

Portugal hosts IPTC Spring 2009 meeting

Agenda topics included updates on delegate activities, new G2 Implementers Guide, global economy.

IPTC delegates to the Spring 2009 meeting in Oporto, Portugal, in March dealt with an impressive list of topics, from reviewing the G2-Standards Guide for Implementers (see full article at left) and a brand name for the new Subject NewsCodes now being developed, to finalizing a number of standards changes that will be presented to the AGM in Seoul in June.

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'How-to' Guide for G2 implementers debuts

To technology developers and programmers, it is welcome. To non-technical news organization executives, it is edifying. To vendors engaged in implementing G2-Standards, it is a job well done. For any who consider G2 implementation a part of their strategic vision, it is a document marked "README FIRST".

Early reactions to IPTC's new "G2-Standards Guide for Implementers", which was released to the public in late March, show it already has its own fan base. The publication — free and available for [download](#) — is at once an introduction, a tutorial, a handbook, and a reference document. Using it can jump-start an organisation's adoption of NewsML-G2, EventsML-G2 and SportsML-G2, all of which were developed specifically to manage and exchange news in multiple formats across multiple platforms and delivery channels.

In a press release published when the Guide was issued, Walter Baranger of

The New York Times and chairman of the IPTC Public Relations Committee, said that the Guide provides "an exciting opportunity for newspapers to look at the IPTC G2 news exchange standards in an easy-to-understand way. With cost pressures increasing almost daily, IPTC G2 gives us strategic options for handling news that we could only imagine a few years ago."

The financial health of news organisations resides in the information they produce, exchange and deliver to consumers and institutions that want and need it. The ability to quickly and

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SUMMARY

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- 5 LeMeur reviews G2-Standards and NAR development
- 6 Dresden hosts Photo Metadata conference; IPTC AGM 2009 meets in Seoul in June

IPTC's "G2-Standards Guide for Implementers"

A look at its objectives, content and structure

Beginning with the Executive Summary, which sets out the case for using standards like G2, and summarizes the major business benefits of the G2-Standards, the Guide includes descriptions of the G2-Standards for news exchange and outlines how and why they work. It describes their shared architecture and XML framework, gives specifics of each individual standard, defines how content of whatever type or format is packaged, and provides charts that map earlier IPTC standards to the G2-Standards.

The content of the Implementers Guide can be loosely divided into seven interconnected sections:

1. Introductory section, including the executive summary, also provides instructions on using the Guide and a brief but thorough examination of how news organisations work.

2. Anatomy of the G2 standards, including a visual look at the data model for the G2 family and an examination of metadata structure: G2 properties, controlled values, concepts and IPTC NewsCodes, QCodes and conformance levels are explored.

3. Content types are discussed in chapters on text, pictures and graphics, audio and video with an examination of the essential building blocks for each content cate-

gory. Examples and use cases serve as teaching tools, illustrating their requirements and parameters, and specifying the types of metadata associated with each.

4. News Architecture (NAR) for the G2 standards is the shared conceptual model for the three G2 standards. The components of this model are `newsItem`, `packageItem`, `conceptItem` and `knowledgeItem`, and the latter three are explored with numerous examples, sample coding streams and definitions. (The `newsItem` component is detailed in earlier chapters.)

5. EventsML and SportsML and their special characteristics are delineated in separate chapters, along with the business advantages of using each.

6. Migrating to G2 from the IPTC 7901 and NITF standards is carefully detailed with tables that map from IPTC 7901's fields and NITF's elements to their equivalent G2 properties.

7. Generic processes and conventions that are common to all G2 standards — and which relate to best practices in news processing — command their own chapter in which the topics of controlled values, taxonomies, and QCodes is explored, along with the handling of such metadata as publishing status, embargoes, and geographical locations within G2.

The Guide is free and available for [download](#).

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easily transfer this information or content rests on using common formats and agreements on transferring “information about the information” — the metadata.

In addition, the G2-Standards support delivery of new kinds of content (videos, event information) to the channels made possible by new technologies. The G2 Implementers Guide is the “User Instruction Manual” for putting this new family of standards to work.

As Jean-Pierre Evain with the European Broadcasting Union — a contributor to the Implementers Guide project — commented, “The Guide is the first must-read document for any newcomer in the IPTC metadata world. It reflects the spirit of the models on which the metadata schemas are based, and it informs through examples.”

Paul Harman of the Press Association in the UK concurred. “The G2 Implementers Guide is an invaluable aid for organisations intending to implement the G2 family of standards or for those who will be receiving it. It provides the necessary context for system developers — who may lack a full understanding of the way news organisations work — to interpret the detailed functional specification.”

Benefits are clear, compelling

Digital standards clarify, simplify and “codify”, so that businesses can move forward in an environment that is business-friendly and free of obstacles to growth and profitability.

