle, conflicting imprint or reused identifier can create duplicate records, ingestion failures, customer confusion or an incorrect product.

3. Metadata and subject classification

BISG describes three connected classes of book metadata: bibliographic information, marketing information and commercial information.^[4]

Metadata class	Representative fields	Retail function
Bibliographic	ISBN, title, subtitle, contributors, language, format, edition, page count, dimensions, publication date, publisher.	Identifies the product and supports catalog matching.
Marketing	Description, contributor biography, audience, keywords, reviews, table of contents, cover image.	Helps a buyer or reader understand the book and decide whether it fits.
Commercial	Territories, rights, prices, currency, discount, availability and returns status.	Allows a trading partner to determine whether and how the product can be sold.

Barnes & Noble's public data instructions require a basic record containing ISBN, title, author, publisher, format, price, publication date, BISAC audience, BISAC subject and discount before orders can be placed. It also accepts merchandising material such as descriptions, contents, sample chapters and attributed review excerpts.^[11]

The core test is consistency across the chain. A correct record at one platform does not prove that every retailer has received or displayed the update. Compare at least:

- the ISBN agency record;
- the distributor or wholesaler dashboard;
- major retailer pages;
- Google Books or another catalog discovery surface;
- the physical copyright page and cover; and

- the publisher or author website.

Google Play Books advises publishers to complete as many metadata fields as possible because richer data can help readers discover a title.^[15] KDP recommends accurate, reader-oriented keywords and consistent descriptions and keywords across formats.^[16] Metadata should describe the book accurately before it is adjusted for discovery.

BISAC and subject metadata

BISG calls BISAC the U.S. standard topical classification used across the book supply chain and notes that a subject heading can affect physical shelving and internal database search.^[17] Its selection guidance recommends no more than three BISAC codes and favors the most specific accurate headings over redundant general codes.^[18]

Subject selection should therefore answer two questions:

1. Where would a competent bookseller expect to shelve this book?
2. What subject best matches the content a reader will actually receive?

Using an inaccurate category to reach a larger audience can weaken retailer fit and create a poor consumer experience. Subject codes, keywords, audience designations and the description should reinforce the same honest positioning.

4. Pricing, discount and returns

Commercial readiness depends on whether the chosen price, discount and returns policy are workable together.

The publisher needs to know, for each format and market:

Publisher compensation before other costs = list price – wholesale discount amount – print charge

The exact calculation and fees depend on the distributor. The result must leave enough room for printing, returns exposure, freight or handling, taxes where applicable, and the publisher's operating needs.

IngramSpark currently presents a 55% wholesale discount and returnability as bookstore-oriented terms in its bookselling guidance.^[7] Its returns documentation also states that the publisher can be charged the wholesale cost of returned copies plus applicable shipping and handling, and that returns can create a negative balance.^[8]

This creates a real trade-off:

Choice	Potential advantage	Exposure or limitation
Higher trade discount	Can improve retailer economics and make stocking more attractive.	Reduces publisher compensation per copy.
Returnable	Reduces inventory risk for the retailer.	Transfers return exposure to the publisher; cash flow can turn negative.
Non-returnable	Limits the publisher's return liability.	Some store-placement routes may reject or avoid the title.
Higher list price	May create room for discount and print cost.	May become uncompetitive against comparable books.
Lower list price	May fit category expectations or support consumer conversion.	Can make trade terms economically impossible, particularly for expensive formats.

ALLi's guidance takes a more conservative position for authors without a deliberate physical-store strategy: it recommends considering minimum discount and non-returnability unless the business can support a targeted bookstore push and bear returns.^[19] The two sources address different sides of the same decision. IngramSpark describes terms that can help bookstore adoption; ALLi emphasizes the publisher's risk. Both need to be considered.

There is no single correct discount or return setting for every book. Before changing terms, model at least a normal month, a weak month and a return-heavy month. If the return-heavy case would create an unmanageable liability, the book is not commercially ready for that strategy even if the settings are technically available.

5. Print quality, specifications and physical proof

Passing an automated file check establishes only that the files can enter production.

IngramSpark's public requirements call for separate complete PDF files for the interior and cover, single-page interiors, embedded fonts and printer-specific bleed, safety and image-resolution settings.^[9] KDP's paperback guidance likewise specifies single-page files, embedded fonts, 300 DPI images and defined bleed dimensions.^[10] The details differ by platform and format, so a file built for one route should not be assumed to fit another.

