



NEWS FROM TAB

Traffic Audit Bureau for Media Measurement, Inc.
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NEWS OF INTEREST TO PLANNERS, BUYERS AND SELLERS OF OUT-OF-HOME ADVERTISING

Issue 7: Update on the Transitional Audit... Plant Operator support is crucial

I am pleased to report that we are well into the final phase of TAB's new audit methodology. In the first phase, we discarded over 30 percent of the 70,034 old count stations that were either duplicates or overlapped another operator's count station. We have completely moved from the old approach where each of the over 280 operators had his own count stations and traffic counts. The old approach had two significant problems: (1) circulation counts had been inconsistent across operators and therefore lacked credibility, and (2) TAB lacked a standard database across all operators. This limited the utility of the data and made it difficult to easily implement data updates (e.g. new inventory or annual traffic adjustments). Our new count stations are total independent and now represent a market-level system totally free from the biases of the old approach.

In order to implement the new system, we must now map our plant operator members' entire inventory into this new independent market-level network of count stations. In addition to assigning the panels into the new count stations, we must also make sure the panel attributes for each piece of inventory are correct and standardized across all plants. We are currently in various stages of processing data from over 60 plants.

This industry has seen dramatic change over the past few years. Many operators have acquired new inventory. Additionally, many companies have modified and enhanced their databases since their last audits. This has often included changing panel ID numbers. During the first quarter, we have found that these hurdles have significantly increased the complexity and scale of our task. The good news is that we have put in place solutions that attack these hurdles head-on. The fact is that without the new centralized database approach, we would have been paralyzed by these factors. The historical TAB audit databases simply lacked the standardization and robustness needed to accommodate this growth.

Here are a few things we are doing to get the job done.

We are staffing up to move to a new database approach to the TAB audits. The increased scope of the project has required TAB to hire more staff than anticipated. We're now temporarily staffed with an experienced database consultant and three data analysts. We are also outsourcing parts of the project where necessary.

New software has been developed to make the process more efficient and accurate. Our proprietary Verify mapping software allows us to map panels into count stations from a computer work station. TabviewOnline, TAB's first web-based application for processing audit information, was released on June 1st. This application marks the first time that all users will have access to one database. The application will increase accuracy and standardization. It will also provide significant efficiencies by eliminating the need to update

The screenshot shows the TABviewOnline web application interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'home | plant | panels | count stations | panels/count stations | maintenance | reports | logout'. Below that, a search bar is visible. The main content area is titled 'Panels - MILE HIGH OUTDOOR - DENVER' and shows a table of panel information. The table has columns for Unit#, Audited Date, SID, Illumination, Single Face, and Panel#. Below this, there are sections for 'Primary Artery #' (1925 COLFAX), 'Town:' (Denver County, CO), and 'Street Side:' (N E). A 'PANEL COUNT STATIONS' table is also present, with columns for Unassign, Count Station ID, Type, Year, Station Location, and Avg. DEC. The total for Avg. DEC is 24.92. At the bottom, there are buttons for 'New', 'Modify', 'Assign Count Station', and 'Unassign Count Station(s)'. The browser title is 'Panel - Microsoft Internet Explorer' and the address bar shows 'http://tabview.tabonline.com/tabview/apps/panel/panel_info.aspx?divisionid=5'.

Sample Screen from TABviewOnline

multiple databases.

We will be working with the corporate databases of major media companies. Several major media companies have developed standardized and detailed inventory files across their plants. We are developing the software to verify and then integrate their data directly into TABviewOnline.

Plant cooperation is critical. Since plant operators have a key role to play in this verification process, our ability to introduce DEC's from the new audit methodology by the end of 2003 will depend on plant operator support. Plants that are part of corporate databases must make sure their inventory is up to date. After geocoded panels are assigned, plants will be asked to review and add pertinent information such as illumination and any missing data. Plants without a corporate level database will be asked to utilize TabviewOnline to get inventories up-to-date. For some plants that have undergone major changes, this can take significant time and should be planned accordingly.

Plants must perform these tasks this summer for TAB to debut the new audit numbers later this year. We will be sending a more detailed communication to all plants via TAB Audit Notes.

The great news is that the end is in sight. More importantly, once these tasks are completed, the industry will have one standardized database, credible circulation counts, and the ability to update new inventory quickly. Your support this summer will benefit the industry for years to come.

Joe Philport