The intent of the G2-Standards family is to provide interoperability for the news industry within the multimedia world that now exists. When implemented, the G2 family is a powerful engine that can net, for businesses, lower costs, greater flexibility, and richer possibilities for the future.

“Standards make it easier for organi-

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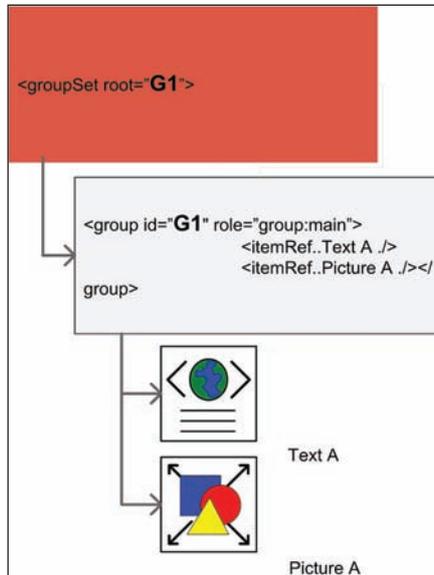
sations to do business with each other", said Kelvin Holland, IPTC Technical Editor, who was responsible for leading the document to completion. "This increases the level of business activity and should promote higher-quality services, so both businesses and their customers benefit".

Much of what G2 can do was developed in response to what is probably the most compelling technology to impact the news industry since movable type: the Internet. With the potential it offers for industry growth, it also brings with it new sets of requirements. The G2-Standards will help news organisations make the most of the new possibilities.

Accessible G2 Guide can ease implementer concerns

The G2-Standards are thorough and well designed. They also are complex and may be daunting to anyone considering an implementation project.

Darko Gulija, who represents Hina in Croatia and also chairs the IPTC G2-Standards Working Party, told the *IPTC Mirror*, "The G2-Standards suite is a quite complex framework that covers everything from exchanging simple textual news items to powerful Semantic Web applications that link content and knowledge domains. This complexity might turn away potential implementers".



The Guide is liberally illustrated, both with charts and diagrams and with 'ink-on-paper' depictions of what a photo or text looks like when properly coded for a G2 standard. This diagram shows a simple package relationship.

In his opinion, the G2 Guide overcomes this. "The Guide eases the implementation barrier for G2-Standards for newcomers," Gulija said, "by providing a slow progression from basic tasks to more advanced features and by aligning particular problems with their solutions". This can make implementations truly interoperable, he noted.

Robert Schmidt-Nia of Deutsche Presse-Agentur in Germany agreed. "Without the Guide," he said, "it was always difficult to discuss the paradigm of this new standard [family]." Learning to work with the standards

only through the XML schemas provided, he feels, was insufficient.

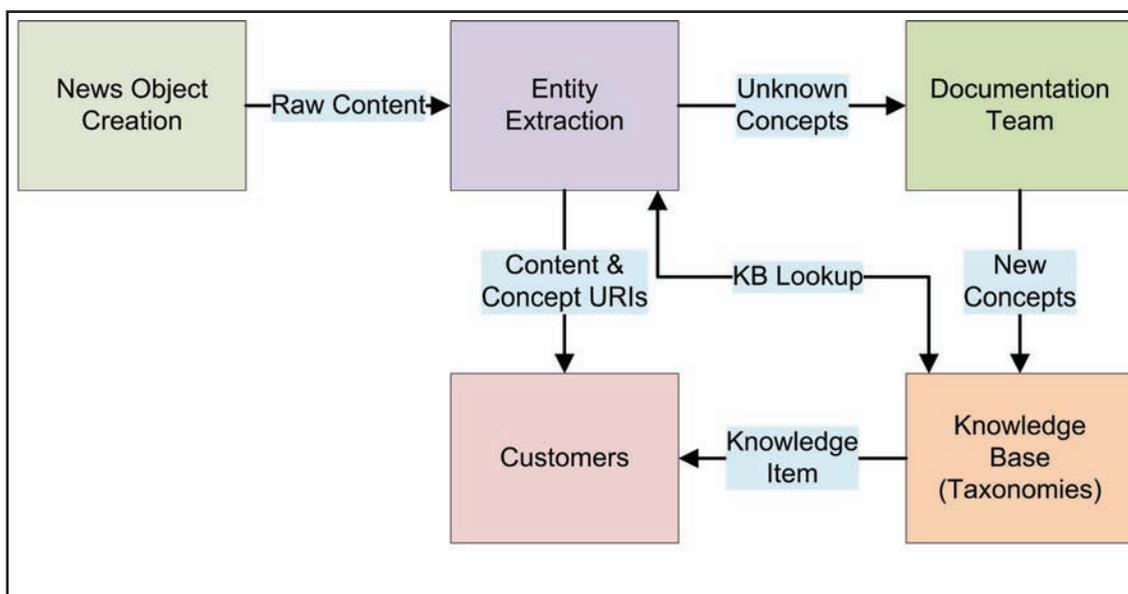
With the Guide, however, he no longer considers this the case. "The Guide covers a great deal. It examines common workflows in news organisations and explains how implementing the G2-Standards can support them. It demonstrates this with one example after another from the real world. Studying those examples, a news industry implementer could find solutions to his or her own problems, whether they are ordinary or uncommon".

