Publishing Without Platform Limits

BY PETER MASON

JANET WOODS knew there had to be an easier way to transfer the print edition of the St. Petersburg Times to the newspaper's Web site, tampabay.com.

The company operates with two systems for the newsroom—Systems Integrators Inc., or SII, for text editing and Adobe InDesign for desktop publishing—and two systems for the Web, which requires that stories and photos coming out of the newsroom be reformatted and encoded, sometimes by hand, before being posted online.

"We needed to get something unified," says Woods, customer services and operations manager for the Times. "The industry is changing and our readers are changing. We have to find different ways to gather and publish information efficiently."

In the past, content management systems, or CMS, were typically reserved for posting information online from print editions. Woods explains that the Times used an in-house system to "massage" text from SII in the newsroom for presentation on the Web. The exported data was posted to the newspaper's Web site using a "homegrown" CMS.

However, more newspapers are now looking to move beyond Web-only CMS, and implement streamlined, flexible systems that produce print and Web editions with a click of the button—something Woods refers to as "publication agnostic."

Woods, who is heading up the pagination project at the Times, is currently in the process of implementing WebSpeed CMS from Digital Technology International in Springville, Utah, which combines print and Web production for both editorial content and advertising.

DTI is not alone.

In 2000, Harris & Baseview—now

MediaSpan Media Software in Ann Arbor, Mich.—introduced JazBox, which can publish to print, the Web and wireless devices. Since that time, interest in the unified CMS has grown, with installations increasing 62 percent in 2005, says Jodee Taylor, a MediaSpan marketing team member.

Additionally, some newspapers have gone beyond what is commercially available and developed their own unified CMS.

In 2002, The World Co., publisher of the Lawrence (Kan.) Journal-World, began developing software that allowed users to import and manage content in a centralized system. The result was Ellington, an online publishing platform built "by journalists, for journalists," says Dan Cox, director of World Online, the online division of The World Co.

"We found that there was a big difference between what was available on the market and what we needed," says Cox, who believes that the industry has a "sea change ahead of it" as more readers look to the Web

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> **— JANET WOODS, ST. PETERSBURG TIMES**

and high-tech devices, such as portable music players, cell phones and personal digital assistants, to find their news. "It's evolve or die, really."

Ellington differs from other CMS in that it can publish to multiple sites and output to different devices (iPods, PDAs, etc.), Cox says.

Earlier this year, The E.W. Scripps Co. in Cincinnati selected Ellington for 15 of its newspapers and nine of its television stations.

John Reetz, general manager of COXnet, the online unit of Cox Newspapers Inc. in Atlanta, says his team also took into account the changing demands of newspaper readers when examining unified CMS for Cox's 17 dailies. "We wanted a system that not only handles edited text coming out of the newsroom, but also has the ability to produce 'third-party text,' such as blogs and PDAs," Reetz says. In May, COXnet began installation of DTI's WebSpeed CMS.

"We anticipate much greater efficiencies in workflow when getting content to the Web," Reetz says. ◻