



Frequently Asked Questions about PPML *The Personalized Print Markup Language*

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Send feedback and additional questions to info@podl.org.

Q: What is PPML? Why was it developed? What is its purpose?

A: PPML is the Personalized Print Markup Language. Developed by the members of PODi, it is an XML-based print language whose purpose is to make it much faster to print documents that have reusable content. While proprietary technologies have provided this ability in the past, PPML is the first industry standard method. For further information on PPML applications and benefits, see the PODi document [Introduction to PPML](#).

Q: Who is PODi?

A: PODi, "the Digital Printing initiative," is a consortium of leading companies in digital printing. PODi was originally formed in 1996 by Adobe Systems, Apple Computer and Scitex, to promote Print On Demand applications (hence the original PODi name "the Print On Demand initiative"). Today the group's mission has expanded to include many more [member companies](#) and a much broader [mission](#): to encourage growth of digital print applications through market education and development of standards.

Q: What are the intended advantages?

A: The primary advantage is **interoperability**, which will widen the possibilities available to everyone – users, hardware developers, and software developers.

In the past, achieving personalized print has only been possible with proprietary software and hardware: every machine vendor had its own language. It was not possible to take a job that was targeted toward one system and run it on another machine.

This led to a restrictive environment for everyone. **Print designers** had to choose the output system before production could begin. **System purchasers** generally had few choices of software available to drive whatever machine they bought. **Software developers** who wished to develop software for personalized print faced a difficult decision: either write a lot of different output drivers, or limit the market for their software. Consequently, each **hardware developer** often had a difficult time persuading software developers to support its proprietary output language. That, in turn, limited the market potential for any given machine.

It is expected that all this will change with PPML. With a shared output language, software and hardware developers alike should have a broader market. System purchasers and users will have more choices available, of both hardware and software. And print designers will be able to proceed with production with less concern about the eventual output system.

Q: Is there a royalty for using PPML?

A: No. The PPML specification is freely available from <http://www.podi.org>, and no royalties are required for either hardware or software that creates or uses PPML.

Q: What language does PPML use for page content? Is it compatible with PostScript? PDF? PCL? AFP?

A: PPML is independent of printer language: PPML can be used to create output that will support any printer language. Manufacturers will decide which languages a particular machine will support.

PPML machines have already been announced that will support PostScript, PDF, TIFF, and JPEG. We expect to see support for numerous other languages in the future. For information on a specific product, contact the manufacturer. (This is comparable to choosing a laser printer today: if you want, you can buy a printer that supports PostScript, PCL, or some other combination.)

PPML is a *meta-language*. It describes the structure of jobs, documents, and pages. It places "marks" on a page via PPML <MARK> elements, which point to content data, such as EPS files (Encapsulated PostScript).

PPML itself does not *describe* page content; rather, it *selects* content elements, to be placed on a page. For instance, there is nothing in PPML that says "Go to this point on the page and draw a three inch circle filled with red." Instead, the PPML code might say "At this point on the page, place file ThreeInchRedCircle.EPS."

Q: Is there a viewer for PPML?

A: This is recognized as an important need. There is a possibility of an announcement soon.

Q: How does PPML interact with JDF?

A: *Note: The following expresses PODi's understanding, and may be adjusted in further conversation with those who are creating JDF. For the initial version of this FAQ, [the CIP-4 organization](#) (sponsor of JDF) has not commented on these words.*

PPML is a *job content* format; JDF says nothing about job content. PODi and members of CIP-4 have expressed a spirit of mutual cooperation, with the intent of ensuring that the progress each group makes will support, rather than conflict with, the other.

An initial area of cooperation is in the mutual need to define features that are specific to digital printing.

Adobe Systems is a key player in both groups.

Q: What is the interaction between PPML and IPP?

A: [IPP](#), the Internet Printing Protocol, is an activity of the [Print Working Group](#) and [IETF](#), the Internet Engineering Task Force. Many members of PODi are also participating in the IPP project.

IPP is, among other things, a method of delivering print jobs to a specific machine. It's generally believed that IPP will be a suitable means of delivering PPML jobs to a PPML machine. PODi and IPP staff are in communication and working together, and IPP and JDF people are similarly coordinating their activities. Again, the intent is that the work in these different industry activities will support each other and further the mutual progress of the entire industry toward more productive and interoperable workflows.

Q: What about PPML's "print layout" elements – don't they conflict with similar features in JDF?

A: Indeed, there are similar features. For this reason, the PPML specification explicitly states that it's legal for a PPML-consuming system to ignore the <PRINT_LAYOUT> element, and instead use similar information that is provided in some other format. This is specifically intended to allow these two specifications to work well together.

Historical context may be useful in understanding this. The PPML and JDF projects were both conceived and initiated in early 1999, and they proceeded in parallel for some time. When the similarities and overlap were discovered, some parties felt that perhaps those elements should be removed from PPML. But others pointed out that until JDF is fully implemented in the industry, PPML machines and PPML users would still need these features (imposition, cut marks, etc). So PODi members voted to keep these elements in the PPML spec, but make them optional.

Q: How can I get more information?

A: **General information** about PODi and PPML is available from PODi at <http://www.podi.org> or info@pod.org, (716)239-6063.

A free, Web-based **developer support** forum is starting in November, 2000. Write to ppmlinfo@pod.org for admission.