SportsML-G2 and the Guide

The three standards that make up the G2 suite of standards share the same architecture, but there are significant differences. SportsML-G2 is explored in a stand-alone chapter.

Alan Karben of XML Team Solutions Inc. in the US chairs the SportsML-G2 Working Group. He is pleased with the Guide's treatment of this specification. "The SportML-G2 chapter in the G2 Guide is 15 pages of an excellent top-down tutorial," he said.. "It starts with the metadata, using generalized G2 structures, and covers core SportsML, plus sport-specific structures". The chapter includes a packaging model, as well as numerous pages of coding that show how different aspects of a sports event are treated — event statistics, team in-

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This Information flow for Concepts and Knowledge Items, taken from the Guide, shows a possible flow for news information that exploits G2's ability to encapsulate detailed information about news entities (people places, and organizations) and abstract notions (searchable subject classifications). The object is to classify news as richly as possible, in order to increase its value and usefulness.



BBC Monitoring confront G2 before and after the G2 Guide. They prefer 'life after'.

At BBC Monitoring, we decided to use G2 as the core schema for our new content management system. We started design while the Guide was being produced. Thus we experienced "life before" the Guide and "life after" it. We like "life after" better. Initially, we became somewhat lost in the wealth of detailed documentation on the website. Despite the helpfulness of other IPTC members, we had little idea of how to get started with G2. The Guide, with its examples and best practices, fixes that. It probably should have a large "Start Here" button on the front!

How has it helped us?

- It's a "Readme First" for G2, introducing the standard and sign-posting the rest of the documentation. The first few chapters provide a non-technical introduction to the standard and its environment. As such, we could usefully provide it to both more and less technical colleagues as a cold-start introduction.
- It's a practical, hands-on type of book. Plenty of real-world examples, built up step-wise to complete pieces of XML.
- It's good at setting context: not just how-to, but why-you-might-want-to.
- It makes clear how G2 is meant to be used - its coverage of knowledge and concept items is proving particularly useful in the work to represent our extensive country profile and media source knowledge bases. Our designer for this area commended the book for clarifying the approach he should take.

— **Tony Card and Siobhán Wheston**
BBC Monitoring, UK
<http://www.monitor.bbc.co.uk>

PUBLISHER'S STATEMENT

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*Photographs in *IPTC Mirror* without a credit line were taken by Sue Fine, IPTC Editor.
Graphics for the "G2 Guide for Implementers" article appear in the Guide and were created by Kelvin Holland, IPTC Technical Editor

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formation, player information, and so forth.

“I’m a big sports fan — SportsML, that is”, Holland added. “It is a fascinating subject and we tried to do it justice — successfully, I hope — within a limited amount of time and space. We will be strengthening this segment of the Guide as we go on. As we accumulate real-world “best practices” this section will become even richer”.

EventsML-G2 and the Guide

Planning and coordinating coverage of events that are known in advance is a core activity of news organisations, one that now can be powered by EventsML-G2. The standard, detailed in its own chapter, emerged from a collaborative effort by experts in North America, Europe and Asia Pacific who are experienced in planning news operations and know the issues. This means adopters have an “off the shelf” data model that is

specific to the news industry. Among other features, it aligns with the iCalendar specification supported by Microsoft Outlook, Lotus Notes and Apple iCal.

Some 50-80% of news to be covered is of events that are known about in advance. EventsML-G2 offers news organisations a competitive advantage — one that is interoperable with both NewsML-G2 and SportsML-G2 in the G2 suite of standards.

Holland believes this standard, while not yet widely adopted, is the industry’s next “killer app”. “Adopting the NAR data model for events as the basis for a system would save developers a lot of time and effort,” he said.

Migrating to G2

Between them, IPTC7901 and NITF have been mainstays of news exchange standards for text for 30 years. Migrating from them to the G2-Standards earned an entire chapter in the Guide. Mapping between each

standard and G2 is provided in a table format that is designed to ease migration.

The ‘MMM’ standard

The G2-Standards trilogy positions news organisations for today’s multi-media, multi-platform and multi-channel news environment.

Said Holland, “Many of us have been in situations where a quick and sometimes crude ‘mash-up’ was used to solve a data exchange problem. I hope the Guide makes it easier for developers to use G2 as a longer-term solution without reinventing the wheel”.