The physical proof needs its own review after the files pass technical checks:

- cover title, author and spine are legible at normal shelf distance;
- the barcode scans and corresponds to the correct ISBN and printed price where the target requires price encoding;
- trim, binding, paper and color choices suit the category and price;
- margins, running heads, folios, tables, images and chapter openings are consistent;
- no text is clipped, crowded into the gutter or obscured by manufacturing variance;
- images reproduce at the expected density and contrast;
- blank pages are intentional;
- the copyright page matches the active edition and imprint;
- endorsements, review excerpts and claims are accurately attributed; and
- the finished copy has been checked for corrections introduced after formatting.

Barnes & Noble's placement guidance requires title and author on the spine for store-placement consideration and specifies a Bookland EAN barcode with an ISBN and retail price.^[20] Books-A-Million's current in-store/event criteria also require a scannable barcode with ISBN and price and state that print-on-demand titles are not accepted through that route.^[3] These are retailer-specific examples, not universal manufacturing rules.

6. Ordering, discovery and retailer fit

A buyer must also be able to identify the likely customer, understand where the book belongs and confirm how it can be ordered.

A useful retail submission answers five questions:

- What is the book? Give one clear category, format and edition.
- Who is likely to buy it? Identify a defined reader rather than claiming that the book is for everyone.
- Why does this store fit? Point to local interest, subject fit, customer demand, event potential or another retailer-specific reason.
- How can the store order it? Name the wholesaler, distributor, direct terms or approved consignment route.

- What will support demand? Give specific publicity, community, author-platform, event or marketing activity.

Barnes & Noble asks store-placement applicants for marketing or publicity details, the wholesaler or distributor, a link to the title on bn.com and the author's hometown, and says books are considered on subject matter and salability.^[20] The American Booksellers Association's Advance Access program requires self-published titles to be readily available from wholesalers; submitted title information includes publisher, ISBN, price, format, subject and publication date, and participating titles must have standard terms and be returnable.^[21]

The details vary by retailer, but the buyer still needs evidence of identity, orderability, fit and a plausible path to sale.

SECTION 06

Common failure points in already-published books

An already-published book can require substantial remediation before retail submission. Common problems appear in the product record, commercial terms, files or submission itself.

Failure point	Observable symptom	Corrective action
Availability mistaken for placement	The author cites an online listing as proof of bookstore acceptance.	Separate orderability, online listing, buyer approval and physical stock in all communications.
Identifier mismatch	Paperback and hardcover share an ISBN, or the imprint does not match the agency record.	Audit each product and resolve identifiers before duplicating distribution records.
Fragmented publisher control	A former provider owns the distribution account, ISBN or editable files.	Establish contractual rights, obtain files and credentials, and document who can authorize changes.
Conflicting metadata	Retailers show different titles, dates, contributors, prices or descriptions.	Choose a source-of-truth record, correct it upstream and track propagation.
Weak category fit	Broad or inaccurate subjects leave no clear shelf location.	Reclassify using current, specific BISAC headings that match the content.
Uneconomic trade terms	The list price cannot support printing and retailer-oriented discounting.	Recalculate price, format, print specification and channel strategy together.
Unbounded return exposure	The title is made returnable without reserves or scenario modeling.	Quantify downside, define monitoring and reconsider scale or route.
Platform-approved but physically weak	The book passes automated checks but the proof reveals typography, spine, color or trimming problems.	Correct files and approve a new physical proof before submission.
Unscannable or incomplete cover data	Barcode, price or ISBN is missing, incorrect or poorly placed.	Rebuild from the target printer's template and verify the manufactured copy.
No buyer-facing case	The pitch describes the author's ambition but not store fit or customer demand.	Prepare a concise retailer-specific sell sheet and evidence-backed marketing plan.
Premature resubmission	The same unresolved record or production problem is sent again.	Complete remediation and confirm downstream updates before a new approach.
Guarantee language	A provider or author describes distribution as assured shelf placement.	State the exact service performed and preserve retailer independence.

SECTION 07

A remediation sequence for books already on sale

Step 1: Establish the product record

List every active edition, format, ISBN, imprint, publication date, platform, territory and account owner. Treat each format as a separate product.

Step 2: Resolve rights and control

Confirm who owns the publishing rights, ISBN record, editable files and platform credentials. Do not create a replacement edition merely to bypass an unresolved contractual question.

Step 3: Set one metadata source of truth

Create an approved master record for bibliographic, marketing and commercial fields. Record when and where each change is transmitted.

Step 4: Rebuild the economics

Compare the title with genuine category peers. Model list price, print cost, discount, publisher compensation and return exposure for the intended channel.

