Space • *n.* 1 a continuous area or expanse which is free or un-occupied. > a gap between printed or written words or characters. > pages in a newspaper, or time between broadcast programmes, available for advertising > the freedom and scope to live and develop as one wishes.

– From the Compact Oxford English Dictionary

Dear Reader,

Here at Spindrift we may not possess the most sophisticated of internal workflows (a few Macs, Word, e-mail, Indesign and Acrobat plus the good old-fashioned phone), but from the start we have been working completely digitally and remotely, with Paul in Malmö, Cecilia in Cumbria and Laurel and Todd in Sussex. With four people and a 16 plus page PDF as the final product, you don't need to worry too much about workflow set-up. However, getting remote workflows to work is clearly a challenge for more and more people in our industry.

We realise it may seem as though we are going on a bit about issues such as collaborative proofing. However, we believe the explosion in this type of technology is indicative of something bigger, namely the fact that the internet is emerging as an ever more important entity in publishing and graphic arts workflow. The internet is the new work environment, and there is an on-going migration of functions and tasks to it. It is going to be increasingly important for players in the industry to be able to utilise this new work space to their advantage. (Which is why we are nagging you about the latest technologies for doing so.)

Of course, the internet is not only a vehicle for efficient collaboration, it is also a possible cost saving mechanism for printers and publishers. It allows them to create a bunch of DIY tools for their customers, such as sending in print-ready, and corrected, digital ads. Or, taking it one step further, as in Quickcut's new solution, where they provide publisher branded portals which include templates for building ads, PDF validation and uploading of ads and proofs between publishers and their clients, among other things. The digital sky is the limit.

Enjoy the read!

Cheers from the Spindrift crew,

Laurel, Cecilia, Paul and Todd

In This Issue

Brighton calling

Laurel Brunner spent an action packed day at Newstec – the British newspaper industry get-together on the south coast. She writes: "Of course everyone and his dog talks workflow management, but it's clear that databases combined with network servers can make anything possible. We see more and more companies looking to build production systems with this distributed foundation, but their shape and size depends on what they're for, who is using them and why. We saw several companies illustrating this point at Newstec, and several examples of why the best development efforts are market driven, rather than dependent on committee activities." Find out more...

see page 10

Softproof update

You are right, it is not a new subject. But after this issue of Spindrift you will be in possession of the definitive word on all the products, and their abilities, currently available for proofing without paper. A tidbit: "We have had a brief look at Colorbus' work in progress and it looks to be a very promising solution. One particularly interesting, and as far as we know unique feature, is the possibility to merge 1 bit TIFF files (screened and separated output files) into a composite colour managed softproof. This feature has encouraged several large newspapers to jump onto the Colorbus softproof bandwagon already, including a couple of major British nationals." And there's more...

see page 16

Regular Columns

News Focus

Screen gets into the digital printing game

Dainippon Screen has just announced it has acquired Inca Digital Printers, the specialist wide-format digital inkjet printer manufacturer, in an agreement worth in total GBP 30 million (€43.8m). The acquisition is the latest phase in the ongoing expansion of Dainippon Screen's digital printing business and, effective immediately, Inca Digital becomes a wholly owned subsidiary of the company.

In 2001 Inca Digital shipped the world's first commercial digital flatbed printer and since then the company has remained at the forefront of development in the wide format digital inkjet industry. The company has established a formidable reputation for quality, reliability and performance and built a successful global distribution network for its innovative Eagle, Columbia and Spyder inkjet printers with Fujifilm Sericol.

"This is a highly strategic investment for us", said Akira Ishida, Dainippon Screen's Chairman and President. "The impact of digital inkjet technologies on the conventional print market is accelerating and Inca's technology complements our existing digital imaging and printing products perfectly. Significantly, Inca's expertise gives us access to important new markets in industrial printing and packaging. By combining Inca's expertise in wide format inkjet printing, with Screen's considerable experience in the media technology, semi-conductor and flat-panel display industries we can further strengthen and grow Inca and Dainippon Screen's businesses, while working together to develop new applications across multiple sectors in the future."

Gradual Easing Back

You can't keep good men down, thank heavens, so we are most pleased to report that Peter Camps and David van Driessche, once primary pistons in the Enfocus engine, are back in business. Gradual Software is developing tools for full automation across the numerous stages of professional publishing activities, from document creation to delivery. So light on the ambition then guys? This desktop technology is highly modular and designed to be added incrementally to build links between islands of automation, which sounds suspiciously like a design objective for JDF. Gradual Software recently acquired Danish developers Caslon and is basing its product on a streamlined version of Caslonsoft 5, a collection of workflow management utilities. A full license costs $2499 and we await with interest Gradual Software's plans for subsequent developments.

Agfa Heading West

Westferry printers in the UK has ordered nine Polaris platesetters as part of Agfa UK's largest ever single site newspaper order. Besides the platesetters, Westferry has also ordered Agfa's Arkitex workflow and signed a five year contract for N91v violet photopolymer plates. The site will output 35,000 plates per week for Westferry's 18 Goss presses printing around 23 million newspapers per week. This was a hard won order for Agfa and according to Westferry's chief executive Bill Wenman, the company chose Agfa because "they simply put forward the most attractive all round package". Installation begins at the end of this month and the site should be fully operational by October.

Agfa has also announced version 2.5 of its Apogee workflow system. Most of new features are geared towards the interests of small commercial printers. Performance is improved and there is support for the latest application files.

In a further development, as they say, Agfa is now ready to get into the industrial inkjet market, however Agfa-Dotrix MD Rob Haak jumped ship to set up a consultancy in "the industrial market for single pass inkjet printing solutions" under the name of Spikix. Agfa runs multiple joint development and manufacturing partnerships with Thieme, Mutoh Europe and Xaar. By combining these partnerships with its own in-house imaging, ink and printing expertise, Agfa is now going to introduce a series of wide-format and digital screen printing systems which will be available as of Q3 this year.

