Post-Gazette's Libercus rollout continues

▶ **BY TARA MCMEEKIN** EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette is rolling out the Libercus platform for its print product following the conversion of its website to the Libercus CMS in October.

The daily is aiming for go-live on the cloud-based software by the end of January, according to John Crisp, vice president of new media for Post-Gazette parent company Block Communications.

"They have been converting sections already, including the e-delivered afternoon edition of the paper," he told *News & Tech*. "That went live in early August."

The Post-Gazette's afternoon e-edition is included with a print subscription to the paper or can be purchased separately.

Block converted to Libercus for the print edition of The Blade in Toledo, Ohio, in September 2012, and on toledoblade.com in November 2012, at which time the paper also erected its online paywall. The Blade rolled out its e-edition on Libercus in June 2013.

Libercus incorporates its own copy-editing, pagination and layout engines, eliminating the need for Adobe InDesign or QuarkXPress. The apps are deployed through Microsoft Corp.'s Windows Azure cloud-computing platform.

"In Toledo, we built a layout engine within the same Libercus CMS to simplify workflow and you lay out the paper in an HTML5 environment in your Web browser — there's no extra app required," Crisp said. "That content, including all copy, photos and feeds from The AP or Bloomberg, etc. all goes into the templates built into the layout engine, and it publishes for your output devices."

Templates generate the appropriate PDF for whatever section or product is being published, and then HTML5 pages are generated for e-editions, etc.

The Post-Gazette's workflow will be about the same, with some tweaks to accommodate the much larger daily, according to Crisp.

"The fact that they are much larger in terms of pages and website traffic made it a significantly different installation," he said. "They have to go through a lot more training and design a lot more templates, so that by definition increased the magnitude of the task."

To that end, the Post-Gazette has relied a lot more heavily on its tech staff in addition to vendor staff during the rollout.

Crisp said The Blade, because of its smaller size and staff, relied more heavily on Libercus for software support.

Block maintains internal disaster recovery, which would allow both dailies to generate a paper internally in the event that either should lose all Internet capabilities.

Block in 2012 made a major investment in E. Viddal & Associates, owner of the Libercus platform in 2012, ahead of The Blade's conversion to the CMS. Crisp also sits on the Libercus board ad chairman with direct responsibility for sales efforts.

"We definitely have a stake in marketing this to other papers," he said. "And the response has been positive. This is a truly cloud-based system that gives you the opportunity to do something different with your newspaper model."

To that end, The Sandusky (Ohio) Newspaper Group is the latest to commit to the Libercus platform. SNG — which publishes 12 community newspapers throughout Ohio, Michigan, Utah and Tennessee, as well as 42 websites and a full-service digital agency — will implement the app across its print and digital channels.

"The real upside for us was eliminating the need to duct-tape systems together in the background," Patrick O'Brien, director of product development said in a statement. "We believe the installation will give us significant savings on IT and hosting, coupled to real productivity growth."

SNG's titles include the Sandusky Register and the Norwalk Reflector in Ohio, the Standard-Examiner in Ogden, Utah, and the Grand Haven (Mich.) Tribune. In Tennessee it publishes the Kingsport Times-News, the Johnson City Press, the Lebanon Democrat, the Erwin Record, the Tomahawk in Mountain City, the Herald & Tribune in Jonesborough, the Mount Juliet News and the Hartsville Vidette.

That deal comes on the heels of Libercus' September pact with The Elkhart (Ind.) Truth, which is transitioning from a legacy publishing system in a bid to more rapidly deliver news content to multiple channels. The Truth will be fully live on Libercus in early 2014. ▲