Champions of the XML Workflow: Content Services in India

Transforming content has never been more sophisticated
by Teri Tan

A robust and efficient single- source multichannel publishing system? That's the promise of the XML (eXtensible Markup Language) workflow. Now the question of XML adoption is no longer when or whether, but how soon. There is much urgency to digitize backlists and join the e- book bandwagon, to turn static pages into multimedia e- learning modules to interest the growing MTV fans and video gamers out there, to convert content into NIMAS/ DAISY- compatible formats for the learning disabled and to reuse content to maximize its worth. For publishers, the XML workflow means efficiency, neutrality, flexibility, multiplicity, consistency and portability. It means the possibility of creating content once and publishing it in whole or in part in different platforms simultaneously.

The case for XML is overwhelming, and its dynamism has been tested and proven.

At Planman, some 200,000 pages have been converted into DAISY- compliant files for libraries in Europe and Australia. The company has also won a two- year DAISY conversion contract from a public library. "We are now actively promoting DAISY conversion services to major libraries, organizations and publishers worldwide," says Amit Vohra, v- p of sales. In addition, Planman and its U.S.- based joint- venture partner, settingPace, completed close to 75,000 NIMAS- compliant pages for one publisher last year. "We have also converted MS Word and PDF into NIMAS- compliant XML for books, Web sites and handheld devices."

As for interesting projects, Vohra recalls a geography series that required 35 ancillaries as well as transparencies. The tasks included designing maps, charts and graphs, and researching and writing original content and enrichment activities. "We had to find reliable sources of information and reference, maintain editorial consistency with the student book, manage the large volume of pages and, of course, meet the tight deadline. It involved the full scope of our content services-- design, development and production."

Library services and newspaper archiving are huge, too. Its team recently transcribed scanned images of bibliographic records in various languages into a customized record format with 99.995% accuracy. "We have been selected by the World Bank to undertake postproduction work that includes conversion of printed pages to XML and e- book formats such as PDF, ePub and MobiPocket, as well as files ready for on- demand printing. Our team converts about 5,000 printed pages into these formats every month," says director Sourav Chatterjee, whose strategy for 2009 is to consolidate existing businesses through acquisitions. "Our success in winning several major projects in different segments, such as newspaper digitization, DTB production and creative services, should buffer us from the impact of the economic downturn."