Fujifilm's Purple Patch

Fujifilm has announced its second generation violet plate for newspapers. The Brillia LP-NNV violet photopolymer plate is much like the LP-NV but, besides the extra N, this plate has a second generation emulsion technology for reduced dot gain and improved linearity. It is designed for 405 nm diode platesetters and for mid to long run newspapers, with run lengths of up to 300,000. The plate will be available in the next few weeks.

Fujifilm has sold its 1000th violet ctp system and will install the landmark Luxel V-6 B2 platesetter at the Kingfisher Press in the UK shortly. The company is seeing an excellent response to its violet technology amongst printers and repro houses, largely on the basis of the low cost of ownership for violet ctp, its quality, ease of use and environmental friendliness.

Xeikon Diamond Winners

The winners of the eighth Xeikon Diamond Awards for digital printing applications have been announced. Xeikon have run these awards for a number of years and judge entries in five different applications categories, which are redefined each year in line with changing business models as digital press adoption spreads.

The overall winner was a limited edition booklet for an artwork project printed on a Xeikon DCP 320 D. The 25 x 28 cm booklet was distributed to 55 selected VIPs during an art exhibition and was made up of various digitally printed pages ranging from a 160 gsm gloss paper to a transparent 100 micron page and a postcard. Pages were combined according to the interests of the VIPs.

Tann-Papier in Austria printed the job for Kronlacher, a "hairstyle and fashion company" which wanted an individualised and numbered limited edition series of prints. The resulting print was selected as the overall winner because it combined format variations, special substrates, quality and tight deadlines, and was part of a comprehensive short run colour print project that included invitations, business cards, banners and labels.

Other winners included Itella, Finland for an network based service campaign for all Ford Service & Spare Part dealers in Finland, Drucksprint AG, Switzerland for the "Endless" book for photographer René Kanzler, Simpson Label Company, UK, for gorgeous variable data whisky labels, and Klomp Grafische Communicatie, in the Netherlands for a self promotional personalised three step calendar.

Our personal favourite (although this view was not shared by our fellow jury members, even though it won the One to One category) was the personalised Monopoly board, which Snows Business Forms in the UK produces for game supplier Hasbro. The end customer creates individual versions of the game, reflecting a special day or event, such as a birthday or anniversary. You choose the content for the board and the Chance and Community Chest game cards. The set is printed and sent out within a week or so of order. You can see it in action at www. mymonopoly.com. Very cute indeed.

Kodak Imagemapper

Kodak has formally announced Matchflow Imagemapper software for digital camera file management. We saw a preview of this at Drupa last year when the software was under development. Imagemapper automatically profiles and converts images from any digital camera to provide immediate and accurate colour images.

Designed for commercial printers, prepress houses, photographers, newspapers and indeed anyone working with digital cameras, Imagemapper makes accurate digital file rendering as idiotproof as possible. It combines the KPG Colour Fidelity Module, a Gretag Macbeth Colorchecker Rendition Chart and a set of standard RGB and CMYK output profiles, with batch processing of images. The software creates an ICC profile for the camera to take into account its lens, lighting and settings, to remap all pictures in the same folder by embedding the custom input profile, or by converting to an intermediate RGB working space or to RGB or CMYK output.

We hope to bring you more details of this, once we've had a chance to take a closer look.

Xerox Introducing DC7000

The Docucolour 7000 is basically the same as the 8000 but slower and less expensive. This lower entry level colour printer is available with a choice of three front ends from Xerox, Creo or EFI and costs around $245,000.

The company has also announced an inline coating unit for the Igen 3 110 press. The coater is manufactured by Epic International and can keep up with the Igen 3's 110 page per minute speed. There are also new booklet makers for the Docucolor 7000 and 8000 .

Secure inks

Creo and Xink Laboratories have introduced a new class of secure flexographic radio frequency identification (RFID) antenna printing inks. These new covertly tagged flexographic ink formulations are for manufacturers and converters producing RFID-tagged smart packaging as mandated by Wal-Mart and as recommended by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for pharmaceutical counterfeit protection. The new inks and RFID tags are available exclusively through Xink and its worldwide printing and manufacturing partners.

The Xink antenna inks eliminate the possibility of counterfeiters duplicating RFID numbering schemes and so

copying them. Xink do this by integrating Creo Trace-less covert tagging technology. The forensically invisible Creo taggant is machine-readable on production lines, or in remote locations, detected using Creo readers.

Scitex super fast

Scitex Vision has gone one better and launched the Scitex Vision XLjet Premium, based on the XLjet series, of which more than 500 units have been sold. Scitex Vision XLjet Premium features higher frequency print heads, and combines high performance with high productivity, according to the supplier. Available in 2.2m, 3.2m and 5m widths, the Scitex Vision XLjet Premium can switch between four, six and eight colour production at a high-quality output speed of 60 m$_2$/hr or run in draft mode (suitable for applications viewed at a long distance) at 124 m$_2$/hr (1,333sqft/hr)

Green beauty printed on a Scitex Vision XLjet.

Letter From...
Customer Support

Dear Drifters,

In this world of mega advances in workflow, content management and other such technologies, I thought you might like to share a wonderful support call we had recently.

A nameless customer phoned to say that they were having problems with a remote user of the system. This was a homeworker who had Citrix access to the system which is all very clever and all that. The remote user had let a book fall on the shift key and Windows responded after a moment or so and asked him if he would like to make this key a "hot key". Of course, as you would, he said "yes". He then wondered why every time he hit the shift key he got some weird and wonderful Windows procedure popping up in front of his eyes.

The moral of this story is that we live in a world full of people that cannot use the technology they have, let alone the stuff that is coming.

I would urge Spindrift to focus on the advantages of using old lino over potatoes for basic pattern printing and to advise all readers to purchase two John Bull printing sets instead of one or otherwise suffer the problem of running out of the letter "e" halfway through their latest project.

