

NEWSPAPERS & TECHNOLOGY

Reprinted with permission from Newspapers & Technology, June 2003

CanWest rolls out online tearsheets

By Steve Proulx

SPECIAL TO NEWSPAPERS & TECHNOLOGY

On New Year's Day, advertisers and employees of five CanWest Publications Inc. dailies in Canada began accessing ad tearsheets and newspapers in a new way.

The Calgary Herald, Edmonton Journal, Ottawa Citizen and two Vancouver dailies tapped Jan. 1 as an appropriate time to roll out the new service, based on Shoom Inc.'s hosted iTearSheets application.

"iTearSheets is a natural extension of electronic ad creation and delivery; it's akin to that technology breakthrough," said Ron Clark, senior vice president of CanWest Media Sales, the unit that sells advertising for the newspapers.

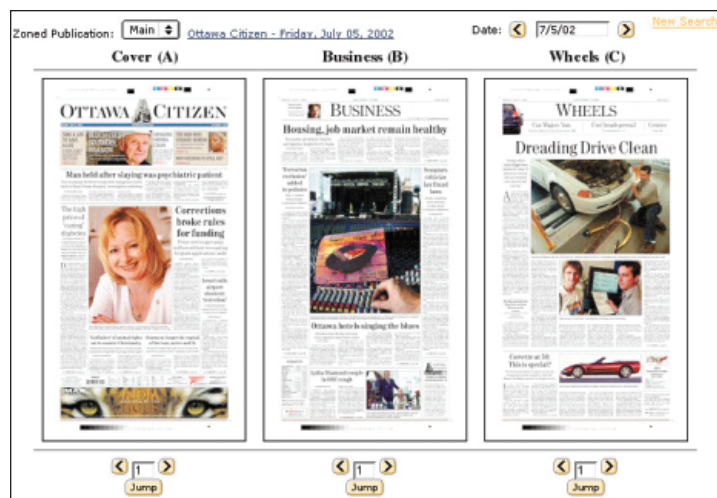
Advertisers with access to electronic tearsheets no longer receive hard copies unless a specific production issue, such as a new corporate color, warrants a request for them. Instead, they logon to a password-secured section of itearsheets.com to monitor their advertising.

The five dailies made iTearSheets available to large corporate advertisers and multinational retailers first and plan to phase in the service to local advertisers by July 1.

CanWest's other major dailies, The Gazette in Montreal, National Post, Regina Leader-Post, Saskatoon Star Phoenix, Victoria Times-Colonist and Windsor Star also plan to offer iTearSheets to their advertisers and employees in July.

Searchable images

Shoom's Web-based service delivers keyword-searchable thumbnail images of newspaper pages on publication day. Content is available by 9 a.m. Eastern time.



Graphic: Shoom Inc.

Digital tearsheets service from Shoom gives ad reps more firepower, publisher says.

CanWest began testing iTearSheets in 2000, using The Vancouver Sun as the pilot. The publisher decided to offer the service last year.

"It's a proven, professional, friendly and attractive system that works very well for us because we didn't have to develop the customer interface, create databases and manuals, maintain customer support and do other things that aren't our core business," said Clark. "If we'd tried to create a system internally, it probably wouldn't have iTearSheets' elegance, which is very important to client acceptance, and we may have encountered resource constraints that would have delayed the service."

To view ads, advertisers logon to itearsheets.com, where they can access their own ads as well as keep track of competitive offerings.

CanWest's advertising sales representatives, meanwhile, use the Web site to access the same indexed electronic advertising information.

Gather across many markets

The site enables reps to gather data across multiple markets more quickly, said Greg Morton, CMS' director of newspapers sales — Toronto. Armed

with that information, CanWest reps can help advertisers plan their ad campaigns more effectively. "It makes it much easier for advertisers to place ads in newspapers rather than other print or broadcast media," he said.

Both CanWest and advertiser billing operations as well as auditing firms have reaped benefits from the roll-out of the service.

"Both newspapers and advertisers gain space and time formerly devoted to paper tearsheets," said Phil Luckhoo, CanWest Publications' business manager. Case in point: verification of invoices.

