

Extra! Extra! Read (and see) all about it!

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"Content is king" has been a catch phrase in the publishing arena since the early days of the online world. But your content can only be king if your users can find it at the very instant it is contextually relevant to them. Metadata are the means by which publishers of digital information can dynamically present additional content to their users, and therefore reap additional value from underutilized content assets. Of the many types of metadata that can be derived from digital content, geographic metadata offer unique value.

For this reason, technology that recognizes and extracts geographic references from unstructured data, such as text on a Web page, is becoming a valuable addition to the platforms that digital content publishers and distributors use to serve their users. Software that identifies the geographic places mentioned in text content and matches those places to their specific latitude and longitude coordinates, commonly known as "geotagging," enhances the utility of the content for both the users and the publishers.

In media and publishing, geographic references are typically not explicit. For example, there are many places in the world called Paris. When a Paris is mentioned in an article or on a Web page, effective geotagging software uses the context of the story to determine which Paris it is most likely to be. In the news business this ability to disambiguate becomes even more valuable when used to determine whether the Paris in question is a place or a person named Paris. (A Google search for Paris yields 451+ million results!) Geographic metadata will improve a publisher's ability to deliver the right content to the right user at the right time.

To leverage the geographic metadata produced by geotagging systems, the metadata need to either be stored in a suitable database for later reference or used in real-time by an existing application. Many publishers do not yet have databases with the capability to store geographic metadata, or applications that can use such metadata in real-time. For those publishers there are geographic search solutions they can use to capitalize on the geographic information buried in their content.

Geographic text search systems typically store the geographic metadata in a proprietary index, much like traditional key word search systems do, which enables rapid searching for relevant content. Such searching can be done either by actual users or other applications, such as content management systems.

For online publishers who rely on an advertising business model for revenue, the value of geographic metadata is significant. Online advertising grew to over \$16 billion in 2006, an increase of more than 31 percent over 2005. The growth of online advertising is coming at the expense of almost all other advertising media. Online sites that rely on advertising revenues have an opportunity to benefit from this growth. Here are five ways.

1. Display more ads on existing pages. This sounds easy but it can easily detract from the user experience and cause users to leave. No one likes to be inundated with ads, but if executed creatively and with sufficient respect to the users, the results can be quite profitable.
2. Charge more for advertising. This seems simple, but to do so an online publisher must increase the value of the advertising by either enhancing the demographics of the user base or improving the ability to target the ads (i.e., present certain types of ads to certain types of users). Effective ad targeting is one of the holy grails of Web media.
3. Attract more users to the website. With the ever-expanding number of websites from which news consumers can choose, this is a battle in which online publishers are constantly engaged, while simultaneously fighting to keep their existing users. To attract new users, publishers need to deliver a high quality and ever-evolving experience to readers. Unless the content is highly relevant or entertaining, users tend to quickly become bored with the "same old same old."
4. Increase the average number of pages viewed by each site visitor. More page views per visit means more ads viewed per visit. Since websites typically get paid for each ad displayed, this directly translates to increased revenue. To get site users to view additional pages, a publisher must find ways to suggest additional content to users (much like TV networks that show ads for their own shows). Publishers can suggest additional content to users by either manually placing additional headline links on pages or by leveraging metadata to do it dynamically. Effective use of metadata is another holy grail of Web media.
5. Get users to return more frequently. To do this a publisher must constantly offer fresh content that is of value to users, and then become effective at informing their users of its availability.



These tenets of growth are nothing new to online advertising strategists. Exploiting them requires a combination of the creative deployment of suitable technology and good content.

Assuming they already possess good content, both geotagging and geographic text search solutions provide online publishers a means by which they can exploit all five of these revenue-impacting techniques.

Geographic text search solutions can be used to present users with geographically relevant search results from queries that input to an existing site-search utility. Geographic search results can be presented as a ranked list, much like traditional key word searches, which may also be accompanied by a map showing the places to which each listed result refers.

Geographic text search solutions can also be used to present users with other geographically relevant content. Portions of the content on the page the user is viewing can be used to execute a query to the geographic text search solution. The results, or even just the first few results, can be presented on the page as hotlinks. This type of metadata-driven content presentation drives page views without the manual labor that is typically required. Additionally, such an implementation of geographic text search remains constantly aware of newly published content assets that are relevant to what the user is already reading.

Geotagging or geographic text search can also be used to create mapping solutions that will enhance the user experience and increase page views and revenue. For example, you can offer users the ability to dynamically request a map of the places mentioned on a Web page, which can be displayed with an additional advertisement or sponsorship that is not simply crammed onto the page the user is reading.

Another application of geographic text search is local news (or geographically focused) alerts. Leveraging existing user registration and email messaging systems, local alert services raise user satisfaction levels through enhanced personalization. Such a service will draw users back to the site more often, and can enable the delivery of geo-targeted advertising. The net result for publishers is an enhanced user experience, increased page views per visit, increased user loyalty, and more targeted advertising. That all adds up to more revenue and higher profits. The return-on-investment value proposition for geotagging and geographic text search systems is clear and strong in the online publishing industry. This is especially true in the online news business.

There are approximately 1,400 daily newspapers in the United States, most of which have an online presence. Geotagging and geographic text search technology offer them a means to differentiate themselves from their competition, add utility to existing content assets, enhance user experience, and generate incremental revenue in the process - not a bad proposition in a dynamic, competitive publishing environment.

The traditional news industry is consolidating, in large part, to trim costs and leverage economies of scale. The cost of newsprint, meaning hardcopy papers, continues to rise at a rate considerably faster than the cost to deliver online news. Advertisers are increasingly devoting more of their budgets to online. Most newspapers have realized that survival means learning to prosper in the online realm.

Consolidation has brought the center of gravity of individual and smaller news organizations to a corporate group that sets the standards for the individual papers under its umbrella. Geotagging and geographic text search technology can be leveraged across multiple newspaper Web sites, enabling groups of online publishers to leverage each other's content dynamically.

News consumers are generally interested in both national and international news, as well as local news, and there are many places to find national and international news. However, it is difficult to retrieve news about your neighborhood from reliable large, global news sources. For this reason, geotagging and geographic text search technology are ideal for newspapers to process their content so that it becomes personalized and local to the reader.

Geotagging and geographic text search technology have long been in use by government agencies, energy companies and other enterprises to extract valuable information from unstructured data. Now these technologies are also available to online media publishers and distributors as a means to improve their services, revenues and bottom line.

The merits of technology have brought the quality of news and content a long way from the paperboy on the corner yelling, "Extra! Extra! Read all about it!" Now, with geotagging and geographic text search technology, you can view targeted content, spatially displayed on a digital map, and publishers can enable their advertisers to maximize their advertising dollar by pinpointing their marketing targets.



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