Yours faithfully,

William Caxton

Say What?

(Iffy Writing Award Presented in the Ether for Obfuscation, Confusion, Misinformation or All Out Pretentiousness)

From Printing World, obviously suffering in a post Gareth Ward hayze

"New Jarrold chooses Krause systems for Compactas

New Jarrold Printing has opted for Krause ctp systems to feed [sic] plates for the two massive 64-page KBA Compacta webs.

The Lüscher Xpose 180 platesetters expose Fuji thermal plates and David Medler said … 'We shall not be baking these plates because of their size.'"

So is it Krause or Lüscher platesetters that will "feed" plates for the Compacta webs?

We are delighted to report that it's Lüscher.

And we came across this rather cryptic piece in newspaper trade title Production Journal:

"The inevitable circulation decline is a myth according to Jim Chisholm, strategy adviser to the World Association of Newspapers. Speaking at the Newspaper Society's Circulation, Editorial and Promotions Conference in Birmingham last month, he outlined the key features of successful newspapers. 'Circulation winners take a long view. These newspapers are all about consistency. They don't change strategy every time they change editors because they don't change editors. The team works together for a long time. They have a very clear idea of who their audience is. You can't be all things to everyone and newspapers that try to do that generally have a very hard time. Small is beautiful. The bigger you are the harder you fall.'"

Entries for our new Spot the Point competition to info@digitaldots.org with all haste.

Driftwood

(Useful stuff washin' in on our shores)

Sarbanes-Oxley

At first it was just a vague muttering, but it's getting louder and louder. So what exactly is Sarbanes-Oxley then? It's an act of the US Congress, brought into law in July 2002. So what? So it means that, in the wake of various financial misdealings, frauds, collapses et al in the United States, the rules for documented accounting compliance for public companies are much stricter than they were. And why should we give a strudel for it? Isn't this just about accounting? It is about accounting, but not just accounting.

It goes like this:

The purpose of this Act was: "to protect investors by improving the accuracy and reliability of corporate disclosures made pursuant to the securities laws". The Act is a set of changes to American accounting rules and corporate governance regulations, named after the two US Senators who designed it. According to President Bush it is apparently to "deter and punish corporate and accounting fraud and corruption, ensure justice for wrongdoers, and protect the interests of workers and shareholders". Workers and shareholders? It seems these naughty corporates have had too much freedom in the past.

This act is long, complicated and controversial. It's expensive and came about in spontaneous response to several major US corporate collapses (WorldCom and Enron for example), so patience and consideration may not have come into the picture. But that's not the point. There is no escape from Sarbanes-Oxley and its compliance requirements are driving many pages for output on digital presses.

This is why. Accountants love numbers and they love paper – lots of it because they can't trust electronic documents in quite the same way. Sarbanes-Oxley requires managers to keep "adequate internal control structure and procedures for financial reporting", they must keep an "assessment ... of the effectiveness of the internal control structure and procedures of the issuer for financial reporting". In other words they have to be able to prove compliance, documenting new procedures and subsidiary information relevant to their financial data. Most of this will involve print on demand hard copy, rather than relying on digital documents. It's complex, time consuming and will cost US businesses, and indeed worldwide businesses, dear. One academic estimates a cost of $1.4 trillion, not including the intangible costs such as firms choosing not to be listed on the US stock exchange, or reverting to private ownership.

In a recent article in the world renowned Economist Magazine, the value of Sarbanes-Oxley was questioned. The gist is that compliance costs will outweigh any savings achieved through preventing fraud. So far the main winners seem to be accountants and, of course, documentation system suppliers.

Expandocs

(In this section, we aim to cast some extra light on a particular recent news story.)

Vio VCSP

To a cynic, it used to be that the only distinguishing characteristic between Wamnet and Vio was their corporate colours. Purple or orange, it was all just so much wire, but Darwinian forces obliged both companies to act with their markets, to evolve or face extinction, adapt or expire. Although Vio's evolutionary route was somewhat less than direct, the company's role and purpose are now clear: Vio is in the business of digital supply chain management, implementing its own technology, plus that of third party developers for automated file delivery and data management. More interestingly, Vio has anticipated the need for colour managed file delivery, introducing a colour proofing and certification system for inbound PDF files.

▶

Vio Certified Soft Proofing (VCSP) can be publisher branded and customised. It uses Enfocus tools to preflight to publishers' PDF profiles, and ICS's Remote Director ICC colour management technology for accurate soft proofing. These technologies, combined with Vio's Digital Workflow Suite, form a multistage, closed loop, colour managed and certifiable colour ad delivery system.

First the user prepares a PDF, which is then dragged onto a desktop icon. This is the Vio agent which initiates a web site where the target destination's titles are listed. The user selects the relevant title and the ad file is then preflighted and either rejected or passed to the next stage. The proof is generated once the file is in the Vio Jobs folder, Remote Director is launched, the Prepare Proof button has been clicked and the user has selected the correct ICC profile. Once approved the file is archived, which is an interesting choice of task order, since it is only after archiving that the PDF is given a job ticket, which the user completes prior to submitting the ad to the publisher, along with the preflight report. Once the ad is accepted, the user receives a confirming email.

Perhaps it's just us, but this all seems a little cumbersome, with the user bearing considerable responsibility for creating a calibrated screen proof. Having so many stages in the process could be tedious for casual users, and could also render the system, and even the publisher, a trifle vulnerable. VCSP assumes that the user a) understands how to write a compliant PDF and what an ICC profile is, and b) is signing off the proof without the publisher having much say in checking print readiness.

Vio's technology is relevant for newspaper advertisers and publishers who need to send and receive colour managed adverts from regular and experienced advertisers, without hard copy proofing. This added colour management dimension further renders obsolete the need for advertisers to work with repro gatekeepers and could considerably strengthen Vio's position as a developer of ad delivery technologies. To us, VCSP's process looks a bit circuitous in comparison to say Enfocus, Quickcut or Markzware's systems for file delivery. However since each customer will likely have a bespoke solution, perhaps this isn't important.

