Digital Advertisement Distribution

Adobe Acrobat Sets the Standard

Adobe™ Acrobat™
In Advertising

Solutions Area

Digital Advertisement Distribution

Key Benefits Summary

- Electronic delivery of ads reduces costs and provides higher reproduction quality and faster time to market.
- Electronic proofing cuts hours and sometimes days from proofing process.
- Single, standard file format retains form and quality, regardless of the originating application or platform.
- Ad reproduction quality is improved because ads are sent to film from the original digital file.
- Newspapers reduce occurrences of mis-run ads, saving money.

Digital advertisement distribution is rapidly emerging from concept to reality with a number of retailers, advertising agencies and newspapers using the new process. The users have cited its many advantages, including lower costs, higher reproduction quality and faster time to market. Many associations, vendors, systems integrators and communications companies are developing digital distribution systems and offering services in this area. Adobe Acrobat software is a key enabling technology, making digital distribution a reality and allowing retailers and newspapers to distribute ads in this innovative way.

Traditional Creation and Distribution

In the past, newspapers created much of the print advertising they published. Now, with the growth of desktop publishing, most retailers produce ads in-house or use an advertising agency. The process varies, but most retailers or agencies assemble ads using a combination of software applications, output them to paper or film and then distribute them to newspapers via messenger, overnight express service or U.S. mail. Once ads are received, the newspaper checks ad size, validates spot color requirements, and verifies film for process colors. The ad then goes to the production department, where it is pasted into the page or scanned for later imaging as part of a complete page.

Deadline pressures, delivery costs and final ad quality are a few of the limitations of the traditional preproduction process. Inclement weather can cause ads to be lost en route to their destinations. Airport closings can force retailers to turn to counter-to-counter courier services costing hundreds of dollars. In addition, hard-copy ads lack the flexibility to accommodate late-breaking copy changes. Once an ad is received at the paper, it is considered final.

The Digital Solution

To more efficiently distribute advertising, retailers and advertisers are turning to digital distribution, providing newspapers with digital versions of the ad, either in Adobe PostScript™ language format or in the ad's originating application. In theory, the industry embraces the concept of digital distribution. While it addresses some of the ad cost, quality and accuracy issues, this process has shortcomings for newspapers, mainly because of the additional costs of checking and imaging digital files. Frequent problems found in digital ads are missing fonts, corrupt files, missing graphic elements, copy inaccuracies, variations in application software versions and use of software or software extensions not available at the newspaper. What the process needed to become truly efficient was a single, standard file format that provided everyone in the process access to the ad in the same form and quality as the original, regardless of the application or platform used to create it.

Retailers

Today, many retailers delivering ads digitally are converting them to Adobe's Portable Document Format (PDF) and transmitting them via dial-up lines, satellite, bulletin

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boards or ISDN lines directly to newspapers. "Using Acrobat to deliver ads digitally provides tremendous advantages for retailers," says L. Bruce Sholes, director of Intergraph's Retail Solutions group. "Retailers are actively seeking digital distribution solutions because of the potential to save costs, enable important last-minute changes when necessary and improve ad quality. Digital distribution is one way to be more competitive in the marketplace, and Acrobat software contributes to this. Intergraph is a leading systems integrator serving major retailers. It has licensed Adobe Acrobat software and will provide it as the cornerstone of its retail customers' digital distribution solutions.

There are other benefits for retailers that ultimately translate into a competitive advantage. Reproduction quality is improved because first-generation film of the ads can be shot by the newspaper, directly from the digital file. There is also the potential to adjust black-and-white calibrations for different newspapers, fine tuning the image to a newspaper's imagesetter and press. Ad versioning and zoning is easier, enabling retailers to make optimum use of demographic information and target marketing. Digital distribution offers a more reliable delivery system because it is not disrupted by foul weather conditions. In addition, this method enables a faster time to market because it allows a shorter schedule for producing ads and later closing dates.

Advertising Agencies
Advertising agencies using digital distribution realize many of the same benefits as retailers, including a faster time to market, improved ad reproduction quality and lower costs. Capps Studio Ltd., a limited

partner of the Leo Burnett Company advertising agency, is taking advantage of digital distribution in a number of ways.

The agency creates PDF files of its ad slicks and clip art for Oldsmobile dealers. Previously, the agency mailed photostats to dealers, which then completed their ads by manually cutting and pasting the necessary

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elements. Now dealers use Adobe Acrobat software to open and print PDF files of the ads they need. Dealers can make simple edits to the PDF files using Adobe Illustrator™ 5.5 for the Macintosh® platform. "Using the program's ability to edit PDF files, dealers can change prices or make other small edits," says Chris Miller, Director of Macintosh Computing for Capps, "while still maintaining the integrity of corporate logos and colors.

