


Statement of Requirements for Improvements to the Invelos Software, Inc. DVD Profiler Contributions System and Online Database



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Preface

Invelos DVD Profiler is widely regarded as the best DVD cataloging system available. There are several notable competitors, but DVD Profiler has a number of unique, highly desirable features:

- Intuitive graphical user interface with a myriad of features for customization, reporting and statistics
- Online database that can be synchronized with user local database
- Remote access to databases within user network
- Compatible mobile solutions
- A one-time license fee
- A Forum with an active User Community, that is administered in an open-minded, fair and tolerant way
- A mechanism for user-supported program extensions called “plugins”

But by far the most valuable asset is its extensive Online Database. The online database is comprised of thousands of Profiles that can be downloaded to the local client software. Profiles embody metadata and images that describe the content stored on the corresponding DVD or Blu-Ray disc media. Furthermore, local profiles can be augmented with personal information such as Notes, Purchase Information, Reviews and much more. Personal information is preserved by the DVD Profiler software when the local database is backed up and restored, and is not overridden when profile updates are downloaded from the Online.

An innovative, unique companion feature to the Online Database is the Contributions System. The Invelos Online Database is a User Community supported resource. Users research metadata, and through interfaces provided by the client software, upload that metadata to the Online Database.

User collaboration is supported by the Online Website Contribution System which keeps track of and synchronizes changes. Change management is administered by the Invelos Corporation, based on a set of guidelines known as the Contribution Rules. A “by request and invitation only” group of users comprises the Rules Committee, which periodically reviews and approves new and changed contribution rules. The Rules Committee is chaired by the Invelos Corporation management.

As the technologies for media rendering and storage have advanced, and as user libraries and interests have grown, the Contribution Rules have been significantly tested. Earlier compromises are causing increasing frustration among avid users. New requirements for metadata interpretation and manipulation, mostly well-known and documented, have not been adequately served by recent DVD Profiler updates, although these updates have provided many useful and appreciated enhancements.

The User Community (the subset most involved in Contributions) frustration that has been building over time, is more often being manifested as hostility in the Forums, persistent recycling of old arguments, and withdrawal from the contributions process by some of the most prolific and experienced collectors.

In a desperate attempt to pull itself together, several users (The Team) have come together, with determination and restraint, to collaborate on a set of recommendations for DVD Profiler enhancement that would address these frustrations.

It is in this renewed spirit of cooperation that this document is presented to Invelos, in the hopes that it provides some value to the Corporation, who in turn can provide additional features in support of its dedicated User Community.

mediadogg, on behalf of The Team

Background

I had been observing a number of heated discussions about the contributions process and rules over a period of time. It appeared that the issues were being constantly recycled and not adequately resolved by program updates, and I also observed several experienced users proclaim that they were no longer contributing. As a long-time admirer and supporter of the dedicated and talented individuals who build the valuable Online Database, I felt that I wanted to do something to help – contributions are not my thing, but I do have some project management skills that I developed during my 30 year career with a major computer company.

I decided to try and organize a work project to address some of the issues. I wanted to focus on a way to lure frustrated contributors, especially those with large collections, back to the contributions process. It seemed to me that one of the biggest issues was the continual fight to maintain their view of “good data,” due to the open process of profile contributions and updates to the Online Database. For a number of reasons, including the ease with which inexperienced users can make contributions, and disagreement about the how to apply certain of the Rules, a number of users had just stopped contributing. This will eventually spell doom for what I have already dubbed the most valuable asset of DVD Profiler.

I came up with the idea for a set of “Gold Audited Profiles.” I presented this idea in the context of a project, that I would eventually lead, and used a Forum Poll ([thread link](#)) as a way to gauge whether or not my ideas had any traction. I went out on a limb, but was eventually amply rewarded by a surge of other DVD Profiler users coming forward to help organize the process. But for a few hiccups here and there, it has been fun.

A discussion of the perceived issues with the Contributions Process, details of my proposal, and other proposed solutions by Team members are presented later in this document. It was encouraging to me that, as of this date, there have been 58 responses to the poll, all but 7 of which could be construed as actively or passively supportive of the project goals. Not only is this a high percentage of acceptance, but in my opinion, nearly 60 responses to such a poll is unusually high, and may be further indicative of the level of interest in getting these issues resolved.