Uniquely, Vio raise revenue from VCSP using a click charge model, selling £15 tokens that are redeemed every time a colour proof is created. Users can buy tokens in advance from a Vio rep who, following the customers registration at the Vio website, installs the software and sets up the account. This could be a bit of a block to companies who want to use VCSP for a lot of collaborative preproduction work, but Vio is quite flexible on how it sells services, with subscriptions, licenses and combinations of the two.

As an Adsml founder member, Vio is naturally using Adsml to automate copychasing and insertion management and to link copy to ad bookings in VCSP. Is Adsml the best route, given JDF and the fact that both Quickcut and Quark already have XML based tools to do this? According to Vio's chairman Richard Horwood, JDF has no place in linking ad booking and production systems since it is: "for manufacturing processes". We aren't wholly convinced by the Admsl arguments. But we could be wrong.

It's still a bit of a mishmash, with too many revenue models and muddled overlaps across technologies but Vio, with a tight focus on its customers, is getting there. One thing that might help Vio reach beyond its known universe are legible brochures. Would someone please explain to us the design objective behind printing 10-point pale blue and pale yellow screened text on white stock?

Spindocs

(Where the spinner gets spun!)

Printing World recently reported that:

"Associated Newspapers [in the UK] this week began operating the first complete colour managed digital supply chain for advertising that will slash the cost of handling ads for its national titles. ... It is billed as the world's first end to end colour managed, preflighted, certified digital supply chain for colour advertising."

And so it goes on in a similar vein bigging up Associated's break with preferred ad suppliers. But no mention of the fact that automated colour managed preflighted etc file delivery has been happening elsewhere in the world for many years. Even if we allow that the UK is special and so entitled to be slow, the UK's Guardian Newspapers broke with the gatekeepers to accept fully managed digital ads in the dark and distant days of 2001.

Acrobites

(Something to get your teeth into)

MVNO

You don't have to own a mobile network to be a mobile operator, you know. You just need to know someone who is, and who is willing to lease you capacity on their network. Start selling SIM-cards over the internet or branded handsets through retail outlets, and hey presto, you have entered the booming MVNO (Mobile Virtual Network Operator) market. So far, most of the MVNOs in this world are subsidiaries or spin-offs of the actual licence-holding mobile operators, or start-ups who operate using the same business model. They operate mainly voice and SMS services, and, like traditional mobile operators, serve high volumes of users in anonymous markets. They compete on price, and most have a sales model based on prepaid cards which are sold either via retail outlets or the internet. Some of these MVNOs brand and sell their own handsets, others simply sell SIM cards and let customers use their existing telephones. Virgin Mobile belongs to the former category, and new entrant easyMobile in the UK belongs to the latter.

But now a new type of virtual operator is entering the market. This is the service-oriented, content-centric MVNO, which differentiates itself not on price, but on the services and content it delivers. These players, like ESPN Mobile (who partners with US carrier Sprint PCS) enter the fray with a strong brand and an existing customer base. They operate in a niche market where they can

reasonably expect their customers to be more loyal than they would be to a more generic operator merely offering low prices. If we stick to ESPN as an example, they will be offering (when they launch later this year or early next) sports, entertainment, news and statistics, as well as streaming audio and video, as the core of their service – it's no longer about cents per minute and SMS, it's about a more comprehensive mobile relationship built on customers' expectations and trust in the ESPN brand. ESPN already "own" these customers, and the customers identify themselves as sports fans and ESPN watchers.

The interesting aspect of all this, from a publisher's point of view, is that newspapers have some of the prerequisites of the content-centric MVNO: a strong brand, existing customer base and marketing channels (through its existing media). However, we have it on good authority, this game is not for the under-funded or the technically challenged, so perhaps we'll have to wait a while for the Financial Times to launch Pink Mobile.

Boomerangs

(Your feedback fed back)

Hello Laurel,

Hope you are well. We are getting ready for the big Dutch show, Grafivak, starting tomorrow! However, had to stop to read my latest Spindrift… and its feature on preflighting. (Did you say it is obsolete?!?)

Anyway, some very good points. Thank you for the coverage!

One mistake and perhaps an important one that I noticed was practical, yet leads into the broader issue of truly what "pre-flight" is as compared to "postflight."

On page 11 of your excellent story titled, "Preflight reinvented" and the top of the page you say in part, "For example Enfocus, Markzware and OneVision all started

life as developers of Postscript checking tools and yet all three have…" Actually, Markzware started by supporting multiple file formats, including to a degree Postscript, however more fully, importantly and truly the native files of importance at the time, Quark Xpress, Pagemaker, Illustrator, Freehand and Photoshop. Postscript checking via Flightcheck was long not very complete in the early days, for that was not our focus. The Postscript checks and later PDF checks grew with time and are now of course very complete and all through a stand-alone application that is not a rip.

There are good arguments why to check a PDF and call it preflighting. For instance, if you are a printer, for you this is your first check on that file. Also, it is of course interesting and necessary to also check a PDF file and if you have it open in Acrobat, why not run a so-called, "preflight." (After all, it is all preflight, but to get into the details we need to further define elements of this broader category.)

However if you are an advertising agency or catalogue house or anyone working with open or native files, then you should first preflight, then make the PDF. Anything after that for them is then a postflight version of the preflight category!

A PDF can be edited, but why do surgery or take artificial pills when you can cure or fix the pain yourself, very easily in the native file? Furthermore, even for printers, they increasingly do not want to edit PDFs (and publishers even more) and hence the push for cPDF and the use of Flightcheck Online to guarantee the quality, BEFORE it leaves the desktop of the sender, in real-time, all via the all-powerful internet.

