Exhibition deal keeps Expo alive

THE Ifra exhibition for the world’s news publishing industry will expand next year when it runs alongside DCX – the new Digital Content Expo.

AFTER 46 years as a standalone event, Wan-Ifra has joined forces with Swiss exhibition and events company børding Holding GmbH (børding messe) to form a joint venture company called the Publishing Exhibition GmbH & Co KG.

The managing director of børding messe, Alexander R Petsch, will manage the new company that “combines exhibition competence and publishing expertise under one roof”.

Wan-Ifra has traditionally organised the IFRA World Publishing Expo (WPE) trade exhibition. The annual international exhibition for the news media industry is attended by trade and publishing professionals from more than 100 countries.

As PJ went to press World Publishing Expo 2016 was about to open its doors in Vienna with 110 exhibiting companies in the hall, 50 media experts speaking on stage, and more than 2000 pre-registered participants.

This year’s event is significantly smaller than usual, with a number of the larger traditional companies having spent their marketing and exhibition budgets attending drupa in May and opting out of WPE for 2016.

In announcing the joint venture, Wan-Ifra said: “The trend towards digitisation has brought about a fundamental change in the newspaper industry. With the launch of the new DCX Digital Content Expo, Wan-Ifra and barding aim to substantially support and develop the growth market of digital content production.”

At the same time, the tradition of the Ifra World Publishing Expo will be continued as the interface between print and cross-media publishing, highlighted under the motto of ‘Make Publishing Successful’.

Every October, WPE showcases the latest developments in technology and services for publishers and media companies to investigate and consider for their investments in the coming year. It also serves as an opportunity to sign annual contracts in numerous business areas, particularly for consumables, such as ink and paper.

The common objective of both organisations is to offer Wan-Ifra’s customers and members the best networking platforms. Starting next year, there will be exhibitions held simultaneously under one roof: Ifra World Publishing Expo and DCX Digital Content Expo. Wan-Ifra says it is an ideal combination oriented towards the needs of the publishing industry.

JP prints Metro at Portsmouth

JOHNSTON Press has secured an arrangement to print around 85,000 copies of Metro five days a week at its Portsmouth Web plant in Hampshire. Printing commenced on Sunday 2 October for distribution the following day to Portsmouth, Southampton and other south coast towns.

The new deal was under way as PJ went to press and forms part of Metro’s plan to expand its print distribution by 10 per cent this month. Total print circulation is now 1.477 million, the largest it has ever been.

“We are delighted to be printing the publication at Portsmouth Web and further our print relationship with Metro, given we already print the title for distribution in Sheffield and Leeds from our Sheffield Web plant,” said Johnston Press group services division (print and logistics) managing director David Crew.

Metro distribution director Andrew Guiton added: “Metro is very much looking forward to printing with Johnston Press in Hampshire for the first time, enabling us to deliver our increased circulation in the London area from Monday 3 October.”

The free newspaper for urban commuters is distributed across 50 UK cities. Most of the extra copies of Metro are being distributed in the London area, now with an enhanced print run at Newspapers in Broxbourne, upping the number available each weekday morning to almost 190,000 in the capital.

Paterson joins Jersey print plant

DIGITAL newspaper printing specialist KP Services (Jersey) Ltd has appointed Bill Paterson as managing director.

Mr Paterson is a former regional print managing director within JP, former production director at Celtic Media and has worked in senior ops and production roles within the former Northcliffe Newspapers. Alan Palin continues as KP Services general manager in charge of day-to-day operations.

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Case study: Searching for continual improvements

DMPG and dmg media, the group’s consumer media company, were aware of many changes since then, including in its pre-press operation.

Today, the department handles the production of six newspapers – the Daily Mail on Sunday, Irish Daily Mail, Irish Mail on Sunday, Metro and the London Evening Standard – and numerous supplements and titles, including YOU, Event, ES, Irish YOU and Irish TV Week. Four staff cover technical specifications and customer services for pre-press production, while image editing is outsourced to the Born Group, which consist of eight on-site operators plus a team at its Northcliffe House offices.

“We have a continual quality improvement programme, which is rather like painting the Forth Bridge: once a project is finished, we analyse the results and look at the next step or technology available to improve things further,” says dmg media business service director John Tucker.

“We do try not to change too much at any one time, as it is important that we can see the benefits of whatever changes we can manage.”

A good example is the installation of OneVision’s Aurora software. This was originally installed in 2007 to simplify the pre-flight checking of incoming advertisements but has since evolved into a key production tool.

Dmg media senior pre-press operations analyst Lee Terry reports: “Managing the workload and the workflow of the business and its use was expanded into the marketing and editorial workflow.

“Within six months of going live, we increased throughput to around three gigabytes per day, processing PDFs from multiple channels.”

