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XyEnterprise Press Release

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XyEnterprise Case Study

UK TYPESETTER LETTERPART LTD REPORTS HUGE BENEFIT WITH XML

Letterpart Limited (based in Reigate, Surrey) is one of the leading typesetting companies in the UK. The organisation has a wide range of clients, ranging from Lexis Nexis UK (a publisher of legal, tax and business information) through to bespoke publications such as Wisden's Cricket Records for Headline Book Publishing.

Much of the work carried out by Letterpart is either of a complex or large volume nature and includes legal publications, dictionaries, reference titles and novels. A large number of these publications are produced in loose-leaf format. Additionally some of the publications handled by Letterpart have very high tabular content. Chris Leggett, Managing Director of Letterpart, states "some publications can consist of up to 50% tabular material".

Letterpart have been using XyEnterprise's batch-composition product XML Professional Publisher (XPP) for some years. The value XPP has added to the production process is the level of automation and the powerful pagination capabilities to generate high-quality typeset pages, including seamless, automatic generation of Tables of Contents and Indexes, and production of PDF files ready for the printer. Leggett says: "XPP will automate any index or contents in a directory, and once setup, takes minutes to produce hundreds of pages. On complicated titles, our throughput has increased dramatically due to the automation features of XPP."

Prior to purchasing XPP, several of Letterpart's customers were requesting the creation of loose-leaf publications. Because XPP has a separate Loose-leaf module, Letterpart was able to use this functionality to fulfill their customer needs. The system is used to create the initial baseline documents. Then, when amendments are made, XPP is used to generate only the pages containing updated information, plus any new "Insert" pages required to contain additional text flow. If the customer needs a list of the changed, added or deleted pages, for any of their publications, this information can be extracted automatically. Utilising XPP's Loose-leaf module was a major boost for the organisation; production of loose-leaf updates is now achievable with minimum effort. Leggett, says: "When we initially purchased XPP it was the only software on the market that could produce loose-leaf pages automatically and still, to this day, there is nothing to beat it."

The Move to XML

Originally most of the data provided by Letterpart's customers was in MS Word format. In this type of format the consistency of the markup in the data could present a challenge. So, interim processes to validate and then transform this information to tagged ASCII had to be carried out before importing the data into the composition system.

In 2001 some of Letterpart's customers started to use XML as their source format or at least plan towards it. So, Letterpart took the decision to upgrade and take advantage of the newly released version of XPP which provided direct support for import of native XML/SGML data. The core functionality of the product had not changed, so no expensive retraining of staff was required.

Now it is possible for Letterpart to process XML data directly without the need for data transformation, and, as the data is validated against a DTD on input, the integrity of the data is ensured. Letterpart also gained the ability to offer XML output if required. Leggett says: "The one thing with XPP is that XyEnterprise are always pushing the boundaries, thereby keeping the product at the cutting edge of typesetting technology."

Many of Letterpart's customers still, however, supply their work in MS Word. Letterpart have used a product developed by Graham Every Limited, which provides an RTF-XML conversion to handle this type of data. RTF files are converted to XML that will parse against a DTD created for the particular publication.

The adoption of the CALS standard for producing tables gives another benefit for typesetting companies like Letterpart. Using tables created to the CALS standard means a saving of time and money to process tabular content. When working with XML/CALS data Chris Leggett states: "We are saving enormously on tabular material - in the past some jobs could take 15 minutes preparation per table - now, using CALS and XML, most tables go through without the need for any manual intervention."

Since working with XML data and the latest version of XPP, Letterpart has seen an increase in productivity. Leggett estimates that on some types of work they have been able to show their clients a cost saving of between 30-60% in page price. This saving has resulted in an increase in work and has been the major reason for the recent expansion of the Reigate office.

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