Whether it is Quark or Indesign, first preflight, then export to PDF. In other words, first use Flightcheck Studio or Flightcheck Professional, then export to PDF. (I can also outline why you should use FCStudio or FCPro for InDesign, even though it has a preflight module, in another email. For instance InDesign preflight does not check image data in most cases and thus is really more a layout check, than a complete preflight check IMHO.)

So, I better stop now, or you will need to charge me fore reading this lengthy email! Thank you again for your time and as always please feel free to contact us.

Friendly Regards,
David Dilling
Markzware Europe

Was that Newstec or Snoozetec ?

Despite the echoing aisles, truly dismal conference attendance and dark mumblings that this could be the last Newstec ever, the show is still more than worth the trek to Brighton, at least for the visitors. These were sadly tough to spot, but those who did show up got the chance to see at close hand some interesting technology, much of it still under development, along with much that was presented at Ifra last year. This includes the DTI Caché database technology, Kodak's violet plate and platesetter, and Creo's Synapse Newsmanager for workflow management.

Of course everyone and his dog talks workflow management, but it's clear that databases combined with network servers can make anything possible. We see more and more companies looking to build production systems with this distributed foundation, but their shape and size depends on what they're for, who is using them and why. We saw several companies illustrating this point at Newstec, and several examples of why the best development efforts are market driven, rather than dependent on committee activities.

Oppolis is a great example of a little developer with big ideas. Oppolis has developed a publishing workflow technology that brings together multiple software tools and page building into a single system for small publishers. Gopublish works with Indesign to bring together and manage advertising, editorial, archiving and planning data. A publication is built from the Gopublish database through cleverly combining its elements. Access to the database is maintained throughout the publication building process, so it is possible for example to associate groups of images with a page, so that the user can choose his or her preferred image. There is automatic revision control and a basket structure to help manage the workflow and the planning view has direct links to the editorial or ad content. This is ambitious technology configured for smaller publishers and priced accordingly.

From little to large

It was clear at Newstec that Quark is leveraging its core competence to make its technology available to a broader market. The company is still holding its own in the newspaper industry, with a recent order for 200 licenses at a UK title for Xpress 6.5, and news that QPS 3.5 is now in final beta testing. Due for release in a couple of months, QPS 3.5 will include red-lining capabilities, and allow connected clients to support applications other than Xpress and Copydesk. For smaller publishers QPS Studio, a version of the software preconfigured for workgroups of five to ten users, is due for release two months after QPS 3.5. With QPS Studio the user interface is preset, so it does not require a system integrator to set up.

There is also a new version of Quark Content Manager in the works for Xpress 6.5. Content Manager 3.5 is due in July and includes Review Manager. Users will be able to review Xpress documents via a web browser, including HTML animations and real time chatting. Quark Brand Manager is a version of the same thing tailored for agencies, so that corporates can better control their brand using specific editing controls and content locking. HP Indigo is one of Quark's strategic ▶

partners, so we expect to see this technology find its way quickly into HP Indigo's variable data print management tools. We can also expect to hear more about brand and content control in Xpress 7.0

Despite the rumours and qvetching that 6.5 is buggy and unstable, Quark is seeing increased sales of upgrades to 6.5 and claims that it's its fastest selling upgrade ever. Quark attributes the problems more to operating system problems than to its code. Version 7.0 is due out "later this year".

Adsml?

For the last couple of years much has been written about Admsl, the XML based data format under development for closed loop ad delivery to newspapers. Yet so far there seems to be more chat than fat on Adsml's bones, even though the great and the good excitedly flock to be busy, busy, busy at meetings and get Adsml airborne. At Newstec there were hints that maybe the market can't wait anymore. Validation of incoming ads against booking reference number, their URNs (Unique Reference Numbers), should really be fundamental to any database driven ad management system.

Quark showed for the first time its database driven advertising management technologies, bridging ad booking systems and QPS, including ad delivery management. DTI announced that its Copychaser technology is tracking incoming ads, matching them with bookings, updating production plans with scope for chasing missing copy at the Telegraph Group in London. This company is seeing a process time reduction of 70 percent because of Copychaser. Quickcut's links between ad validation and the ad booking system are due to go live at the Irish News this month, and the company's forward advice system is closing the delivery and validation loop, so that no longer is there a need for publishers to manually check against bookings or chase copy. Since all this stuff is XML based, DTI, Quark and Quickcut's efforts to directly link ad booking and production make considerable sense. Given the deadfrog speed with which Adsml is coming to market, it's hardly surprising that vendors aren't waiting but instead are building their own links. And as for all these standards committees, consortia and cartels, perhaps they are best kept culled?

With its constantly updated global file specifications database, Quickcut has pioneered the use of databases for managing ad delivery for many years. Although we still tend to think of the company in this context, it is clear that Quickcut is broadening its horizons. Quickcut was the most interesting thing we saw at Newstec, because much of its work looks like a blueprint for where workflow management is heading.

Quick Print 5.0 is currently in beta testing at News Limited in Australia and is due to ship later this year. Version 5.0 is Quickcut's first version of its technology to incorporate the Adobe colour engine with Quickcut's ICC colour management capabilities. The new release combines Quickcut's three base technologies (Quickprint, Quickcut ICC and Quickcut PDF checking) into a single product and a single Mac and PC release. Whether the single product will turn out to be a treacle pudding or a soufflé isn't clear, but we tend more to the soufflé point of view for a couple of reasons. First off, it's very easy to get confused by the company's Quickcut-this-Quickcut-that approach to product names. Many companies do this, apparently thinking that it makes things easier for customers and prospects, but it's mostly information overload. ▶

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Hopefully Quickcut will start a new trend towards straightforward names for products.

