

Merriam-Webster partners with Content Data Solutions, Inc. to gain efficiencies through effective data management and speed time to press.



Merriam-Webster's Goals

- Maintain its position as America's foremost publisher of language related reference works
- Adapt to the changing market by utilizing current technologies
- Convert, manage, compose, process, and output complex data accurately and efficiently

The Solution

Content DSI converted Merriam-Webster's legacy data, created a custom database, and used best-of-breed technology to compose, revise, and output complex data.

BACKGROUND

Merriam-Webster, Inc. is America's foremost publisher of language-related reference works. The company publishes a diverse array of print and electronic products, including *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate[®] Dictionary, Eleventh Edition*, America's best-selling desk dictionary; *Webster's Third New International Dictionary, Unabridged*; and *Merriam-Webster's Geographical Dictionary, Third Edition*.

"There are more than 1 million separate pieces of information in the Collegiate Dictionary, yet most users can find the single item of information they're after in less than 30 seconds," stated John M. Morse, President and Publisher of Merriam-Webster, Inc. "Put simply, the print dictionary is an incredibly well-engineered product that works incredibly well. As one of our editors pointed out, it is the original handheld device. Content DSI's ongoing services in information management and page composition for more than 20 years have been integral to the technological advancements we've made in publishing our dictionaries."

THE CHALLENGE

In the early 1970s, Merriam-Webster recognized that emerging information management and page composition technologies would enable them to speed time to print while reducing maintenance costs. Merriam-Webster searched for an innovative, flexible business partner who could implement these new technologies to help them adapt to the changing publishing market.

Before working with Content Data Solutions, Inc., Merriam-Webster managed its data primarily on paper. Merriam-Webster needed a partner who not only had database expertise, but who also could provide the necessary data conversion services and was proficient in image processing and page composition.

THE SOLUTION

Content DSI's first task was to design a database to meet Merriam-Webster's specifications and then convert their vast amount of paper-based data to an electronic format suitable for storage in the new system. This cutting edge information management solution needed to house and index the data so that it could be exported for composition and printing. Merriam-Webster first utilized the new database to publish its *New Geographical Dictionary*. The business partnership grew from there, as both companies focused on gaining efficiencies through more effective data management and speeding time to press for Merriam-Webster's products.

In the early 1980s, Content DSI migrated Merriam-Webster's data to a new system—the Advanced Text Management System (ATMS) which was based on the latest IBM technology. This new editorial environment allowed for interactive editing and provided enhanced data management capabilities, offering Merriam-Webster greater flexibility. As technologies changed and improved, so did Merriam-Webster and Content DSI. In the late 1980s, Content DSI again upgraded Merriam-Webster's data management system, storing the data in a common tagged structure similar to SGML (Standard Generalized Markup Language). This made editing easier, more accurate, and more efficient than the previous system, allowing Merriam-Webster to take advantage of leading-edge data management technology.

In addition to finding ways to better manage and retrieve data, Merriam-Webster was also searching for an advanced page composition technology to support the complex display requirements for their reference books. Once again, they asked for Content DSI's help in finding, evaluating, and integrating such a system into their existing data management infrastructure.

Merriam-Webster relies on Content DSI for:

- Data conversion
- Composition
- Image processing
- Page output

Content DSI Company Overview

Content Data Solutions, Inc., a software and systems integrator, provides custom content management, cross-media publishing and e-business solutions to leading commercial publishers, industrial manufacturers and other content centric companies.

We apply proven methodologies and processes to help enable our clients to author, store and manage information from a central data repository, publish that information in multiple formats and import and export data to and from internal business systems. Our solutions help companies efficiently manage and publish their information.

Content DSI has the experience and expertise to develop a clear understanding of our clients' goals, requirements and business issues. We then recommend, design and implement an effective solution to satisfy their needs.

We highly value the relationships we establish with our clients and are dedicated to delivering the highest level of service.

Content DSI's search for best-of-breed page composition technology found the XyVision (now known as XyEnterprise) Production Publisher (XPP) system in late 1994. XPP fit Merriam-Webster's requirement of handling high volume, highly complex work, running in a client/server environment, and outputting PostScript files. XPP operates in both batch and interactive modes allowing Merriam-Webster to leverage the SGML tagging structure.

With XPP, the composition and revision processes are highly automated, allowing for quicker turnaround. The interactive component allows Merriam-Webster to request localized changes (individual pages) without composing an entire chapter or book. The system drastically reduces change implementation turnaround time because XPP only recomposes affected pages. In addition, XPP easily handles the tables and special characters abundant in dictionaries and allows for PostScript files and color output.

The first Merriam-Webster book composed on XPP in 1995, the *Collegiate Dictionary, Deluxe Edition*, contained hundreds of color graphics and required color proofing. This was not possible with traditional mainframe systems, and desktop publishing systems such as QuarkXpress™ could not handle the high volume.

The enlarged three-column version of the *Collegiate Dictionary, Deluxe Edition* represented a major change for Merriam-Webster. Colored boxes were used to differentiate between a particular word's usage, history, and synonyms. In this version of the dictionary, Content DSI created a custom font and incorporated colorized images that Merriam-Webster provided electronically. Content DSI keyed extensive tabular data in SGML and imported it to XPP for composition. Content DSI also downloaded the entire A-Z word list from the proprietary Merriam-Webster tagged file and imported it to XPP for composition.

© 2009 All rights reserved. Content Data Solutions, Inc. is a registered trademark. Other company, product, and service names stated herein may be trademarks or service marks of their respective owners.

SUCCESSFUL RESULTS

Merriam-Webster maintains its partnership with Content DSI because it works. "Content DSI is persistent in pursuing the solutions to challenging problems," says Madeline Novak, Director of Editorial Operations at Merriam-Webster.

Content DSI has produced Merriam-Webster's flagship publications for more than 20 years, helping Merriam-Webster maintain its leading global position as a publisher of language related reference works. The partnership has paid large dividends in increased efficiency, as Content DSI has helped Merriam-Webster reduce revision production cycle time on the Collegiate Dictionary from five months to one month.

Awards and Recognition

In 1997, Merriam-Webster's *Geographical Dictionary, Third Edition*, won the Best of Category award at the Xyvision Users Group Conference. In 1998, *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Deluxe Edition* also won First Place in the Book Category, and Best of Show Award for outstanding use of the XPP system. In 2000, *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Tenth Edition* won Best of Category in the Legal/Reference Publishing Category.

Publications produced for Merriam-Webster

- Addenda section of *Webster's Third New International Dictionary*
- *Merriam-Webster's Biographical Dictionary*
- *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Thesaurus*
- *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (Eighth Edition)*
- *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*
- *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Deluxe Edition*
- *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Eleventh Edition (2003 copyright)*—recomposed
- *Merriam-Webster's Geographical Dictionary, Third Edition*
- *Merriam-Webster's Pocket Geographical Dictionary*
- *Webster's New Geographical Dictionary*
- *Merriam-Webster's School Thesaurus*