As a final note, to date, there have been more than 30 users (see Cover) have joined me in the original thread and in spinoffs participating in a spirited and cooperative conversation.

I want to express my appreciation to The Team, and share my wish for a significant and timely response from Invelos Software, Inc. You will likely recognize aspects of your thoughts and suggestions throughout the document. With a couple of exceptions, I have elected not to explicitly quote members or provide thread links, for my convenience and ease of reading, but the original threads are available as documentation of all the excellent collaboration that occurred. It goes without saying that the contents of this document are the product of our mutual efforts, and not mine alone.

mediadogg

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Process Issues

Major contributors frustrated by profiles being overwritten with “bad data”

It has been observed by members and confirmed during our discussions that several avid contributors have either stopped or slowed down their contributions. One reason given for this is the fact that it has become unbearably difficult to monitor profile changes and protect them from changes that are deemed to have “bad data.” Typical problems include invalid Birth Years being introduced, controversial spelling changes, and credits that violate Contribution Rules.

This indicates that there are flaws in the change review and approval process that allows these errors to slip through. The number of conflicts arising from what should be routine changes indicates complexity and inefficiency in the process. The author has personally observed member complaining about having to do, then having to redo the same changes (e.g. color attributes).

This indicates that not only must the change review and approval process be updated to handle these scenarios, but that there needs to be a way to protect verified profiles from significant changes, so that prolific contributors have confidence that their hard work will not be undone.

Festering Disagreements over Rules

It is felt by many contributors that Contributions Rules changes or additions are needed to handle the increased complexity in DVD / Blu-Ray metadata, methods of distribution, media technologies (e.g. digital), new roles for Cast and Crew and other things resulting from the evolution of the industry.

The fact that these changes are not being made in a timely manner, has resulted in a number of long-standing feuds among members on nuances of Rules interpretation. The same arguments are being recycled in different threads, often by the same members. These disagreements are not being moderated to conclusion (e.g. how to document sources, definition of a minimum profile for contribution), or in some cases, the existing Rule has led to unsatisfactory results and members are still not satisfied (e.g. Capitalization)

Confusion about Contribution Rules for new submissions

Related to the previous issue and possibly even because of it, it has been difficult of new contributors to understand and master the contributions process. The Rules are complex and in dispute, as well as the rules for the minimum acceptable contribution. Often, newbies are given conflicting advice from members, and argument ensues and the new member is chased away from the process.

A related problem, for both new and experienced users, is the fact that new contributions have no way to subset the profile components being submitted. If a collector has a complete profile that does not meet existing Contribution Rules, there is no way for him to automatically submit the minimum subset that does meet the rules, so many profiles created by experienced users do not get submitted because of the double work it creates for them.

Content Issues

Disc IDs:

- Submissions requiring disc ID cannot be done by people without a computer drive. This is especially true of Blu-Ray titles.

Cast / Crew Linking:

- The ability to identify every Cast/Crew member uniquely
- Rules for capitalization of names inconsistent with other rules about exactly as written
- Support for names with accents and character sets not currently supported.

Use of Birth Years (BY):

- May be solved if a linking system is implemented.
- Invalid BYs are allowed to corrupt the database. Unjustified BY should be filtered out before propagating profile changes.
- BYs that are not included in accepted BY thread are allowed to be submitted.

Cloning of Profile Metadata:

- There needs to be a way to reduce the amount of duplicate effort in cases where the same movie is released in two territories, or even a re-release in the same territory. In such cases, a lot of data has to be entered multiple times, and there's no direct means of updating all of the others if a fix is made to one of them.
- Other situations require the replication or cloning of metadata for the purpose of creating child profiles or copying the profile to a new locality. Current rules require the revalidation of the entire profile.

Crew Chart Exceptions:

- Some people insist that contribution must exactly match the chart. "Directors" would not be allowed because the chart only list "Director" or "Directed By".
- How do we deal with older films whose credits do not match the chart?

Capitalization Standards:

- Copy Overview exactly but then Rating Details need to follow capitalization rules.
- Capitalization rules updated to address all lower case data. When something is written all in capitals, we change that data to include upper and lower case letters. Should something that is written in lower case letters follow a similar protocol?

Proposed Solutions

Gold Audited Profiles Project

Goal: To create the most accurate set of DVD / BD profiles in the Universe by improving the quality of contributions to the database, the accuracy of the data, and protecting a quality profile from damage.