Back to the plot

Quickprint 5.0 is based on the Adobe PDF library, so it's no longer application dependent. Whatever is available in the Adobe PDF library is available to the Quickprint software which means there's no need for users to depend on Adobe products and there's much more speed. Quickcut estimates that version 5.0 is at least twice as fast as the previous
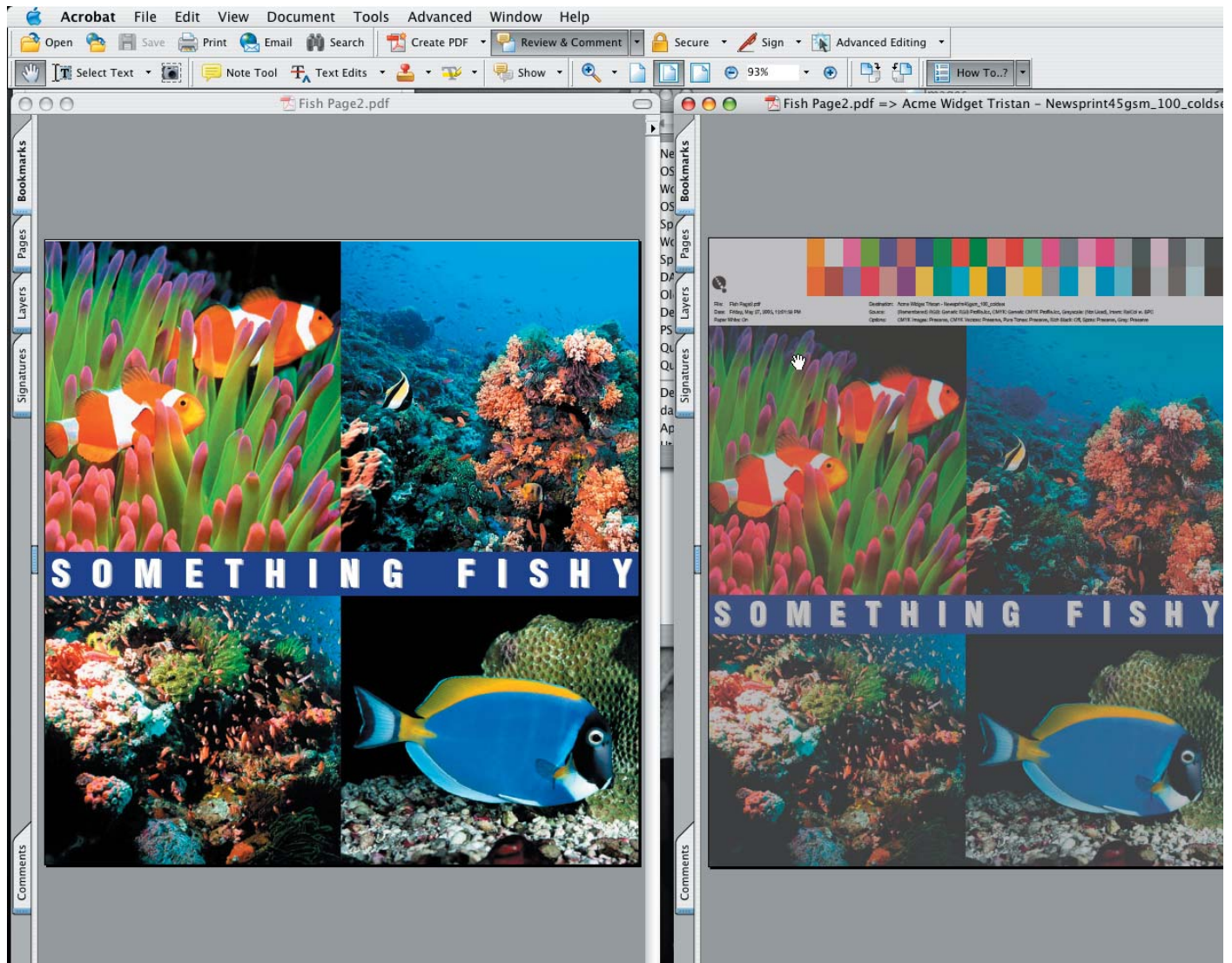
version. Other new features include settings for checking against PDF X-1a, PDF X-3 and the Ghent Workgroup's PDF Plus. Quickcut is doing the necessary testing to gain accreditation from both the Ghent PDF Workgroup and the UK's PPA (Periodical Publishers Association). Apart from the fee (quel surprise), accreditation involves ploughing through a shedload of 72 test files and the subsequent cross checking of the results by the groups involved.

Quickcut has always had an impressive ability to anticipate market needs, despite its apparently lukewarm interest in ICC colour and profile management. That has changed with version 5.0 with the addition of robust colour management capabilities, and Quickcut and EFI have just announced Assureproof for hardcopy proofing and verification. ▶

Quickcut's Quickprint 5.0. The ICC profile has been applied to the image on the left, so that in the image on the right it looks accurate to its appearance on newsprint.

Assureproof is for generating hard copy ad proofs that match the destination publication's ICC colour profiles. Colour measurement values are written to a JDF file, so is possible to generate an accurate colour hard copy proof anywhere in the workflow.

Portal Services

Quickcut, in common with several other workflow technology developers, is providing publisher branded portals for workflow management and file delivery. The portal services are based on three components: templates for building ads, PDF validation and uploading of ads and proofs between publishers and their clients, and uploading of separate ad components for the publisher to layout and produce on their clients' behalf. This as yet unnamed technology is in beta testing at News Limited in Australia, where it is used in live production.

All incoming ad files are validated against the Quickcut database, but the user sees only a subset of the whole database. The publisher controls the list of visible titles for which files can be validated via user log on. Although this system makes the assumption that people will want to create their own ads and build their own PDFs, it also supports non-PDF workflows. Users can upload separate elements, if they don't want to work with PDFs, or create their own ads. They can upload text, logos, images and whole page files so that the publisher can take care of layout and production readiness. This provides a means of supporting twin workflows for both native file and PDF based file delivery, although this is still elements based rather than native file based. There is currently no means of downloading the Quickcut plug-ins for Indesign or Xpress which pre-configure documents using a publisher's profiles, nor does the user interface encourage native file uploads.

