

Purpose

The purpose of this project is to establish a way that ad creators can embed a URL into a PDF in order to have this work as a hyperlink when the ad is published online.

Background

Apart from being printed most newspapers also publish a copy of the printed version online as PDF in one way or another. Most ads in newspapers exposes a URL, an e-mail address or other means of digital communication. When read online it seems obvious that the reader would expect to be able to click on that URL and have it work as an active hyper link.

The ad creator could create hyper links that would work directly on the PDF. However, this poses two problems. First of all a hyper link in a PDF would violate the rules for a PDF/X. The second problem being that if you assemble several ads on one page in InDesign or other editorial systems all hyper links will most likely be gone, when creating the final PDF of that page.

This is why we need a way to carry the hyper link information together with the ad as PDF through the production in a way that will allow the information to be stored without violating the PDF/X specification and in a way that the information can be preserved all the way to the final PDF.

Solution

Carrying the hyper link information as metadata seems to be the obvious way to solve this problem. We can embed information in the XMP of a PDF and still be within the PDF/X specification and the XMP of a PDF can be preserved throughout the production including assembling in InDesign or other editorial systems.

In order to be able to write the hyper link information into the XMP metadata, we would need to decide where to put the information and to find an easy and user friendly way to do this.

You could choose to write a specific Metadata Panel for this. That would however, demand every user to install that panel in order to implement this new workflow, which seems unrealistic. Another option would be to use an existing namespace to store the information.

There are of course pros and cons of using existing fields as that might already be used for something different. We have

looked around and found that the IPTC Contact Websites (Iptc4xmpCore:CreatorContactInfo/Iptc4xmpCore:CiUriWork) could be used.

If used it might in many cases already hold the URL that is going to be used for the hyper link, but most likely it is a field that is not already in use.

Finally if you are creating an ad to be send to a newspaper, there is no obvious reason, why important information should already be stored in this filed.

By using this already existing namespace we can have a solution that can be implemented right away, as many of the most common applications already allows the user to write directly into that namespace.

InDesign and Illustrator probably being the most common applications for creating ads already presents this field in the IPTC panel.

Adobe Bridge allows writing into this namespace as well, which means that any PDF created in any application can be enriched with this metadata using Bridge.

In terms of user friendliness it is a problem, that Acrobat does not present the IPTC metadata panel as default, so there is no interface for the user to write into the suggested namespace. The solution for this might be to create a JavaScript to be used in Acrobat.

The script could work in a way that it presents a dialogue where the user is prompted to type the required URL. Preferably the script should verify that the URL is valid. After clicking OK this URL should be written into the suggested namespace.

The script could be integrated in an Acrobat action, that could be exported, distributed and easily imported in the users Acrobat.

Being a JavaScript at modified version could maybe also work in InDesign and Illustrator to make it even easier for the user to add the metadata.

Concluding thoughts

This could be an easy and straight forward way to fulfil an increasingly more urgent need. It is a solution that could be implemented right away as most designers already have

all the tools needed and most publishers would be able to handle information supplied this way.

This might only serve as a temporary solutions as the features would hopefully be an integrated part of applications in the future and also a part of a future PDF/X standard. However we need something that could work in the meantime and the suggested solution could be a way to get going right away.

There might be publishers, who want to ad this information in other steps of their workflow and not have the ad creator do this. Handling things the suggested way will allow workflow systems to ad the information to the XMP at any stage in the flow. Whether you want to get information about the URL from a database, from an ad receiving system, from an ERP or as variables from almost anywhere, all you need is an XML containing the necessary information to be written into the XMP of the PDF. It has been tested in Enfocus Switch and works just fine.