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PRESS RELEASE

International Consortium Seeks Global Standard for Electronic Data Exchange for Advertising

AdsML standard will build on existing standards, set specifications for crucial processes; all advertising media ultimately affected

Darmstadt, May 13, 2003

An international consortium of organizations serving the print and electronic publishing industries is creating a global standard that will govern how digital information is exchanged for all types of advertising, across all media and through all stages of the lifecycle of an advertisement.

The AdsML standard will provide standardized electronic processes for all sectors of the advertising industry, in order to shorten deadlines and time to market, save time and money, improve communication, reduce errors, enhance business relationships and create new business opportunities.

Beginning with the planned fall 2003 release of AdsML 1.0, the proposed standard will simplify and accelerate business interactions at all points of the advertising workflow between the time an ad is booked through the point at which it runs or is aired and then billed. The standard ultimately will support the various business cycles for advertising in television, radio and the Internet, through mobile technologies, on billboards or outdoor advertising, even on-screen advertising at movie theaters and cinemas.

"The advertising industry needs a set of standards that allows us to efficiently handle the data exchanges and transactions between the different systems in the business chain," says Allan Marshall, managing director of Associated Mediabase in London. Associated Newspapers played a leading role in setting up AdsML.

Jack Knadjian, who represents Agfa on the Steering Committee, says, "Everybody benefits from automation. It reduces costs and allows better service. For this to happen, we need digital communication between systems, which is why international standards are so crucial. Agfa has a track record for driving standards in the printing industries and we are committed to help achieve this in the publishing industries as well."

AdsML to support, expand existing standards

Key issues AdsML will address include reconciling agency, prepress and publisher IDs and unique references, facilitating ad booking over the Web, tracking ad copy across



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multiple supply chain partners, enabling automated repurposing of print ads for Web, reconciling what is booked, what is published and what is invoiced, and driving automated billing.

“Building effective standards is fundamental to undertaking any serious attempt at streamlining the supply chain,” says David Jones, general manager of Vio Worldwide and a member of the AdsML Steering Committee. “The absence of a standard governing end-to-end booking, insertion and payment processes for all types of advertising is one reason why communication between agencies, media buyers, prepress houses and publishers is still so inefficient and costly.”

The AdsML standard is based on the widely accepted XML (eXtensible Markup Language) standard and supports other electronic data exchange standards, including AdConnexion for Ifra, CREST from NAA and SpaceXML from IDEAlliance. These and other existing standards focus on different aspects of the overall advertising process. AdsML will fill in the gaps between existing standards (there are no standards for inventory management, for example), extend their reach and encourage convergence when they overlap.

“For suppliers, the big win is that they do not have to build different interfaces every time they tackle an integration project,” Jones says. “They can reuse previous work, reduce the number of languages they have to support and shorten the implementation time. Standards provide clarity by removing confusion.”

AdsML 1.0 will support classified advertising in print and online, online advertising, including banner and pop-up advertising, and advertising that is part of the core content of a Web site, ROP advertising in print, inserts, mail advertising and advertising by SMS, MMS or other mobile technologies.

About the AdsML Consortium

The AdsML initiative is supported by Ifra, an international association for media publishing, the Newspaper Association of America (NAA) and Nihon Shinbun Kyokai (NSK – the Japan Newspaper Publishers & Editors Association). The purpose of AdsML is to create a comprehensive standard for end-to-end advertising workflow. The AdsML Consortium was organized in the fall of 2002, following Expo 2002, a printing industry trade show sponsored by Ifra, in Barcelona.

Current Chair of the AdsML Consortium, which will rotate annually between Ifra and NAA, is Harald Loeffler, research manager at Ifra in Darmstadt, Germany.

In addition to Steering Committee members Agfa, Associated Newspapers and Vio Worldwide, membership in the Consortium already includes vendors such as Rosetta, CCI Europe and Engage. Membership in the consortium is open to organizations



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working in the advertising supply chain, software manufacturers, and related consultants and associations.

Notes for Editors:

There are a number of XML (eXtensible Markup Language) standards related to advertising and associated processes. They include:

SpaceXML: This originated in 1991 as a general standard for media advertising in North America using the ANSI X12 formats. It was transformed to an XML-based standard in 1992. The current version covers multiple media, although retail display and insert advertising are the most complete. It specifies how the business transactions should be handled. It has been approved by committee and is in the process of being implemented.

CREST: This is designed to handle classified advertising and focuses on categorizing and formatting the content. The standard does not concern itself with the business transaction rules. It has been adopted by a number of US publishers.

AdConnexion: Like SpaceXML, this deals with display advertising specifying how the business transactions should be handled. It comes out of work done in Europe and reflects some of the particular characteristics of the Scandinavian ad industry. It has limited adoption in Europe.

PRISM: This standard specifies a metadata vocabulary for syndicating, aggregating, post-processing, and multi-purposing magazine, news, catalog, book, and mainstream journal content. This includes an emphasis on preservation of metadata. It has some adoption in the US.

NITF (News Industry Text Format): This handles the content and metadata for news stories. SportsML is a related standard for specialized content in sports. NITF has been widely adopted globally. SportsML is newly released but already has considerable international interest.

NewsML: This is a content wrapper for news items including NITF, photos and other graphic materials. It provides metadata information about the contained news items, along with information about how the items are related. NewsML is media agnostic. It has been widely adopted globally.

cXML: This is a standard that handles financial transactions. It comes from the business-to-business world, and is one of many standards that have emerged from EDI and similar initiatives over the years. cXML is based on Ariba technology and has



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some unique aspects that help support interactive synchronous messaging over the web. It has been widely adopted in other industries.

JDF (Job Definition Format): This is the leading contender for implementing systems integration and workflow automation in print plants. It is backed by Adobe, Agfa, MAN Roland and Heidelberg and has limited adoption in the field.

PrintTalk: This is an amalgam of JDF and cXML which is designed for commercial printers. It focuses on business transactions for business cards, labels tags, commercial printing, and so on. It has limited adoption.

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