But Quickcut's portal technology can absolutely support native and PDF workflows, and this fact should not be lost when the product is market ready. Hopefully Quickcut will develop interface options for this to make it easier for casual advertisers to send in ads fully laid out but not written to PDF. The elements component includes ad templates so users can avoid doing layout if they want and the same logic suggests it would make sense to get them out of creating PDFs as well if they want. Designing an ad is quite good fun, but having to learn and understand production readiness for PDFs is a fag and, after all, there's only so much DIY (Do It Yourself) some people can take.

The third module to this portal technology is a collection of templates from which the user can select, with access to online image libraries. Placement and selection requires a point and click, rather than drag and drop, but there isn't much guidance in the interface for this at the moment. There are also some basic image cropping tools available, which is handy but which could be automated for images that are too large or too small for the selected template. There is no white space management or automatic justification of copy once content is added. Since these templates are presumably structured HTML files, this shouldn't be a problem to fix with a bit of clever coding. There are presently no guides as to which templates are the most popular for particular ad types, nor are they rated either for their popularity or their effectiveness, which might be a trifle ambitious for the moment. A popularity rating would however be a very nice addition and one likely to encourage multiple ads, particularly for the casual advertiser for whom this technology is designed.

Although Quickcut has more to do, its portal technology is already a seriously impressive piece of work with a logical and straightforward workflow, and the right tools for making ad creation and delivery simple. And let's face it, anything that makes newsprint based advertising easy and accessible has to be a good thing.

The system keeps a full log of the status of uploaded elements with a notes option for the whole lot, but there is as yet no means of adding notes to individual elements, but this could change. Publishers build the ad once all elements are uploaded, using either a user selected template or some uploaded design concept. Once laid out, the publisher uploads PDF proofs which the client can then download for approval. Automated e-mail notification to the client that files are ready for checking "can be arranged" according to Quickcut. Proof PDFs don't carry any note regarding colour management, colour accuracy or the importance of monitor calibration, which for the market, and to anticipate possible colour discrepancies, they absolutely should. Hopefully this will be in place when the product is ready for release. Quickcut is working on the user interface to make it more idiotproof, fixing such things as the fact that files can be approved or rejected, without actually opening the file. But this is a quibble; overall Quickcut's portal looks to be more like a winner than an also ran.

All portal modules are independent components and can be independently configured according to what publishers want, making this an attractive technology for regionals and local newspapers. There are plenty of things we'd like to see in this tool, such as a more user friendly interface, template ratings and the like, but these things will surely come. Quickcut could also go further by providing basic up-selling tools, such as a web ad option and even links to ad booking systems to further develop the DIY model and up-sell print ads from the web. Although Quickcut has more to do, this is already a seriously impressive piece of work with a logical and straightforward workflow, and the right tools for making ad creation and delivery simple. And let's face it, anything that makes newsprint based advertising easy and accessible has to be a good thing. Three UK publishers already expressed interest in Quickcut's portal technology and the company anticipates having something ready to deliver in September.

Quickcut isn't the only company doing interesting stuff with databases. Last year at Ifra we had a glimpse at Picdar's Media Mogul Jsuite technology for content management. This J2EE version does away with the need for client software, yet has individualised views according to a user's role, history and interest. Version 2 was demonstrated at Newstec and puts greater emphasis on the user's interaction with the technology via the browser, with URL data access and drag and drop of images from the browser into Xpress pages with incorporated OPI.

Media Mogul provides access to distributed data repositories through mapping to different database technologies made available under license. It is ideal for use in content portals for text, images, RSS feeds, indeed anything, and it's suitable for both large and small publishers. J2EE also releases Picdar from an over-reliance on Unix. This gives the company and its customers more flexibility to run for example on Microsoft servers, and allows them to capitalise on peoples' familiarity with browser based user interfaces.

Media Mogul is in testing with one large UK national newspaper (could it be Associated?) which has already got four million objects accessible and is nearly ready to go live.

Seecolor

Seecolor, best known as developers of proofing tools, has reinvented itself to be Newscolor to better reflect its role. At Newstec the company ▶

previewed Remarque, a technology for changing half-tone and stochastic screens to use less ink on press. Remarque is a patented technology that changes dot sizes to overcome dot gain on press. This problem is inherent to stochastic screens and is particularly annoying for newspaper printers. Remarque changes dot sizes arbitrarily, using the press profile developed with Newscolor's profiling target and tests.

The Remarque software works out the thresholds for dot changes, based on maximum and minimum dot sizes, specific to the way a particular press prints. It anticipates patterns of dots that go solid and uses this as its basis for a 100% dot. Working with four rather than one dot at a time, instead of the usual 256 greyscales, Newscolor's technology works with over 1000 greyscales for enhanced quality.

This patented technology has many attractions for newspaper publishers apart from the obvious ink savings. It doesn't matter what sort of workflow, output or rip technology is used, since Remarque is based on the press's behaviour for ink savings. It can be used to maintain print consistency across multiple presses, and the screening process can be broken in half, for transmitting TIFF files that are one fifth the size of screened one bit TIFFs and doing the screening at the target location. Stochastic screening is also more resilient to misregistration, and less ink means less water is used, so there should be less scumming on press. Remarque is also a means of avoiding having to create multiple versions of images and/or ads for different output, since any dot adjustments are done according to the target press profile when the file is ripped.

Remarque could in theory work with any screening technology, but Newscolor prefers to use its own stochastic screening because it is a known quantity. However there's no reason why it wouldn't work with other technologies. The software is available for free as an internet download, but support has to be paid quarterly, with a fee that varies according to the amount of ink saved, based on the press profile and Newscolor's assessment of the savings value.

