



International Federation of Audit Bureaux of Circulations

Guidelines for Digital Media
(not websites)

2nd EDITION

Preface

Welcome to our 2nd Edition of Guidelines for Digital Media.

Since the original edition of these guidelines much has changed in the digital marketplace.

The digital publications standards committee has revisited the first edition and has updated the guidelines in this second edition. (See sections 5.6 through 5.11). Most notably, the committee recommends that IFABC members begin to encourage their respective members to report usage metrics.

We recommend following the initial steps of ABC in the United Kingdom which has adopted a metric of “publication active views” for its newspaper members.

Further, the committee recommends following the steps of the Magazine Publishers Association (MPA) in the USA. It’s “Digital Editions Standards Initiative” (DESI) has called for additional engagement metrics: sessions per issue, time spent, and sessions per individual.

The committee also recommends reporting “# of pages viewed”.

All of these usage metrics are suggested as optional metrics, but if only one were to be chosen, the committee recommends “publication active views”. Additional metrics can be adopted if more granularity is desired.

The guidelines that follow have been amended accordingly.

Respectfully,

The Digital Publications Standards Committee

November 2014



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1 Digital Media -- Defined.

1.1 Digital Media is edited, designed, and contains date-stamped content that includes advertising. It must be delivered periodically. It must be presented in a metered (i.e. linear) navigation format such that the media is divided into defined pages of content presented together allowing the user to progress from front cover to back cover in a linear progression.

1.2 Though editing, design, and issue identification (i.e. date-stamped content) are significant differences, the primary distinction between digital editions or publications and a website is the metering (this can be pagination or any other method of going through the issue from beginning to end).

1.3 In order for the circulation of Digital Media to be eligible for reporting in an audit organization's reports, in addition to complying with the above, access to digital content that is not delivered (i.e. viewing content on a web site) must be restricted either by a "pay wall" for subscription products or a "registration" requirement with a password gate for controlled circulation products. A public access website may not be included as a copy or circulation.

1.4 Digital Media can be segregated into two types, Editions and Publications. – A Digital Edition has a companion print version. A Digital Publication is a stand alone digital product without a companion print version.

1.5 A Digital Edition may exist in a replica format with or without enhanced content or a non-replica format being dynamically created or having targeted content. Similarly, a Digital Publication may be dynamically created or have targeted content.

2 Digital Media – Formats

2.1 Four basic formats of digital media may exist. They are:

2.2 1) Editorial Replica – If a print brand existed first, editorial and design are unchanged from the original print edition. With a replica digital product, each issue's content and design are identical to the original edition. Apart from minor updates, the content cannot change once the issue is made available.

2.3 Editorial Replica Digital Editions may not have the same advertising as might appear in a print version either due to advertiser request or due to the capability of the device being used to view the media.

2.4 2) "Replica Plus" – If a print brand existed first, "replica plus" is editorial that is retained from the original edition and is redesigned and/or supplemented, e.g. photo journalism maybe enhanced with audio, video or additional editorial. With a replica plus digital edition, each issue's editorial is primarily taken (but not necessarily replicated in its entirety) from the original edition (whether in print or digital). Editorial that is taken from the print version may be expanded upon in the "replica plus" version, but it may not be shortened. Apart from minor updates, the content cannot change once the issue is made available.



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2.5 “Replica Plus” Digital Editions may not have the same advertising as might appear in a print version either due to advertiser request or due to the capability of the device being used to view the media.

2.6 **3) Targeted** – Editorial is changed for specifically defined groups and/or platforms before point of delivery. With a targeted digital edition or publication, each group of recipients, whether they are segmented demographically or because of the platform they use to receive the digital product, receive a copy with different editorial specifically selected for that group. Apart from minor updates, the content cannot change once the issue is made available.

2.7 Targeted Digital Editions may not have the same advertising as might appear in a print version either due to advertiser request or due to the capability of the device being used to view the media.

2.8 **4) Dynamic** – Editorial can be created and/or selected at point of delivery. With a dynamic digital edition or publication, each recipient can receive a copy with different editorial and that editorial can change at any time.

2.9 Dynamic Digital Editions may not have the same advertising as might appear in a print version either due to advertiser request or due to the capability of the device being used to view the media.

3 Digital Media – Circulation

3.1 Individuals receiving copies of a Digital Edition or a Digital Publication may only be considered as qualified circulation if such copies are elicited either through request (direct by the subscriber or by their company) or as a non-deductible benefit-of-membership subscription (members of organizations who receive the media as part of their benefits of membership. The person can not deduct the value of the subscription from the member dues fee; it is included in the dues).

3.2 Publishers may convert requested print edition subscriptions to digital edition subscriptions, provided the subscriber who requested the publication receives advance notice of the conversion and is given the option to refuse the conversion. The notice of conversion must give the publisher enough time to stop the conversion if the subscriber refuses to convert to a digital edition subscription. Evidence of the original request and the notice of the conversion shall be available at the time of audit.