"Advertisers go online, key in our ad numbers — which take them directly to their tearsheets — and measure ads with the sizing tool that gives exact dimensions," Luckhoo said.

"We invoice our largest accounts every couple of days and can invoice much quicker with electronic tearsheets because we're not held up waiting for hard copies," Luckhoo said. "If, in turn, clients pay invoices earlier, interest earned on the money we capture faster somewhat offsets the cost of the iTearSheets service."

CanWest also saves money formerly earmarked for courier and postage fees. "We anticipate a very short pay-back on the system," he said.

Pages prepared in California

Shoom prepares the newspaper pages at its Los Angeles facility after it receives ad and page data from CanWest's dailies. Procedural consistency at each newspaper is vital to create the overnight electronic product.

To get the data ready for iTearSheets, CanWest IT Group programmers wrote scripts to capture metadata — that is, information that

Continued on next page

describes each ad — from a homegrown order-entry system the newspapers share. Metadata includes ad-insertion number, advertiser, agency, size in columns and lines and page number.

The dailies' prepress departments generate PDF versions of newspaper pages, which are linked by page number to the appropriate metadata.

CanWest updates metadata throughout production to record last-minute changes to ad stacks as they occur.

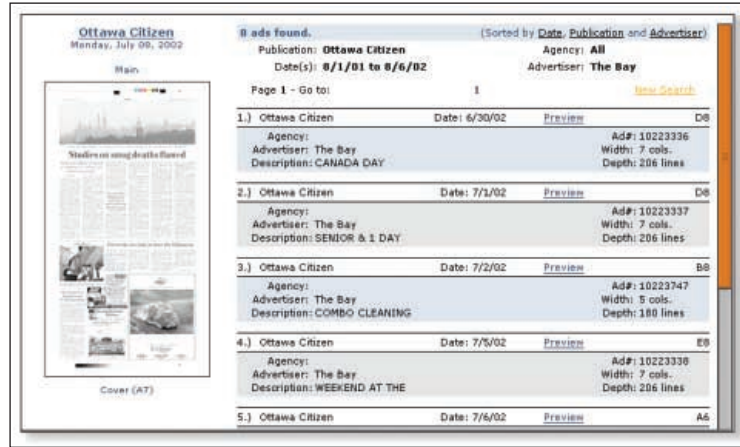
After receiving the CanWest data, Shoom validates, processes, posts and archives the pages on its Web site.

iTearSheets tags files with codes to make them accessible by keyword search and, if advertisers desire, sends e-mail notifications with URL links to their account-summary pages.

From summary pages, users access ad pages directly to review them for proof of publication, measure ads with a diagonal click and drag of the mouse and compare them against insertion orders.

Codes assigned

To assure security, Shoom assigns each organization accessing the



Graphic: Shoom Inc.

Shoom's search results capability allows reps to find quickly the information they are looking for.

itearsheets.com Web site a code. Once logged in, users can browse either the entire newspaper or can search by ad criteria. Users can choose a specific publication or all listed publications, select a date range and zone and search by agency, advertiser, ad-insertion number and description or keyword.

iTearSheets cross-links publications and differentiates and integrates advertiser divisions and agencies.

Search results display ad-insertion data and thumbnail views of pages, which users click to open or download. They can magnify, crop

and resize pages. When they measure ads with a diagonal click and drag of the mouse, a pop-up window appears with column size and depth in inches and lines.

CanWest is nearing realization of its original goals with iTearSheets and, in the process, has attained some unexpected benefits. The company not only has achieved the advantages of digital tearsheets and newspaper archives, but also has gained electronic advertising research and sales tools.

Electronic versions of newspapers created for iTearSheets could replace some current archiving systems and might also become an additional revenue stream, both as paid online circulation and as an incentive to attract subscribers to printed versions of CanWest's dailies.▲

Steve Proulx is editorial services manager at CanWest's IT group and project leader of electronic-tearsheet implementation. He can be reached at 204.926.4774 or via e-mail at sproulx@canwest.com.