Objectives:

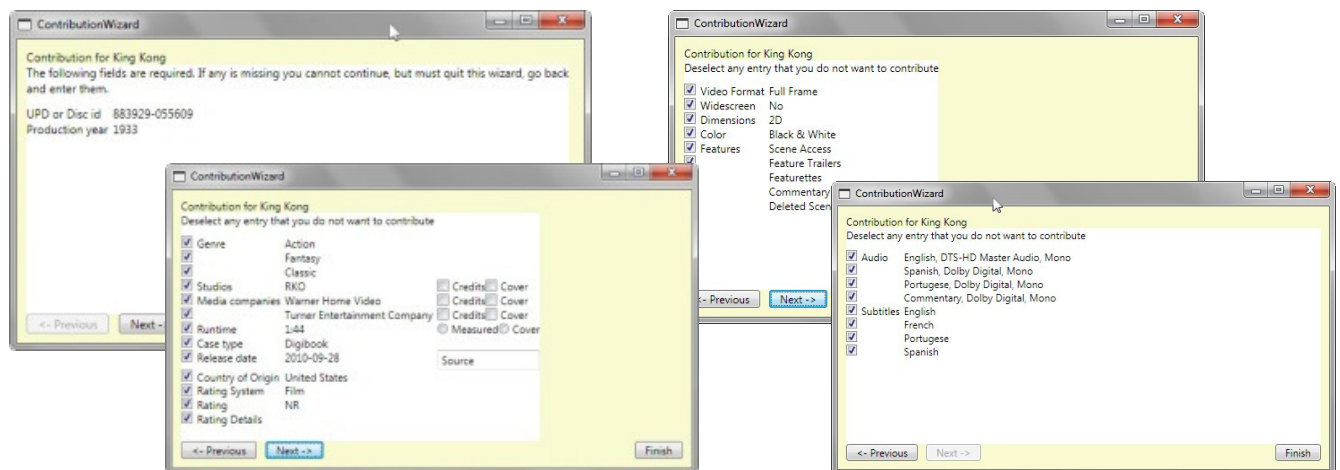
- Create a set of DVD / BD profiles whose metadata content have passed the scrutiny of the DVD Profiler Contributions Team, and have thereby earned the status of "Gold Audited."
- Maintain a repository of such profiles, locked and protected from changes made by unauthorized individuals
- Provide an open environment for improving the quality of such profiles
- Provide a mechanism to share the results with Invelos Software, Inc and invite their active participation in technology or procedures consistent with the goal

The purpose of Gold Audited Profiles is to ensure profiles are correct and within the current profiler database rules. In the repository, which is hosted separately from the Online Database, there could be extra functionality such as additional fields and character set support. The hosting would be a place to store a repository of Gold Audited Profiles, ability to download by DVDP users, some sort of App to maintain or change profiles by a limited set of authorized users. The download process would need to contain an option to recast the expanded profile into DVD Profiler format, with documented limitations.

Contribution Wizard

This proposal was made by GSyen in [this thread](#). A Contribution Wizard allows easier selection of what data to contribute. It starts with required fields and makes it clear that anything else is optional. Many users may be intimidated by the sheer number of data that can be contributed, and are not aware that most of it is optional. The wizard will also enforce the mandatory inclusion of the minimum required metadata fields.

A wizard could also include the possibility to include comments about the source for the data. Being prompted for the source for each section separately would make it easier to remember to document everything, and would also make it possible to build standardized contribution notes. Following is a set of mock up screens provided by GSyen:



Proposed Solutions (contd.)

Immediate Rules Modifications and Enhancements

Modify existing rules for capitalization so that ALL fields to be entered exactly as entered on the DVD metadata or Cover. Existing profiles are grandfathered to be fixed as users find time. DVD Profiler will have a new feature called "Aesthetic View" which will apply an automatic (de)capitalization filter to user selected fields. The underlying data in the profile will remain exactly as given by the studios (except for grandfathered profiles which will gradually be fixed over time.)

Program Enhancements

This section is not intended to displace or repeat the Feature Requests Forum, but rather highlight selected changes that we feel most directly bear on the issues that are presented in this paper, and thereby we feel that they should be accorded a high priority by Invelos Software, Inc.