Step 5: Inspect the manufactured book

Review a current physical copy from the same production route that will fulfill retail orders. Correct both technical defects and customer-facing quality problems.

Step 6: Verify orderability and display

Confirm the edition can be found and ordered through the intended route. Check retailer pages and downstream records after the normal propagation period. A visible listing is evidence of listing only.

Step 7: Match the submission to the retailer

Use the target's current process. Submit only the information requested, with a clear category, ordering route, commercial terms, audience, marketing support and local or subject fit.

Step 8: Keep a decision log

Record the date, target, materials, edition, response, requested correction and follow-up status. Do not describe a pending review as acceptance or an acceptance as completed distribution.

SECTION 08

Retail Readiness Scorecard

This 100-point scorecard is a Stonebridge-created diagnostic based on the public criteria cited in this report. Hard gates override the point total, so a high score cannot offset unresolved rights, identifiers, supply, files, account control or financial exposure. Score the exact edition for the intended channel. Do not score the author or the book in the abstract.

Readiness gates

If any gate fails, the result is not ready, regardless of points:

- publishing rights or authority to distribute the edition are unresolved;
- the ISBN is invalid, reused, assigned to the wrong format or materially inconsistent with the product;
- the target ordering route cannot supply the book;
- the active files fail the intended printer's mandatory specifications;
- the publisher cannot identify who controls updates and corrections; or
- the proposed commercial terms create an unaccepted or unmodeled financial exposure.

Scoring table

Category	Test	Points
Identity and control: 15	Rights/authority for the edition are documented.	4
	ISBN, format, edition and publisher/imprint match.	4
	Platform accounts, credentials and approval authority are known.	3
	Editable and final production files are accessible.	2
	Permissions and claim substantiation are documented.	2
Metadata and classification: 20	Core bibliographic fields are complete and consistent.	5
	Description, contributors, audience and cover assets are accurate.	4
	BISAC subjects are current, specific and faithful to the book.	4
	Keywords and retailer copy match reader intent without misleading terms.	3
	Downstream records have been checked for conflicts or stale data.	4
Commercial readiness: 20	List price is credible against comparable editions.	4
	Print cost, discount and compensation have been modeled.	5
	Returns choice matches the channel strategy.	4
	A return-heavy scenario has been quantified and accepted.	4
	Market, currency, territory and availability settings are correct.	3
Production and proof: 20	Interior and cover meet the intended printer's current specifications.	5
	Editing, typography and interior presentation are suitable for the category.	4
	Cover, spine, barcode and printed price meet the target route's needs.	4
	A current physical proof has been reviewed and approved.	5
	The manufactured book matches its metadata.	2

Category	Test	Points
Supply chain and catalog: 15	The target retailer can order through an accepted route.	5
	Retailer/catalog listings resolve to the correct edition.	3
	Availability and fulfillment status have been tested.	3
	The publisher can transmit and correct metadata through the chain.	2
	The channel's POD, inventory or vendor restrictions are satisfied.	2
Submission and market fit: 10	Target stores/outlets match the subject, audience or locality.	3
	Sell sheet/submission materials are complete and evidence-based.	3
	Ordering details and commercial terms are easy to verify.	2
	Marketing support is specific, credible and not fabricated.	2
Total		100

Interpretation

Score	Diagnostic interpretation	Recommended action
85 to 100	Ready for a carefully targeted submission, if all gates pass.	Verify the target's current process and submit.
70 to 84	Conditionally ready; one or more material weaknesses remain.	Correct high-impact gaps before approaching priority buyers.
50 to 69	Remediation required.	Rebuild the deficient category or reconsider the channel strategy.
Below 50	Not ready for bookstore submission.	Return to product, control, metadata and economics fundamentals.

A score is not an acceptance probability. A book with 100 points can be declined for salability, timing, shelf limits or retailer strategy. A lower-scoring title may still be sold through local consignment or direct events. The score is designed to prevent avoidable failures, not to replace buyer judgment.

SECTION 09

Submission-readiness checklist

Before approaching a retailer, an author or publisher should be able to answer yes to the following:

Product and ownership

- Is the exact edition identified by the correct ISBN and imprint?
- Are publishing rights and account control documented?
- Are final and editable files available to the responsible publisher?

Metadata and discovery

- Do title, subtitle, author, format, date, price and publisher match everywhere material?
- Do the BISAC codes accurately identify where the book belongs?
- Are the description, audience, keywords, cover and contributor data complete?
- Have major downstream records been checked for stale or conflicting data?

