

Distr.  
GENERAL

June 2014

ENGLISH ONLY

**UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION  
FOR EUROPE (UNECE)  
CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS**

**Work Session on the Communication of Statistics**  
(18-20 June 2014, Geneva, Switzerland)

Session 4: Good practices in electronic publications

**Electronic Publications: Developments in the Swiss Federal Statistical Office**

Armin Grossenbacher, Head of Dissemination, Swiss Federal Statistical Office FSO

**Electronic Publications?**

There is no turning back on the road to electronic publications. Online publication has become the most important publication channel and mobile platforms are fast edging out desktop computers.

Official statistics have taken these trends and needs into account in many different ways. Electronic publishing is standard today.

But what are electronic publications actually? Are they a continuation of the traditional book in digital form to be read on desktop computers and mobile devices? Or are they more than that, a complement and enhancement with new functions?

It is worth trying to see the overall picture, not least in order to define the structure of products on offer to users and in particular - in view of declining resources - to organise the production of electronic publications efficiently. Because there is the risk that a new, specific tool will be introduced for each new form of electronic publication launched.

**Overall picture**

Electronic publications can be looked at and categorised from various angles:

- Format

Publications that are described as electronic use numerous formats today. A look at the most common formats gives the following picture:

- The Portable Document Format (PDF) is often considered to be the intrinsic format used for electronic publications. The PDF was introduced in 1993 by Adobe as proprietary standard for the display of documents in their original form on various platforms; in 2008 it became an open standard.
- With the Computable Document Format (CDF), Wolfram created a document format enhanced with interactive possibilities and which, like PDF, can be used with a free player. It is less common than PDF.
- The open EPUB format used by many publishing houses for electronic reading devices describes itself by name as "electronic publication". The layout of documents in this format can be adapted to the screen size of some display devices. With MOBI, Amazon has its own, comparable standard format for its range of electronic books. In particular for the protection of contents available on the market, these formats enable digital rights management.
- .folio is a format developed by Adobe, that allows documents with many multimedia and interactive possibilities to be accessed in particular by mobile devices.
- Lastly and probably most widespread, is the HTML format used as a basis in web browsers, which can be used as a format for the display of electronic documents.
- There are numerous other special formats or applications (apps) for electronic publications which have been specially developed and which have special functions and work on specific hardware.

#### - Places: Possibilities for accessing material

Electronic publications can usually be downloaded as files from the internet. This applies in particular to PDF files.

Since the early days of electronic publications, however, publishers as well as soft and hardware manufacturers have developed their own stores, where such publications can be purchased or sometimes obtained free of charge. The products on offer are a far cry from electronic versions of printed books and include specially developed apps that present content in multimedia, interactive, game or some other form.

Examples of such stores are the Apple Store, Google Play Store and Google Books, the Windows Store and Amazon's Kindle Store.

#### - Platforms: The platform

For a long time the desktop computer was the only widespread platform for accessing and using electronic publications. The hardware revolution of mobile devices has radically changed this. The landscape for electronic publications has been expanded by tablets and smartphones as well as by the various eReaders.

#### - Paradigm: The book paradigm

The sheer diversity of formats, places and platforms, and the subsequent dissemination of widely varying contents made possible, ultimately impose a content-related categorisation as to what constitutes an electronic publication.

At the FSO, following the example of the age-old, traditional book, we take the book paradigm as a starting point and our interpretation of content in an electronic publication is this: the presentation of content with textual, tabular, graphic and interactive multimedia (also socially interactive) elements in a connected, explanatory form. In short: storytelling.

Such storytelling can, for example, exist in a long, book-like version, as a magazine with separate articles or as a reference work composed of individual items.

## Requirements

The requirements upon the configuration and the production of electronic publications in the FSO can be established on the basis of the considerations mentioned above on the definition of the electronic publication.

The users and their needs, as we understand them, are our starting point: Finding statistics not just as raw data but understanding statistics thanks to attractive and marketable models, including context information (as far as possible).

