Virtual Proofing Training Digital PDF Quality Innovation Creativity for Workflow Green High Short Runs Profitability Time to Market Networking Partnering Piracy Digital Color

Where We Are, Where We're Going

INSIDE: 19 Must-read opinion pieces that define publishing's state of the industry.
Adobe XMP-JDF-PDF: The Alphabet of Automation

Soup up your workflow with these powerful acronyms.

The onslaught of technical acronyms leaves many creative professionals, print buyers, and printers feeling as though they’re simmering in a pot of alphabet soup. But once they’re understood, Adobe’s XMP and PDF, and the JDF work together to streamline and simplify workflows from beginning to end.

Adobe XMP and PDF, and the JDF start the capture of key information for the creative professionals, and automate tasks throughout the workflow. Although PDF is well known, JDF and XMP are relative newcomers.

Perhaps less understood is how they fit together to save time, improve productivity and, ultimately, reduce costly errors. Think of Adobe PDF as the ‘universal communication channel’, XMP as ‘the descriptor’, and JDF as ‘the process controller’.

Print buyers can reduce costs and eliminate problems associated with submitting jobs to printers by using the PDF as the delivery channel. The printer creates the PDF according to the JDF specifications, capturing the object, images, and fonts associated with a file.

An Adobe PDF packages image files, eliminates font problems by encapsulating them, and can be created as specific resolutions. Without the PDF, the JDF creates manually bundle up source files, graphics, and fonts, and submit them to their printer, which can lead to time-consuming and costly errors.

For example, images might not be of the right color space or resolution. Graphics links might be wrong. Fonts might be missing fonts. Because Adobe PDF can capture all print related assets in a single file, it is the perfect file format for an automated workflow.

Adobe’s Extensible Metadata Platform, or XMP, embeds information about assets (data about data, or ‘metadata’) into the file itself. For example, digital cameras automatically record information about a photograph, such as date and time, camera type, exposure and lens setting, and add this to the image file.

This is metadata. Additional metadata can be manually added, such as where the photo was taken, the photographer’s name, an article slug, etc., to enable searches for this asset associated with a job.

Using XMP, this metadata is attached to and travels with the photo file throughout the production process. Whatever changes occur to the asset will be saved along with it, making certain the correct version is in use.

Even if the original file is converted to another file format, such as an EPS, PDF, or Photoshop file, the metadata is preserved, maintaining the information trail throughout the production process.

In addition to carrying a wealth of descriptive information, XMP-empowered files are searchable. Simply being able to deeply and accurately search for assets using a computer’s standard search functions can become a reliable method of asset management, without requiring additional software.

XMP lets users assign multiple levels of descriptive metadata that’s understood by XMP-compatible applications, including Adobe InDesign CS, Acrobat 6.0, Photoshop CS, Illustrator CS, and others.

XMP labels provide the meaning that guides interoperability of applications, and can be used to establish field values for databases — attributes important to publishers who need to control an increasingly overwhelming amount of digital content. These same attributes are beneficial to corporate IT departments, for archiving and other purposes.

Job Definition Format, or the ‘JDF’, is authored by Adobe, Agfa, Heidelberg, and MAN Roland. It’s based on the eXtensible Markup Language (XML), an open Internet standard document markup language.

JDF streamlines the production workflow, and integrates business operations that span the entire printing enterprise. JDF enables more than automatic reporting of job information to accounting, or job status to production.

JDF interacts with JDF-compliant devices. For example, a PDF file might contain several EPS or TIFF files. XMP provides key information about the color space and resolution. The JDF file can refer back to the XMP information for color conversion, trapping, or printing requirements.

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