3.3 Print and digital units of circulation shall be reported separately by type and optionally totaled.

3.4 When individuals subscribe and pay an incremental price (bureau accepted price) for print and/or digital components for more than one delivery platform (i.e. different e-readers, mobile and restricted access web site), (see example A) or register for free access to print and/or digital components for more than one delivery platform (see example B) and access digital content for each platform claimed during the time period covered by the issue, the gross number of copies across platforms may be reported provided a net number of individuals subscribing /requesting is also reported. (Note: When the capability of technology permits the accurate capturing of the actual platform or device used to consume the digital media, these guidelines will be revisited to determine if reporting by platform type should be included as a requirement.)



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EXAMPLE A:

- Subscribe today to “name of media” € 99 per year/ 52 copies
For an additional € 10 each subscribe to our digital versions:
 - iPad
 - Tablet
 - PC
 - Mac
 - Mobile/SmartPhone
 - “Name of Media”.com

EXAMPLE B:

- Yes, I would like to receive “name of media” free of charge 52 copies per year
Please check and initial which of our versions you would like to receive (check all that apply):
- | Check | Initials |
|--|----------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Print | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> iPad | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tablet | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> PC | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mac | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mobile/SmartPhone | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> “Name of Media”.com | _____ |

When people select more than one digital platform, to count the digital service as “copies” or “circulation”, the user must access the content on the platform chosen during the time period covered by the issue. In our examples, the frequency is 52 times per year or weekly. Therefore an issue must be accessed via the digital platform during the week of the issue to count as a copy served. If a person buys or requests the print, iPad, PC and mobile versions, but never accesses any copies via the PC, but does access via the iPad and mobile during the week of issue, a count of 3 copies (iPad, mobile and print) and a count of one subscriber would be reported. But if no digital access occurs during the week of the media, no copy count is provided for any of the digital channels.

If only one digital channel is chosen for the subscription, or if only one digital channel is offered with print, access to the digital version is not required to count the digital subscription as a copy for each issue.

3.5 In general, non-paid subscribers must be sent an alert informing that each issue is available for reading.

3.6 Digital Editions or Publications with a daily frequency may provide the subscriber with the option to “opt-in” to receiving an email alert of availability; the alert is not required for media with a daily frequency.

3.7 Digital Editions or Publications with a frequency less than daily may provide the subscriber with an opportunity to “opt-out” of receiving an email alert notification of availability. If a publisher offers an opt-out to receiving the email alert, the publisher shall separately offer an opt-out of receiving the Digital Edition or Publication.



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3.8 Subscribers who opt-out of receiving the email alert but have not opted-out of receiving the Digital Edition or Publication, need not receive an alert to be reported as qualified distribution.

3.9 If an alert to a non-paid subscriber is undeliverable, the media owner shall have no more than 90 days to remove said subscriber from their circulation file, or ensure that the delivery details are corrected.

4 Digital Media – Site License

4.1 A contract or agreement between a publisher member and a company/association to provide access to a Digital Edition or Publication on either a paid or non-paid (free) basis that is hosted on the subscribing organization’s intranet to multiple individuals.

4.2 The contract/agreement shall require the subscriber/administrator of the site license to notify all individual seats (individuals) of the availability of each issue.

4.3 Site Licenses and Seats (individuals) served as part of the license shall not be reported as circulation or copies but shall be reported separately in an explanatory paragraph. However, one shall not be reported without the other.

4.4 Publishers may include paid and non-paid, demographic, and geographic data. Circulation and site license seats may not be summed on reports.

4.5 Licenses shall be reported for definitive amount of seats only, “global” or “companywide” license agreements shall not be reported.

4.6 Reporting the name of the company to which the content has been licensed shall be optional.

5 Digital Media—Disclosure in Circulation Reports

5.1 At present two categories of reporting are recommended, “replica” and “non-replica” but as the market evolves, expanding the reporting to separately report by the definitions in section 2.0 is foreseen.

5.2 “Replica” copies are those as defined as “editorial replica” and “replica plus” in sections 2.2 and 2.4 of these guidelines.

5.3 “Non-Replica” copies are those as defined as “targeted” and “dynamic” in sections 2.6 and 2.8 of these guidelines.

5.4 Publishers shall disclose in circulation reports under a “Statement of Content Platform” or “Glossary” the form or combination of forms of digital media used per the above definition/description (see Section 2). Publishers have the option to further break down the total digital copies reported by each of the four types provided in section 2 of these guidelines.

5.5 Whenever more than one “targeted” edition is offered, each shall be separately described under the “Statement of Content Platform” (see 5.4 above). If the advertising opportunities are not consistent across editions, such disclosure must also be made. Counts of each edition shall be reported separately in the audit report.



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5.6 Bureau should encourage their members to report usage/engagement metrics in addition to circulation/copies metrics where they are available, particularly if tablet technology is in use.