An electronic publication should:

1. provide a descriptive and also explanatory, coherent **story** (book paradigm) or a collection of separate stories (magazine, encyclopaedia paradigm),
2. be able to use the **presentation forms** that are electronically available. From simple text to tables, pictures, interactive graphics, sound and video, connecting to the internet for updates and reference.
3. provide **social** functions, enable at least sharing and possibly interaction (social reading) as well as **marketing functions** such as monitoring, push notification, web preview.
4. work on the main **platforms**: desktop (Win, Mac), tablet (iOS, Android, Win), mobile (iOS, Android, Win),
5. be available in the major **stores**,
6. be available in a **format** that enables requirements 2,3,4 and 5.
7. be produced with the least possible effort by **using available tools** in standardised processes.

## Solution

In our search for a form that satisfies several, if not all of the requirements mentioned, we chose .folio. One convincing reason is the fact that this form of publication can be integrated into existing tools and processes.

### What is .folio?

.folio or Digital Publishing Suite .folio (DPS .folio) is a format developed by Adobe and integrated into existing layout tools (such as InDesign).

It came into existence thanks to the needs of a publishing house (namely Condé Nast) that had originally ventured into the development of demanding, electronic publications but had then to accept that its own resources were no longer sufficient for the maintenance and further development of this publication format. For this reason, Condé Nast paired up with specialised software company Adobe. .folio was created as part of Adobe's product range.

The format's technical specifications have been made publicly available by Adobe since the 1st quarter 2014:

*“Because of the fast growth of the digital publishing industry, and the increase in marketplaces that want to leverage .folio, Adobe believes that the industry is better served through the licensing of the .folio specification.”*

(<http://blogs.adobe.com/digitalpublishing/2013/12/readership-metrics-open-folio-format.html>)

### What does .folio have to offer?

.folio includes a standardised navigation philosophy, a wide range of presentation possibilities, the inclusion of internet contents, access to the main stores and marketing

functions as well as production from the current layout program, editing system or web content management system CMS used in the FSO.

Well-known examples that publish with .folio are the newspaper *Wired* and The Economist's *Intelligent Life*.

### **How is .folio used at the FSO?**

.folio publication at the FSO is under development. We call this type of electronic publication **DigiPubs**.

A magazine and presentations of publications on statistical topics have been created and are being assessed (as of March 2014).

The publication in various stores is envisaged in the form of a single application that will include the various DigiPubs and make them accessible in several categories. The DigiPubs will also be available on the Swiss Statistics website, where they can be used in a browser independently from the individual store platforms.

Prior to their publication, the DigiPubs can be activated and checked in a protected environment, the Adobe content viewer.

A comparison with the requirements mentioned at the start gives the following result:

#### DigiPubs

1. allow the presentation of content in a coherent **story**, whether as a book or magazine paradigm,
2. are able to use the electronically available **presentation forms**. From simple text to tables, pictures, interactive graphics, sound and video, connection to the internet for updates and searches in encyclopaedias,
3. enable **social** functions in the form of sharing facilities as well as some **marketing functions**,
4. work on the main **platforms**: desktop (Win, Mac), tablet (iOS, Android, Win), mobile (iOS, Android, Win),
5. are available in the major **stores**,
6. are based on production tools that are already used at the FSO.

### **Production**

The FSO has used Adobe's product range for layout for many years including the production tools for .folio. The CMS used at the FSO is another production tool that can be used.

Thanks to this integration into existing tools, good synergy can be achieved in the production process. The use of a widely-used, standard product also avoids the need for big investment in the necessary further development of the production tool.

.folio does not, however, in any way exclude specific applications. Depending on the aims of the presentation, other tools and also special developments can be necessary and useful for special types of presentations such as atlases or timelines but also for traditional query tools based on databases.

Examples of these at the FSO are the statistical atlas (Stat@las) or the timeline on the history of and events in official statistics (Chronostat) in Switzerland.

## **The be-all and end-all of electronic publications**

Storytelling - the telling of a coherent story: This is the first of the requirements and is also the most important one for electronic publications if they are to be read and be successful.

The medium of electronic publications has all the ingredients to make the story attractive and to design publications with brand new possibilities. This cannot happen on its own. Authors and also publication specialists -- layout designers, visualisers (storyboard artists), publishers -- are challenged

- in terms of the messages and the content that are to be communicated and
- in terms of the presentation due to the opportunities that the medium is opening up.

The objective can only be reached by well-oiled cooperation in terms of content and presentation. New processes and also changing job descriptions are the result and are necessary. The digital revolution is turning whole working areas upside down.