

Meeting Customer Needs . . .

*Stock Asylum Staff Report
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Washington DC — Larger thumbnails and previews, more sensible pricing, better use of metadata, consistent use of terminology and improved keywording were some of the suggestions offered by a panel of image buyers that kicked off this year's Picture Archive Council of America (PACA) annual meeting here.

For the buyers who participated in a discussion entitled, "Freedom of Choice: Are We Giving Them What They Want?" the answer on this date was, "sort of."

The four buyers said they liked the variety of licensing models today, with most saying they used at least some of every licensing model from micropayment to rights-managed stock photography. But it was clear they all wanted distributors to streamline the image search and licensing process, and develop additional web site amenities to improve their workflow.



Interestingly, panel members said they make little or no use of online lightboxes because they like to grab numerous images from several distributors and place those images into files on their own computers.

But, they said, that means that downloadable "comps" — large image previews — need to be bigger and should be of high quality.

Roy Hsu, an art director at Ogilvy One NY and an active stock photographer, complained that small, low-quality comps often cause problems when trying to sell an idea to a client.

"It's a problem when we are showing it to a client and the client gets hung up on the quality," said Hsu, who also is president of Stock Artists Alliance, a stock photographer's organization. He said some clients have trouble visualizing the final product when the comp is of low quality.

He also called on the distributors to create larger thumbnails for image search pages. Hsu said having to open the larger previews of many images slows down the search process.



The buyers also were concerned that metadata often does not download with comps. Because they do not use lightboxes, they said they sometimes have had trouble figuring out which distributor offers a particular image.

Annette Scarpitta, a picture editor from K12, Inc., and Carol Enquist, photo editor of National Geographic Traveler magazine, said they have developed their own systems to keep track of image sources, but, added Enquist, "It is still so easy to lose track of where you got this from."

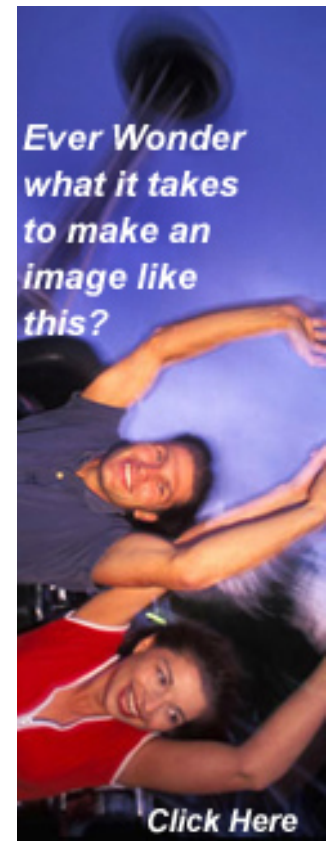
Hsu said he likes Alamy's previews because the British distributor places a black



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bar below the image with Alamy's name and the image number.

Panel members noted that, on occasion, they have had to reject an image they liked because they could not locate the right distributor.



Hsu was concerned about unpredictable pricing of rights-managed imagery. He said pricing sometimes makes little sense to buyers. Hsu noted one case where the price for using an image in 10,000 e-mails was quoted at \$2,000 while the price for using it on half a postcard with a press run of 100,000 pieces was just \$1,060.

He also complained about inconsistent terminology. He said different distributors sometimes use the same licensing terms differently, Former PACA president Jeffrey Burke noted that the PLUS Coalition is working to standardize licensing terminology. Burke is the current chairman of the PLUS board of directors.

Scarpitta said she would like to see improved keyword searches. For example, she said, the phrase "pine tree" often brings up other kinds of trees even when she uses quotes around the term, which, on many web sites, should limit the search to just those images that are keyworded for both words.



Enquist asked for more caption information. She said she often needs to know when an image was made. In addition, she said she sometimes must search on Google to find out what a location looks like and then match the Google image to images on stock photography web sites.

All of the panelists said they often search very deep in collections for the right image. Joanna Sanders creative director at SQN Communications Design, said she has searched as many as 25 different stock distributors for a single image.

Added Hsu: "It is rare that I'll find the right image in the first ten pages of a

search."

Moderator John Nuhn, photography director of National Wildlife magazine, said he and his staff once looked through 12,000 images to find the right one for a story on global warming.



The PACA web site is at: <http://www.pacaoffice.org>.

The PLUS coalition is at: <http://www.useplus.com>.

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