John Evans with Transtel Communications Ltd. in the UK summed it up, “The Guide is just that: a starting point for companies trying to work out how to use G2. It uses real world cases from news agencies, and it provides a solid base from which further real world extensions and usages of G2 can be documented.”

LeMeur reviews G2-Standards development

Laurent LeMeur, as a long-time IPTC delegate from Agence France-Presse, played a pivotal role in developing the shared News Architecture (NAR) that is a distinguishing feature of the G2 suite of standards. Recently, he shared his perspectives on these specifications.

IPTC already had NewsML 1 and SportsML; why was developing the G2 standards necessary?

Actually, it all goes back to NITF, our first standard built on XML. In 1999 it became clear that cross-media capability and specialized content management were needed, based on the new XML recommendation; therefore we developed NewsML 1 and SportsML, which were adopted in 2000 and 2003, respectively. Over time, we found that the NewsML 1 implementation was uneven in some parts and quite complex in its structure. By 2004, we decided to make it interoperable, simpler to use and more powerful at the same time. That’s when work began on what became the G2-Standards.

What is the most important aspect of the G2 specifications?

There are a number, but what makes G2

different and more flexible is the way we tied the G2 standards together by giving them the same architecture — a fundamental set of functionalities that they have in common. Among other things, this means that if you implement one of the specifications, then there’s a very short learning curve when you launch another, and the different aspects of data handling are highly interoperable.

It took four years for the G2-Standards to be ready, although others — NewsML 1 and SportsML — were completed in a year. Why was that?

We learned a lot from developing the earlier standards. We also were rethinking their conceptual model in a component-oriented way and wanted to be sure we got it right. G2-Standards come from four years of deep thought by major players in the news industry.

Are you pleased with the results?

Cross-media standardization and compliance with Web standards are important. G2-Standards are perfectly adapted to both aspects. I think that the core design is good and works well, and that the functionalities will keep improving. I still identify several risks for the future of G2-Standards: a possible reluctance to move away from older standards, a lack of participation from news industry stakeholders leading to the general use of more basic Web standards for cross-media exchange; and making G2-Standards overly complex by adding features used by very few news organisations: a standard should stay on the intersection of different needs, not their union.



Laurent LeMeur

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Delegates participated in a special meeting — Committee of the Council — to assess the impact of the global economic crisis on member travel budgets and explore changes that might reduce costs. Acting on delegate feedback, the Management Committee will shorten the full AGM 2009 Meeting in Seoul, Korea, to 2.5 days and will round out the third day with the Annual General Meeting in the afternoon. The Autumn 2009 Meeting will be held in Washington, D.C., rather than Vancouver, Canada, since the U.S. location is a hub for airlines; travel to hubs often lowers the cost of airfare. The shorter 2.5 day meeting schedule may be observed.

Most IPTC standards are in their maintenance stage, rather than their development stage, so at the Oporto meeting delegates grappled with a series of changes that required discussion before updates could be considered. Some decisions will be voted on by the membership at this year's AGM.

Instead of three days meeting as a full and formal body, delegates tested a new format and met in ad hoc topic groups on one afternoon, with delegates participating in the topic group that interested them most. Managing NewsCode changes and rules for Photo Metadata processing were the subjects of two of the ad hoc groups. Another met to discuss the new G2 Implementers Guide.

LUSA, the Portuguese news agency, treated delegates to a Port winery tour and hosted a memorable dinner.



Counter clockwise from top left, delegates enjoyed a dinner compliments of LUSA, met in ad hoc groups to focus narrowly on single topics, added their organisation's perspectives to discussions of proposed changes, enjoyed the camaraderie of working — and playing — together, and carried out their responsibilities in the coastal city of Oporto, which once was a Roman outpost..

Dresden 2009: IPTC Photo Metadata Conference

Participants at the Third International Photo Metadata Conference on 4 June 2009 in Dresden, Germany, will take up the subject of video metadata. Primarily driven by the needs of web publishers, the exchange of visual media using photos, graphics and video is merging into a single business. What does this mean for those with business models that cross media types? Attending the conference requires registration; online registration is [open](#).



Photo courtesy Words2Gold LLC

IPTC AGM 2009 will convene in Seoul, Korea

The IPTC Annual General Meeting will be held on 17 June 2009 at the Koreana Hotel in Seoul in the afternoon. The full meeting will run from Monday, 15 June through 17 June, and a special NewsML Symposium will be held on Thursday, 18 June in the morning. It is sponsored by the Korean Press Foundation (KPF). A series of evening events will be hosted by KPF, the New Media Division of the Korean Ministry for Culture, and Yonhap News Agency.



Photo courtesy Words2Gold LLC