Five metrics are recommended:

- A) *Publication Active Views*
- B) *Number of Sessions per Issue*
- C) *Time Spent in Issue per Individual Device*
- D) *Number of sessions in Issue per Individual Device*
- E) *Number of Pages Accessed per Issue*

While members may choose which metrics to report, the committee recommends “publication active views” as the key metric with the remaining metrics being available to report more granularity.

5.7 Publication Active Views

- A) A “publication active view” is defined as a single copy of a publication actively opened by a device for viewing.
- B) A minimum of one page of an issue opened/served onto a device.
- C) There must be a distinct action/event by the end user to view. A single action/request which results in both the content being downloaded/made available *and* the automatic opening of a page of the publication is not considered a distinct action/event. A further distinct action would be required such as opening a second page.
- D) The view request must be on an issue by issue basis.

5.8 Number of Sessions per issue

Defined as the aggregate number of times an issue was accessed by all unique browsers (individual devices).

5.9 Time Spent in Issue per Individual Device

Defined as the time spent, on average, in the issue across all unique browsers (total audience).

5.10 Number of Sessions in Issue per Individual Device

Defined as the average number of times each unique browser accesses the issue being reported.

5.11 Number of Pages Accessed

Defined as the total unique pages accessed for each issue by unique browsers.

The committee recommends readers of this report also consult [Methodology for Standard Audience metrics included in Adobe Digital Publishing Suite](#) (DPS).



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5.12 When reporting print and digital circulation, it is recommended the report format include separate reporting of the following categories:

- Total Circulation*
- Percent of Total Circulation*
- Print Version*
- Digital Version*
- Both Print and Digital Versions (if applicable)*

5.13 The sequence of reporting categories maybe decided by each respective audit organization provided all the categories are reported.

5.14 Each bureau shall establish a minimum price point requirement. This minimum price, referred to as the “qualifying price”, must be collected for subscriptions to be defined as “paid”.

5.15 When separate subscription transactions occur at a qualifying price (minimum price accepted by the bureau), each bureau may opt to require a de-duplicating of the subscribers. (See example C) If, however, separate subscription transactions occur but are not at a qualifying price, each bureau shall require the de-duplication of subscribers. (See example D) All bundled subscription transactions, regardless of price, shall be de-duplicated. (See section 3.4) Subscriptions not sold at a qualifying price (minimum price accepted by the bureau) must be reported as non-paid or any other category defined as not paid.

EXAMPLE C:

If a person purchases a subscription in January to the print version at a bureau accepted price, and then purchases a subscription to a digital channel in March at a bureau accepted price, the audit bureau can opt to report these as a subscriber count of one person, or can permit this to be reported as two copies (1 print and 1 digital) with no comment that the copies are to the same person. If multiple digital channels are subscribed, see section 3.4.

Report format:

Print	Digital	
Copies	Copies	TOTAL
1	1	2

EXAMPLE D:

Using the example above, but the purchase price is below the minimum requirement of the bureau, or is free, only a count of one subscriber may be reported. Comment should be made that subscribers receiving print and digital are counted only once.

Report format:

Print	Digital	
Copies	Copies	TOTAL
1	1	1

5.16 When vendors are used which do not provide sufficient information to identify duplicates, disclosure in bureau circulation reports of the number of copies and percent of total of circulation sold through that vendor shall be disclosed with an explanation that as a result of the lack of information, no attempt to identify duplication or overlap can occur.



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5.17 Single copy sales of digital copies shall be reported separately in bureau reports.

5.18 When reporting a geographical breakout of circulation, reporting of digital copies for which no geographical information of the subscriber is available shall be in the category “digital”. This shall be the last category in the table.

5.19 It is recommended that circulation for both print and digital be reported separately in every table of the circulation reports. Further, adding print copies with digital copies to yield a total is also a recommended option. These are recommendations, not requirements.

It is also recommended that whatever the bureau decides as the minimum reporting, publishers should be permitted to report in greater detail should they so choose.

5.20 At the time of audit, media owners need to provide either fulfillment supported reports or provide access to third party vendor reports for validation of the qualification and service of the digital circulation.

6 Promotion/Publicity Requirements

6.1 Whenever a circulation claim is made in promotional material (sales kits, presentations, publicity pieces, etc.) which is comprised of both print and digital copies, the existence of digital copies shall be disclosed in the promotion piece. Print and digital circulation figures may be reported separately, or may be combined with a footnote disclosing the claim includes both print copies and digital copies. This notation may disclose the actual copy counts and percents of print and digital copies included in the total circulation claim, or simply require the disclosure of the percent of digital in the total circulation claim.

ACCEPTABLE EXAMPLES:

EXAMPLE E1:

“Name of Media” 100,000 circulation!
(70,000 print, 30,000 digital version)

EXAMPLE E2:

“Name of Media” 100,000 circulation!*

Footnote at bottom of page:

*Note 1: Includes print at 70,000 copies or 70% and 30,000 digital copies or 30%.

EXAMPLE E3:

“Name of Media” 100,000 circulation!*

*Note 1: 30% of the copies are in digital format.



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Questions or comments? Please contact our committee chair, or any of our members:

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