- Ability for DVD Profiler to supply a temporary disc ID in cases where a UPC/EAN cannot be used, and the user does not have a computer disc drive available. This allows the submission to proceed and the correct disc ID to be filled in at a later time.
- Built-in cloning tools to replace the various plugin and workaround options in use today. The tools would be designed to enforce the Rules and require supporting documentation.
- Automatic (de)capitalization for aesthetic view. Underlying data in profile is exact.
- Addition of a Contribution Wizard concept to the profile submission process to guarantee that a correct minimum profile is submitted, and valid sources are supplied.
- Ability to handle accented characters in the Cast / Crew database.
- Ability to submit a new profile derived from a subset of a complete profile, so long as that subset meets the minimum standard for profile submissions. Per the Contribution Wizard concept, source notes would be mandatory and collected automatically as part of the submission.

With these methods, it should minimize cases where a new submission would be rejected or obtain significant No votes.

Plan

This report will be presented to Invelos Management for consideration. Ideally, Invelos will make a definitive statement of support for the aforementioned changes and enhancements to its products, and some indication of a possible timeframe. This will serve as a guide to The Team members as how to best use their time in the DVD Profiler Community.

As previously mentioned, The Team has engaged in spirited discussions and has identified a number of possible work projects that can be explored in parallel with Invelos activities:

Gold Audited Profiles

- Depending on Invelos Software, Inc response to this report, a subset of The Team will pursue building a prototype of the “Gold Audited Profiles” concept. In response to the poll, 14 people have volunteered to work on this project. The existing Task List will be refined, assignments made and timeframes established. This will require web site resources, web applications and plugins. Invelos active participation and support would be welcomed.

Contribution Wizard

- Depending on Invelos Software, Inc response to this report, The Team may develop a prototype of the Contribution Wizard. Member GSyren, who presented the idea in this thread, has offered to build a standalone tool. At that point, we will ask for a plugin developer volunteer to repackage the tool as a plugin and create an automated submission process.
- As the author of DVDPca (Profile Contribution Assistant) plugin, I intend to enhance this plugin to include validation, per GSyren, so that the profiles it creates meet the minimum standard. I will also add the required “source” field and set by default “Direct from Disc using DVDPca Tool.”
- Ideally, the validation screens will be built directly into DVDP Profiler submission process.
- Until we get changes in the DVD Profiler program, we will continue to explore tools and plugins, perhaps somehow combining DVDPca and Contribution Wizard to create as much of a seamless and accurate submission process as possible.

Rules Changes

- The Team intends to refine and update the definition of the minimum standard profile that is expected of any and every new profile submission, and submit to the Rules Committee for approval.
- The Team intends to continue discussion of the other rules issues, and submit any solutions that reach consensus to the Rules Committee for approval.

What is needed from Invelos Software, Inc

- Invelos Software, Inc should respond to this proposal in a definitive and timely fashion, and indicate which aspects of the proposal it can support and which new features it is willing to consider putting into DVD Profiler.
- Regardless of the support statement, there is an urgent need for Invelos to find a way, involving profile approval process and technology changes, to better protect validated profiles from accidental damage (“bad data”).

Conclusions

Without adequate solutions provided by Invelos Software, Inc to the issues and concerns presented in this paper, the Team predicts that one or more of the following consequences will ensue:

- The number of avid contributors will continue to decrease.
- The number of contributors with large collections will decrease even more dramatically.
- The competitive advantage afforded Invelos Software, Inc by the quality of the Online Database will continue to be eroded.
- The desire for incompatible user tools and competitive approaches to the metadata database will increase. This could lead to even more competitors of Invelos Software, Inc and loss of a dedicated cadre of users.

Whether these predicted consequences impact the Invelos Software, Inc business model enough to prompt its action is not something that the Contributions Community can determine.

Links:

[Gold Audited Profiles Thread](http://www.invelos.com/Forums.aspx?task=viewtopic&topicID=630595&PageNum=1)

(<http://www.invelos.com/Forums.aspx?task=viewtopic&topicID=630595&PageNum=1>)

[Contribution Wizard Thread](http://www.invelos.com/Forums.aspx?task=viewtopic&topicID=630772&PageNum=1)

(<http://www.invelos.com/Forums.aspx?task=viewtopic&topicID=630772&PageNum=1>)