IPTC

Membership

Questions and Answers

The IPTC is a membership organisation.

This document answers questions about membership and IPTC standards.

Version 2009.1

On Membership

- **What is IPTC?**
  The International Press Telecommunications Council is a consortium of news agencies, newspapers and news system vendors that develops and publishes technical specifications to promote the easy, accurate and inexpensive sharing of news.

- **Who runs IPTC?**
  The members are represented by a board of directors and a chairman who hire a managing director and a publications editor. Development work is handled by committees and smaller working groups. Some of them focus on general issues, such as the exchange of general news; others on specific areas such as photography or sports results. Paid consultants are occasionally engaged for difficult assignments. The membership votes before a standard is published, though exact voting rights vary by type of membership.

- **Who pays for the IPTC?**
  Only the members. IPTC standards for news exchange are available for downloading at no cost and there are no royalties or fees; the only source of income is membership dues. The motto for IPTC's standard development work is "made by the news industry, for the news industry." In this way the fees pay for the overall industry's needs. For individual members, dues pay for early and direct access to the development of standards, and for networking with peers in the news industry.

- **When and where does IPTC meet?**
  The entire organization hold three working sessions each year, and one of those sessions is also combined with an annual general meeting when company officers are chosen and basic organizational decisions are taken. Sessions are rotated worldwide, with at least one held in Europe each year. In addition, smaller development sessions are held as needed and teleconferences and email discussions are held regularly.

- **Can small companies or sole practitioners join IPTC?**
  Yes! Even if your company cannot send delegates to IPTC meetings, several affordable membership plans are available to encourage participation by any interested firm. Happily, IPTC has found that some of its biggest contributors to standards work come from some of the smallest member organizations.

- **If the standards are free, why join IPTC?**
  Members receive many benefits, including the ability to request changes or make contributions to the development of standards, and membership in working committees. Both news and IT professionals use IPTC meetings to network among other delegates and invited guests. Members also have access to the IPTC's exclusive members-only web site area, which contains development documents and access to members-only discussion groups. This way they are well ahead of the public, who have access to a standard only after endorsement by the IPTC members. Of course, members also have voting privileges. Finally, a membership in IPTC makes a statement about your business – that it is one of the news industry leaders and is committed to the overall well-being of worldwide journalism.

- **How do I follow the activities of IPTC?**
  We maintain a web site (http://www.iptc.org) that is updated frequently. In addition, the electronic periodicals Mirror and Spectrum are distributed to members and can be downloaded from the web site. The IPTC also makes presentations at major news technology events such as IFRA Expo and CEPIC Congress. Finally, committee

discussion groups via email are a good way to keep up; some of the groups are open to non-members.

- **How do I join IPTC?**
  The first step is to visit the IPTC web site, http://www.iptc.org and then contact our managing director for membership information (mdirector@iptc.org). Prospective members can be invited to a regular IPTC meeting as a guest.

On IPTC Standards

- **Who uses IPTC standards?**
  They are intended for the business-to-business exchange of news among news agencies, other news providers and news publishers. At least one or two IPTC standards are in use at virtually every newspaper and news web site in the world. However, our most popular standard, the IPTC Photo Metadata, is used by many professional and amateur photographers worldwide—even those who are not photojournalists.

- **What makes something an "IPTC standard"?**
  Whether a White Paper or an actual standard, IPTC's technical publications represent the consensus opinion of about 70 leading news organizations and system vendors from dozens of countries. Delegates from those industry leaders meet face-to-face and via many teleconferences (some of them weekly) to keep IPTC standards up to date. No other group is engaged in this intense level of news standards development.

- **How do I obtain IPTC standards?**
  Although IPTC specifications are available at no cost from the IPTC web site, most users purchase IPTC functionality when they buy commercially available software products, such as photo editing software or news editing systems. The ability to use IPTC standards is always embedded in software.

- **How much do IPTC standards cost?**
  Nothing. Really! As long as users stay within IPTC's liberal intellectual property agreement, the downloading and use of IPTC standards is free of royalties or other payments. The cost of creating and maintaining the standards is borne 100% by IPTC members.

- **What does an IPTC standard look like in a product?**
  Well, it doesn't look like anything. Software developers seamlessly integrate IPTC standards into their products – often in subtle ways that are not obvious to customers. The best way to see IPTC standards in action is to ask your software suppliers to demonstrate or explain IPTC functionality in their products.

- **Why would I want to use IPTC standards?**
  Briefly: To save money and improve the ability of your news products to be used by your customers. IPTC does the intensive development necessary to package and label news products in efficient ways that are widely accepted worldwide. For example, our latest G2-Standards packaging uses XML, the lingua franca of the World Wide Web. The content labeling is provided by IPTC NewsCodes, a rich suite of metadata terms that describes news in ways that both humans and computers can understand.

- **Can I use IPTC standards even if English is not used at my company?**
  Of course! All IPTC standards are designed to be independent of any specific language. Although our publications are written in English and meetings are conducted in English, every recent standard is usable by any written language that is supported by Unicode.

- **What are IPTC G2-Standards?**
  These are the latest XML-based specifications for exchanging and describing news content. The G2 label means that the standards are part of a common lineage that is modular and fully compatible with the latest XML technologies. The modular construction means that software developers can re-use code when working with more than one G2 standard, a great way to cut development time and costs. For example, NewsML-G2, SportsML-G2 and EventsML-G2 have much of their structure in common so, for example, projects that work with sports results or event data (such as community calendars) can share much of the development efforts.

- **What are the IPTC Fields?**
  The IPTC Fields are the IPTC-defined metadata that is commonly used in professional and amateur photography around the world—also known as the IPTC Header of image files. Although originally intended only for professional photojournalists, IPTC Photo Metadata (the actual name) proved to be a boon for anyone who needs to maintain collections of images. Apparently most people found it easier to say "IPTC Field(s)" than its original name: "IPTC Information Interchange Model."

- **What is IPTC 7901 and ANPA 1312?**
  IPTC maintains several legacy standards that are in wide use around the world. The main formats used by news agencies to send text articles to client newspapers are still IPTC 7901 and its North American cousin ANPA 1312. Both standards have a common origin in old 1970s teleprinter technology, and in fact they are nearly identical. ANPA 1312 is used mainly in the Americas, and IPTC 7901 is used elsewhere. ANPA is the former acronym of the organization now known as the Newspaper Association of America.

- **Why use XML?**
  The basic encodings used by the World Wide Web are SGML and its sibling XML; for example, HTML is simply a variety of SGML and XHTML is a variety of XML. Their universal acceptance throughout the world is based on ease of use, inexpensive development tools, understandable data structure, compatibility with the world's written languages and simple encoding and decoding in most computers. It was a natural for the world's news agencies to embrace XML.

- **Does IPTC support multimedia?**
  XML-based IPTC standards support any media type – text, images, audio, video, Flash presentation, or whatever.

- **What happens if IPTC decides to issue a new standard?**
  IPTC always tries to make its new standards compatible with previous versions. But sometimes technology changes so dramatically that IPTC must strike out in a new direction, as happened when the World Wide Web exploded in popularity. However, older standards are still published and supported by IPTC, and news system vendors continue to support them. Consider that IPTC 7901 has been in use for some 30 years and is still the most common way for news agencies to send text articles to their clients.

Any inquiries regarding membership or our standards are welcome.
Send an email to office@iptc.org