

Web Central Project – A briefing for newspaper publishers



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Overview

The NLA is owned by the 8 national newspaper publishing houses and generates B2B revenues for publishers through licensing use of their content by press cuttings agencies (PCAs) and client companies that monitor press coverage through paper press packs or electronic monitoring. £20m was generated for the industry in 2008 through licensing fees and access charges for the eClips database, which provides a high-quality feed of the top 150 titles' printed content to media monitoring agencies every night.

In the autumn of 2009, the NLA will extend its licences to incorporate newspaper web content that is utilised by commercial aggregators and their clients – PCAs and businesses. That will be followed by the launch of the eClips web database service which will offer a service to aggregators and PCAs that is directly powered by feeds from newspaper content management systems.

Why is the NLA concerning itself with web content?

The objectives of this initiative are to generate new short to medium-term revenues for publishers and in the longer term, to protect copyright licensing revenues as media monitoring companies increasingly focus on web content, in favour of print. An additional benefit of developing an aggregated database of content - *owned by the newspaper industry* – is that it will give publishers an improved level of control and visibility over the use of their content in the secondary monitoring market. At present, c. 12 commercial aggregators operating in the UK (eg Moreover, Meltwater) 'scrape' newspaper web content and charge for the supply of monitoring alerts or search services to approximately 3,000 client companies. The market is estimated to be worth £10m per annum – but most publishers are not paid for use of their content – and the audience generated by these aggregators amounts to less than 0.1% of publisher web traffic.

What is the NLA going to do?

From September 2009, web aggregators that charge for their services will require an NLA licence and be charged on the basis of the range of content monitored and number of customers supplied. The PCAs that either 'scrape' content themselves or buy-in services from aggregators will also be licensed and charged. Client companies will also require a licence, those that forward links from these commercial aggregators within their organisation or to an extranet on a *systematic* basis (e.g. a daily press briefing), will be charged on a sliding scale of use with effect from January 2010. If client companies systematically source newspaper content themselves, directly from publisher web sites or via a free service such as Google: the NLA will require them to be licensed – but not charged - in order to highlight the fact that publishers' content has value and is subject to copyright.

In January 2010, the NLA will launch eClips web an extension of our successful eClips data service for aggregators and PCAs. The NLA wants to encourage the monitoring of web content: eClips Web will aim to stimulate demand by creating a service that has faster updates than scraping (minutes v hours), deeper content (growing as the service develops) and a permanent record (critical to PR professionals).

Communication

The NLA has been in dialogue with aggregators and PCAs for many months, but from May is engaging with end users and their representatives. We will inform the market of our intentions through a public relations and advertising campaign in targeted B2B media. A key marketing message will be: “newspaper web content costs money to create and has value for media monitoring businesses”. Although we will aim for a clear communication focused on the 20 or 30,000 PR and marketing professionals that actively monitor web content at present – it is possible that there will be some confusion with the growing debate over charging *consumers* for elements of newspaper web content. In that event, publisher understanding of our objectives and potentially editorial support will be essential.

A key part of the communications programme will be a clarification of the terms and conditions of newspaper web sites. The NLA will shortly be circulating key statements that we would like publishers to include: ensuring that users of newspaper sites are aware that use of content for business purposes requires a licence – and directing companies to seek advice from the NLA.

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