

Open-systems experts give practical/contradictory advice

by Mark Fitzgerald

JUDGING FROM THE contradictory practical tips dispensed at the Newspaper Association of America's recent prepress symposium in Phoenix, expert opinion on open systems is every bit as confused as that of newspapers.

Here is some advice offered during the two-day symposium about implementing open-system pagination and other electronic prepress operations:

Do not anoint a "champion" who is responsible for developing the system.

Conventional wisdom that a zealous champion is needed to oversee system implementation is simply dead wrong, says Bob Yoder, director of marketing for Baseview Products Inc., the Ann Arbor, Mich.-based systems provider. Champions just alienate other employees and ultimately impede the integration of the system, he said.

Whatever you do, appoint a champion to shepherd the implementation process.

"Pagination requires champions. It requires stubborn, bullheaded people who will stay up all night studying codes and coping with errors and then come in early in the morning to wrestle with vendors," employees and management, said Bill Stroud, *Philadelphia Inquirer* director of publishing systems.

Scrap your old newspaper systems entirely.

"Instead of adopting new equipment, I hear [the newspaper industry favors] adding new equipment to old proprietary systems. We must accept that some old hardware is out-of-date, some old software is useless," said David Latcha, production director for J. Walter Thompson in Detroit.

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A far more widely held view, this advice considers pagination an evolutionary process. These experts argue forcefully that newspapers cannot achieve the performance of proprietary systems simply by stringing a bunch of PCs along a network.

"What you've got [then] is a thousand chickens pulling a plow," said *Houston Chronicle* operations vice

president Jack Stanley. "Shrink wrap is not the answer."

Pagination systems should be run from the copy desk.

The whole idea of pagination, these experts say, is to give your newsroom greater control of the product.

Running pagination systems from the copy desk is fraught with peril.

"The fact is that when copy editors become compositors their editing suffers. Something has to give and in our case it was quality," said Dennis Herzog, managing editor of the Grand Junction, Colo., *Daily Sentinel*.

"Do functions where they make the most sense," added the *Chronicle's* Stanley. "Don't move your composing room into your editorial room unless you want to pay your compositors more than you ever have — more even than their union ever dreamed of."

Some consensus

Despite these disagreements, however, there is wide consensus on many aspects of implementing pagination. Here are some:

- Paginators and designers must be journalists as well as technologists.

"They are out there walking that fine line between handling production of the paper and influencing its overall content and direction," said Howard Finberg, assistant managing editor for the *Arizona Republic* and *Phoenix Gazette*.

- Three words: training, training, training.

"If you upgrade the hardware and not the people, you're not going anywhere," said Baseview's Bob Yoder.

- Carefully plan workflows.

- Install lots of memory from the start.

"Nature abhors a vacuum even if it's measured in gigabytes," said Will Corbin, managing editor of the *Daily Press*, Newport News, Va. "If you have the memory, something will fill it up."

- Ergonomic equipment design is important.

"You can't spend too much time and money on the ergonomic issue. If you don't do it up front, you'll spend much more in human suffering and money to fix it than you saved in capital expenditures," said Finberg. ■E&P

Pagination survey

ONE IN 10 Society of Newspaper Design member newspapers is now fully paginated, according to an SND survey.

Nearly two-thirds of responding newspapers do at least some electronic paginating, the latest annual survey also found.

The 600-member survey had a 35% response rate. Howard Finberg, assistant managing editor of the *Arizona Republic* and *Phoenix Gazette*, presented the results at the recent Newspaper Association of America prepress symposium in Arizona.

It found 9.7% of newspapers have full text-and-graphics pagination, another 16.9% have fully paginated text and 22.9% paginate at least some text and graphics.

According to the survey, 14.8% of newspapers have incomplete pagination of text only.

A plurality of papers — 23.3% — are still in the planning stages for some degree of pagination.

Perhaps the most surprising result of the survey, however, is that fully 12.4% of responding newspapers not only have no pagination at all — they have no plans to paginate at this time.

— Mark Fitzgerald

Main centennial

BOSTON-BASED PARSONS Main Inc. is in its hundredth year of business.

Founded by Charles T. Main, the original Dean & Main partnership designed and supervised construction of New England textile mills.

It expanded into the areas of power generation and manufacturing. In 1985, the firm joined the Parsons Corp. as a full-service firm supporting international power, pulp and paper and manufacturing industries.

Employees receive ergonomic training

MORE THAN 500 employees of the *Riverside* (Calif.) *Press-Enterprise* have received instruction on the Advanced Ergonomic Systems to avoid keyboard injury.

Designed to alleviate stress and reduce repetitive strain injury (RSI), the training was mandatory for all staffers who work at least two hours a day at a computer.