

## ACAP Newsletter: March 2008

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### Search Engines

Google has been speaking out publicly on ACAP this month and as a result created something of a stir in the media.

The first report was that Google representative Rob Jonas had made a statement at the recent Media Guardian conference in London, saying that “the general view within the company is that the robots.txt provides everything most publishers need to do.” Gavin O’Reilly, the chairman of ACAP and president of the World Association of Newspapers, responded in a press statement: “It’s strange for Google to be telling publishers what they should think about robots.txt when publishers worldwide across the sector have already very clearly told Google that they disagree. If Google’s reason for not supporting ACAP is that they think publishers should have a different view then we would ask Google to respect the fact that after considerable consideration and work we have identified not only the inadequacies of robots.txt but also come up with a practical and open solution. We call upon Google to adopt ACAP as soon as possible and respect the right of content owners to determine how their content is used.”

Then, a few days later, Google CEO Eric Schmidt was questioned on ACAP by a reporter in Sydney. Mr Schmidt offered explicit support for ACAP’s aim of giving publishers more control over the use of their content and said that the essential obstacle to ACAP implementation by Google was technical. He said that ACAP, as currently specified, is incompatible with Google’s search engine technology.

Gavin O’Reilly responded in a further statement to the press: “We are delighted that Google CEO Eric Schmidt has said that they would be willing to implement ACAP if it were not for some technical problems. We have worked closely with Google at a technical level throughout the ACAP project, and are disappointed that we have failed to overcome some remaining technical barriers to implementation. Nevertheless, we have always made it clear that we will of course do whatever is necessary to make ACAP work technically for the search engines. Our requirements have always been led by business requirements not by any preconceived technical solution. Eric Schmidt’s statement reported in the IT Wire article that “It is not that we [Google] don’t want them [publishers] to be able to control their information” is hugely reassuring. We really look forward to continuing to work with Google to do the necessary work to match our business requirements with their technical requirements and so make it possible for Google to adopt the ACAP protocol for the benefit of digital publishing worldwide as soon as possible.”

We are now increasingly optimistic, in the wake of these remarks, that we will be able to achieve a breakthrough in our work to bring the major search engines to implement ACAP.

### **Press coverage**

Press coverage this month mainly follows the Google comments described above including coverage of our subsequent press statements.

### **Implementation**

We now have ACAP-enabled publishers in at least 16 different countries. We only know about those publishers who tell us that they have implemented ACAP, which makes it very difficult to keep track. However, recent progress, particularly following last month's letter from Gavin O'Reilly, is really promising.

Implementation, at the simple level that we are asking everyone to undertake, is a quick and entirely painless process and has no impact on the functionality or use of your site(s).

ACAP AT THIS SIMPLE LEVEL WILL NOT IMPACT ON THE FUNCTIONALITY OF YOUR SITE – but it does indicate very clearly and publicly your long term interest in controlling the reuse of your content. Please do reassure any publisher delaying implementation on the grounds of these concerns.

For those interested in a more sophisticated level of implementation, ACAP Technical Project Manager Francis Cave has now published a new detailed implementation guide for ACAP v1.0. This Implementation Guide is freely available for download on the ACAP site ([www.the-acap.org](http://www.the-acap.org)). The purpose is to assist those who are implementing ACAP to use the rich functionality in ACAP Version 1.0 to express more nuanced policies on crawler access to and use of their website content.

### **Promotion**

A comprehensive PowerPoint “slide deck” is now available for download from the website and can be used by anyone who needs to make a presentation on ACAP. We will, of course, help to tailor slides for particular presentations.

We are still planning to launch the official ACAP blog, although this has been a bit delayed by other priorities.

The Dutch publisher's trade association NUV has organized a seminar on ACAP in Amsterdam on 26 March. The event was substantially oversubscribed, and is having to be repeated in May. Francis Cave and Mark Bide are both speaking, as are representatives of three of the publishers who implemented ACAP during the pilot phase of the project.

We would be very pleased to work with other national trade associations to provide the same kind of support in terms of speaking platforms and editorial space in their communications to members – face to face communication has proved by far the most effective way to get our message across.

There is still much to be done so please do what you can to help to get the ACAP message out:

- Implement ACAP on your website
- provide us with speaking platforms
- distribute our information as widely as possible inside and outside your organizations
- publish our articles in your newsletters/publications
- link to us on your website
- carry editorial on us on your website

**PLEASE CONTINUE TO SPREAD THE WORD...**

*If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us:*

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