Economics

- Can the price support print cost and the intended discount?
- Has the return policy been chosen deliberately rather than copied from a generic recommendation?
- Can the business absorb the modeled downside of returns?

Physical product

- Do files meet the exact printer and format specifications?
- Has a current physical copy been inspected?
- Are the spine, barcode, price, cover and interior suitable for the target route?

Retail path

- Can the target retailer order the edition through a route it accepts?
- Does the retailer accept the book's production model, including POD where relevant?
- Is the submission tailored to the store's audience, category and process?
- Are demand and marketing claims supported by evidence?

If any answer is unknown, the unknown is the next audit task. It should not be converted into an assumption in the submission.

SECTION 10

What no publisher or service provider can guarantee

Retail readiness can improve the quality of a submission and remove operational barriers. It cannot guarantee:

- acceptance by a named retailer;
- listing on every retailer website;
- physical stock at any location;
- a minimum order quantity;
- front-table, window or category placement;
- continued inventory or reorders;
- sales, reviews, rankings or profit; or

- a specific timeline for data propagation, buyer review or retailer action.

Barnes & Noble explicitly states that changing a title's return terms is not a guarantee of shelf placement or an event.^[2] IngramSpark likewise states that availability and display decisions ultimately belong to each retailer.^[1] Those limitations should appear in proposals, reports and status updates whenever a third-party outcome is discussed.

SECTION 11

The decision before submission

Two questions determine whether a submission should proceed:

Can this exact edition move through the intended channel without an identity, metadata, production, economic or ordering failure? Does the retailer have a credible reason to choose it?

The answer can expose a correctable problem before a retailer sees it. It also keeps the record clear: the publisher prepares and submits the edition; the retailer decides whether to list, stock, place or reorder it.

SECTION 12

References

1. IngramSpark, "[IngramSpark Title Availability: What You Need to Know](#)", published September 10, 2019; updated November 24, 2025.
2. Barnes & Noble, "[Publishing/Selling Your Book with Barnes & Noble](#)", updated November 10, 2025.
3. Books-A-Million, "[You sell my book online. How do I get it in stores also?](#)", updated December 16, 2025.
4. Book Industry Study Group, "[Metadata Committee Charter \(2026\)](#)", 2026 charter; accessed September 21, 2026.
5. U.S. ISBN Agency/Bowker, "[About the ISBN Standard](#)", publication date not displayed; accessed September 21, 2026.
6. Amazon Kindle Direct Publishing, "[What is an ISBN and Imprint?](#)", update date not displayed; accessed September 21, 2026.
7. IngramSpark, "[How to Sell Your Self-Published Book to Bookstores](#)", published March 2, 2023; updated May 27, 2026.
8. IngramSpark, "[Understanding Book Returns with IngramSpark](#)", published November 16, 2021; accessed September 21, 2026.
9. IngramSpark, "[File Requirements for Print Books](#)", published January 31, 2017; accessed September 21, 2026.
10. Amazon Kindle Direct Publishing, "[Paperback Submission Guidelines](#)", update date not displayed; accessed September 21, 2026.
11. Barnes & Noble, "[How to Submit Content](#)", updated March 20, 2025.
12. U.S. ISBN Agency/Bowker, "[FAQs: General Questions](#)", publication date not displayed; accessed September 21, 2026.
13. IngramSpark, "[Frequently Asked Questions](#)", update date not displayed; accessed September 21, 2026.
14. Book Industry Study Group, "[Support for effective use of the title and subtitle fields](#)", statement first released May 2023; accessed September 21, 2026.
15. Google Play Books Partner Center Help, "[Step 4. Tell us about your book](#)", update date not displayed; accessed September 21, 2026.
16. Amazon Kindle Direct Publishing, "[Make Your Book More Discoverable with Keywords](#)", update date not displayed; accessed September 21, 2026.
17. Book Industry Study Group, "[BISAC Subject Codes](#)", current list page; accessed September 21, 2026.
18. Book Industry Study Group, "[Selecting a BISAC Code](#)", publication/update date not displayed; accessed September 21, 2026.
19. Alliance of Independent Authors, "[Are Bookstores Worth it for Indie Authors?](#)", published January 25, 2021; accessed September 21, 2026.
20. Barnes & Noble, "[Sell Your Book at Barnes & Noble](#)", publication/update date not displayed; accessed September 21, 2026.
21. American Booksellers Association, "[Publisher Opportunities Details](#)", current program page; accessed September 21, 2026.