

Asia Online



Websites and portals across Asia are latching on to a new Reuters editorial product put together in a new way.

It's barely seven months old but already the Asia Online Report is carving a niche for itself. The service could point the way for the Reuters editorial product of the future. What is an online report? Quite simply it's text linked to pictures and presented in a way that is attractive to an Internet-using, surfing audience which gains access via a number of portals and websites with which Reuters has agreements.

"It's an exciting attempt to produce an integrated multi-media product," says the editor in charge of Asia Online Report, Anne Senior (pictured left). "The interesting thing about the online desk in Asia is that you have a single point of creation, with one journalist handling the pictures, the text and the caption."

Custom-designed software used in Singapore, where the Asia Online Report is based, allows the journalist to choose and manipulate pictures and text. In time it will allow video and graphics to be added to stories as well.

The finished result is then pumped out to established portals like Lycos or websites like the South China Morning Post online edition. Lycos represents a particular success for the Asia Online Report, having opted to take Reuters material in place of its existing supplier, AFP.

"Lycos was very keen on AFP," says Anne Senior, "and it took a lot of hard work and persuasion by the sales staff to wean them off them. Once they got the gospel they became very enthusiastic."

So keen was Lycos that they now use the Asia Online Report as a so called "lock and

Leads the Way

load” product, accepting the news priorities set by the Reuters team and publishing the Reuters content direct to its online subscribers.

The success of the online report has had a knock-on effect on editorial right across Asia. Dedicated online reporters have been recruited in Kuala Lumpur, Manila, and Singapore and six new reporters added to the Indian online service produced in New Delhi.

“We’re actually creating specific content that is riding on the back of business plans for the online product,” says editor Asia-Pacific, Chaitanya Kalbag (right), “But then those reports are also going to all our other subscribers so that feeds back into the main core product. Effectively the entire news file has benefited vastly.”

Kalbag also notes that the more consumer, mass market writing style appropriate for Internet products is having an effect. “We’re now looking for good writers, not just good reporters,” he says. “The quality of writing has been excellent so I’m hoping that online reporting will become a catalyst for better writing across the board.”

The experience gained in Asia in producing true multi-media packages is also likely to help pave the way for the introduction of News2Web which in time will embrace all Reuters journalists in the production of multi-media packages for clients.

“We’re already putting in practice the principles behind News2Web,” says Anne Senior. “We’re doing that with the software we have available now so hopefully those skills will put us in the vanguard of the News2Web revolution.”