The higher the dot gain, the more ink Remarque can save. The technology is in beta testing at four newspaper sites in the United States and one in the UK (why do we think this is probably Associated too?) and most of them are seeing around 25% ink savings. As with so much that comes out of the newspaper industry, this technology will eventually be available for commercial applications, but not any time soon.

Newstec has always been a quiet little show, ideal for developers to do some market testing and low profile previews. The event did not fail to live up to expectations, and in this respect it has the scope to provide a good complement to Ifra. However to truly be a developers' event it needs a solid conference and workshop programme. But where have we heard that before?

– Laurel Brunner
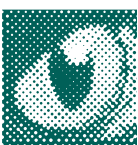
Softly Softly

Since our review of collaborative softproofing systems in March, some additional systems have come onto the market that we thought you'd like to hear about. And if you wouldn't, we promise this is the last of the softproofing stuff for a while!

Colorbus has launched Cyclone Visual Proofer based on the Cyclone RIP with pixel streaming technologies from Cyan Soft. Visual Proofer supports preflight and colour management, plus collaborative internet based proofing. All annotations on proofs are viewed, via the database and web browser. Visual Proofer complements the Cyclone hard copy proofing systems, for printed contract proofs and monitor based soft-proofing.

Java based client users access proofs via log-on to the publisher's or printers's internet server. At the moment, the client software integrates with Eizo's calibration software with the assumption that operators will be using an Eizo monitor for proofing. Other monitors and monitor calibration software can also be used, but in this case the validation of monitor calibration can't be done with the Colorbus client software, but has to be done by some other means.

Colorbus is working on a general calibration tool that can be used for many types of monitors and once complete, this will be tightly integrated into the client software. We have had a brief look at this work in progress and it looks to be a very promising solution. One particularly interesting, and as far as we know unique feature, is the possibility to merge 1 bit TIFF files (screened and separated output files) into a composite colour managed softproof. This feature has encouraged several large newspapers to jump onto the Colorbus softproof bandwagon already, including a couple of major British nationals.

Colorbus recently applied for the UK's Periodical Publishers Association's (PPA) Pass 4 Press certification, but due to differences between viewing booths, wasn't accepted. In the evaluation process a Verividi Viewing Booth was used, while the Colorbus UK team normally use a Just Normlicht viewing booth for the calibration and verification process. Colorbus will resubmit its system for evaluation in September, and hopes are high that it will pass this second time around. This just goes to show how complex proofing can be – different viewing booths really shouldn't make much difference, if they are set to 5000 K and around 2000 lux, but it seems they do. Also, as we learn from this story, such phenomena as metamerism can come into play when you least expect it. The Colorbus hardcopy proofing solutions are SWOP certified, and Colorbus plans to submit the Cyclone Visual Proofer for a SWOP certification as well.

Another company that has recently brought its softproofing solution to market is CGS, with a softproofing addition to the Oris Color Tuner hardcopy proofing system. It's not a collaborative proofing system as such, since it's about sending around PDF files. But it offers the possibility to create a preflighted and pre-ripped PDF, fully colour managed on both pixel and vector graphics content. So it ties in to the Oris Certified Proof concept, and still allows for annotations and previewing using Adobe Acrobat.

Eizo Color Edge CG 220 is a 22.2" LCD monitor with a very large colour gamut. Eizo promises that it will include 98.3% of the Adobe RGB colour gamut.
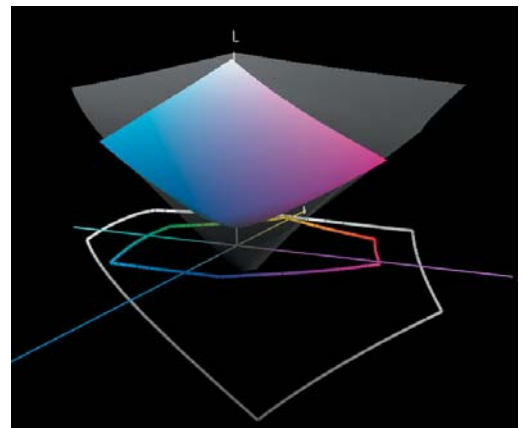
When using a monitor for softproofing, it's important that the monitor can display all the printable CMY colours. The Eizo Color Edge CG 220 does this well for the yellows, and there is only a small percentage of the pure cyan and magenta that isn't fully displayed. (The semi translucent grey sphere represents the colour gamut of the Color Edge CG 220 and the coloured sphere represents the gamut of print on coated paper according to the ISO 12647 standard).

More Monitoring

We're in love with these gorgeous screens, so fortunately Eizo have released the production model of its much vaunted LCD monitor, the Color Edge CG 220. This monitor is claimed to display all the colours of Adobe RGB, but in our tests we found that it actually has a slightly larger colour gamut than Adobe RGB. The blues have given way to some extent to the yellows, but this isn't such a problem, since Adobe RGB doesn't include the 100% pure printable Euroscale process yellow in any case.

The Color Edge CG 220 22.2" LCD monitor has a maximum brightness of 200 cd/m2 and a resolution of 1920 x 1200 pixels. The gamma/luminance curve can be fine tuned via an extra USB connection (hardware calibration). This monitor renders all printable yellows (see illustration) and only a fraction of the full tone values of cyan and magenta is missing. All in all, this is the monitor with the largest colour gamut of the ones we have tested so far.

Uniformity over the whole screen is generally an issue with LCD monitors, but the Eizo Color Edge CG 220 passed our test for high end soft proofing. We calculate an average deviation on measured colour patches, plus an average of colour deviation on a light grey background on the monitor desktop. The new Eizo achieved a total deviation value of ΔE 4.55 in our test, which is slightly over the recommended maximum deviation of ΔE 4. However the uniformity over the whole screen may vary from one monitor to another, and is particularly critical in the very light areas (we test at CIElab L=90, which is a very light grey).

And that's the end of the monitor monitor's monitor monitoring for a while.

– Paul Lindström

A Special Message

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