In 2015 a new generation of Aurora software was released, combined with its Workspace platform that allowed the building of a modular workflow. It was realised that dmg media could implement OneVision’s Amendo software to improve its imaging workflow. However, extensive testing was first carried out of image enhancing software from a number of vendors in the market.

“We looked at the quality produced by the different systems straight out of the box,” says Terry, adding, “in their own way, they all did pretty well.”

However, it was found that each system had drawbacks, including Amendo – the first version tested – which did not handle XML, which was key to dmg media’s operations.

“That was a bit of a show stopper,” admits Terry.

“We informed OneVision that if Amendo could not handle XML this would be a significant problem for us. Because of this, OneVision amended its Jobticket module to handle XML files.

“This meant that we could use its XML with our Ape publishing system without any changes,” says Terry.

“At the end of the day and after adding everything up, the clear winner was Amendo. It gave us the best improvement in quality overall, reducing the amount of manual retouching required.”

It took about a year for the software to go live because the system not only had to deal with a considerable variety and volume of image requests but it also had to prepare for the different print variables for all the publications, all of which needed to be fully tested with full print trials.

“For example, although the magazines are now all printed gravure at Primovis, the newspapers are not only printed at different print sites with different paper stocks, the differences between litho and flexo also had to be managed.

“One of our main aims is to maintain consistency but there are so many variables involved, not just the different stocks and the varying conditions at the different print sites but also the fact that flexo and litho are very different printing processes which at times can be challenging to match the two,” explains Tucker.

“It is a bit like painting with oils and then reproducing the same picture in watercolours and trying to have the same density.

“There are things you can do about this and we are continually looking at ways to improve. For instance, we have carried out some really good flexo trials on different stocks using a set of our standard test images. As a result, we produce some high quality results that could potentially be used for one-off standalone supplements.”

Progress so far

The OneVision Amendo system went live at the beginning of this year.

“The system does what we expected as we knew there would always be times when manual corrections would be required,” says Terry.

“However, results have shown that Amendo is automatically doing a high percentage of all image requests from our editorial teams.”

However, he warns: “As good as these systems are, they are only as good as you set them up. In fact, the test phase took a good eight to nine months but once we had it all on the test box we could save all the modules and settings.”

Currently 19,000 images a month are handled automatically – well over 50 per cent – and Tucker expects that figure will rise as users become more aware of the system’s capabilities.

Other selling points include the ability to keep the colour tone detail when converting pastel colours to CMYK as well as the sharp masking, which is similar to that of Photoshop’s “unsharp mask”.

Tucker adds: “The technology is

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‘We try not to change too much at any one time…’

What’s next?

Following the philosophy of continual improvement, Tucker and his team are already working on other potential advances. “As part of our continuous improvement programme we are looking at the new version of the WinDfrc ICC colour profile to see if it will improve our quality,” says Tucker, who believes that it will give more depth than the current profile used.

What about more automation of image enhancement? Is that possible? “There will always be a picture quality issues as the subject itself is subjective, but artificial intelligence will only get better and therefore the automation of picture editing will continue to evolve,” says Tucker.

He continues: “Continuous technical change is inevitable. We have to remain flexible and always take the view that there could be more cost-effective ways of managing image editing without reducing quality.

“Our job is to investigate any new opportunities and see if there is any value in them for us. That’s the reality of continuous progression.”

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Daily Mail image workflow

THis workflow commences with the image being pulled out of the picture library and placed on the page using Adobe InDesign and an Ateo CS2 editorial system. The user then decides whether the image needs enhancing and whether this should be done automatically or manually.

If the former, the raw image with an XML document that contains the publication title, the queue, the x and y co-ordinates (which give the size of the image as it was placed on the page in the Ateo system), and the resolution (which depends on the type of publication and the printing process to be used) are picked up by OneVision’s Ameado software. The XML document is sent to the Jobticket database module, while another Ameado module takes the raw image, crops it automatically and sends it on for processing, which can include contrast sharpening and colour correction.

If the image is for publication in a newspaper, it is then saved as a RGB JPEG, while for magazines it is converted to the required CMYK profile, while all magazines use CMYK images, newspapers use RGB because of the different print processes involved. Having been output to Ameado’s Workstation FTP server, it is then sent back to the Ateo system and placed on the page. If it is not what is required, the user can send the image to the burn team for it to be altered manually.

Once signed off, the 14 PDF page is sent to Agfa’s Courier system which, according to the site plan, determines whether it should be sent to all or specific print sites. After this, the print ready PDF goes to the OneVision Asara system for conversion into offset or flexo form.

“All the print site has to do is print within the agreed density and register guidelines,” says dmg media business service director John Tucker. “Then, if there is something wrong, it has to be the reps.”

* Although this schematic is for the Daily Mail, the process is the same for every publication title, both newspapers and magazines.

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