This saves dealers money because they don't have to reinvent the wheel, and it gives clients peace of mind, knowing that their corporate look and feel will be preserved."

To save time during the ad approval process, Capps uses remote electronic proofing, sending PDF files to clients for comment instead of relying on faxes and hard copy sent by overnight mail. This streamlined approach cuts hours and sometimes days from the proofing process by eliminating the need for couriers, express mail, stat production and other time-consuming steps.

Says Miller, "We used to spend two days making one change to an ad. With digital delivery using Acrobat, we can make two changes in one day. Acrobat allows us to provide a faster time to market, and this can give our clients a competitive edge."

Newspapers
Faced with increased competition from alternative media, newspapers see digital distribution as an opportunity to improve customer service, provide better quality and—with appropriate systems in place—lower operating costs. Newspapers have the potential to increase market share of national and regional advertising because digital distribution makes it easier to place ads with newspapers. The newspaper prints from the original data file created by the advertiser, therefore, reproduction quality and accuracy are improved. This minimizes the impact of wear and tear on film resulting from traditional methods of courier or messenger delivery. Newspapers save time and money printing from digital files because it eliminates the need to have advertisers reshoot and transport film if damaged or if errors are present.

Looking to the Future

Newspapers are anticipating the support of direct import of PDF files from a wide range of layout applications. This capability is expected to add increased efficiencies to the production process by eliminating the need for many of the manual production processes where errors are likely to occur. This will result in a substantial cost savings to newspapers because it will reduce instances of having to offer rebates or make good on misrun ads.

"Newspapers using Acrobat and associated systems for digital distribution will operate with lower costs and be more competitive with other kinds of media," says Harold Evans, managing director of the Sterling Resource Group (SRG). "Acrobat software saves time and lets newspapers receive digital ads without the worry of application software and/or platform compatibility. When a newspaper receives a PDF file, it can be sent to a pagination system or printed through the imagesetter with no problems. In the long run, Acrobat and associated systems—especially with integration of pagination systems—will be a big benefit for newspapers." SRG provides consultation, support and information on publishing and prepress systems for retailers, newspapers and vendors.

Building the Infrastructure for Digital Distribution

Several associations and companies are building the necessary infrastructure and services to make digital distribution pervasive. AdSAT entered the market two years ago, as one of the first services to deliver ads electronically, transmitting via satellite to newspapers. Another example is The Associated Press, which has launched a new digital advertising delivery service called AP AdSEND. This service leverages AP's communications network and technical expertise to electronically deliver ads to newspapers throughout the United States. Acrobat software is integrated into AP AdSEND, providing a common file format that retains the visual appearance

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> *Director of Macintosh Computing*
> *Capps Studio, Ltd.*

of advertisements in spite of the wide range of computer systems and typesetting equipment used. AP AdSEND manages ad delivery, supplies and installs the enabling technologies, provides training, and acts as a liaison between advertisers and newspapers on reproduction issues. The AP AdSEND service is being actively marketed to retail advertisers and ad agencies. AP, which serves virtually all of the 1,555 daily newspapers in the United States, has AP AdSEND reception equipment installed at hundreds of its member newspapers and will have it installed at **a**ll member papers that will receive ads through the service in 1995. AP AdSEND will also service non-AP members, such as weekly papers and magazines, that advertisers want to reach.

Advertising Communications International (ACI), Business Link Communications, 4Sight and ImageNet are companies that specialize in installing ad delivery systems using ISDN wide-area networking, including the necessary communications hardware and software. Business Link, for example, has installed an ISDN network that links major advertisers and agencies with newspapers such as the *New York Times* and *New York Newsday*.

"Digital distribution is inevitable. Everyone in the industry knows sending stats via overnight mail is passé," says Tom Brettingen, executive director for AP AdSEND. "With AP AdSEND and Adobe Acrobat, advertisers get the convenience of having PDF files delivered wherever they need to go at a reasonable cost, and newspapers don't have to worry about platform and software compatibility issues."

The digital distribution vanguard agrees that Adobe Acrobat provides the foundation for the infrastructure. "No one wants to send native files for digital distribution any more," says Evans. "There is no question that Adobe Acrobat software is the industry choice for this application."

Brettingen agrees. "Adobe Acrobat is the *de facto* standard for digital distribution in our industry."

For more information on products and services covered in this article, contact:

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For more information on Adobe products, call 1-800-833-6687.