



AAF Frequently Asked Questions

By the AAF Association, Inc.™

1. The New AAF Edit Protocol™

1.1. What is the AAF Edit Protocol?

The AAF Edit Protocol codifies the experiences and best practices learned by the manufacturers that brought the first AAF supporting products to market. The Edit Protocol specification document is a companion to the AAF specification, SDK, reference implementation and documentation.

1.2. What does the AAF Edit Protocol Offer End Users?

The primary goal of the AAF Edit Protocol is to deliver consistent, dependable, and predictable results for interchange of editorial information between applications; especially products from different manufacturers.

1.3. How Does the AAF Edit Protocol Benefit Manufacturers and Developers?

The second goal of the Edit Protocol is to simplify the task of adding AAF support to new and existing products. The AAF Edit Protocol is much more specific than the more generalized AAF Specification. The protocol details implementation requirements and documents the lessons learned by the AAF developers who first brought implementations to market. The Edit Protocol will make it easier and less costly to implement AAF in products.

1.4. What is the Difference between the Edit Protocol and the AAF Specification?

The Edit Protocol takes a subset of the AAF Specification and provides constrained guidelines for implementation. The edit protocol focuses on implementing AAF to ensure that edit metadata can be shared between applications with confidence.

1.5. Is the AAF Edit Protocol Available in Open Source?

Yes. The AAF Edit Protocol is implemented in the AAF SDK and reference implementation in addition to the published specification document.

1.6 Is the Edit Protocol supported in the SDK?

Yes, Edit Protocol functionality is built into the AAF Association SDK Version 1.1. The SDK is available for download from the AAF Association web site – www.aafassociation.org -- by clicking on the “Downloads” tab.

1.7. Has the Edit Protocol been approved as an AAF Specification?

Yes, the AAF Board of Directors approved the AAF Object Specification v1.1 and the AAF Edit Protocol on April 19, 2005.

2. The AAF Association

2.1. What is the AAF Association?

The AAF Association Inc. is a broadly based trade association created to promote the development and adoption of AAF technology. AAF technology allows content creators, editors and rich media authors to exchange video, audio, images, text and metadata between applications.

1.2. Who belongs to the AAF Association?

Principal Members

Adobe Systems, Inc.
Ascent Media
Autodesk
Avid
British Broadcasting Corporation
CNN/Turner (including AOL, Time Warner and Warner Bros.)
DiskStream, Inc.
Microsoft
National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency
Quantel
Siemens Business Services
Snell & Wilcox

General Members

Apple
Fox
Panasonic
Pinnacle (including Fast Multimedia)
Thomson Grass Valley

Associate Members

BAE Systems
Blue Order
E! Entertainment
Konan Technology

Korean Broadcasting System
OmniBus Systems
SADiE
SeaChange International
Sony
Visible World

Developer Members

Automatic Duck, Inc.
Brooks Harris Film & Tape
Dark Matter Digital
Diaquest Products
Merging Tech
MESoft
Metaglue Corporation
Perspective Media Group
Preview Multimedia
Synthetic Aperture
Universitat Pompeu Fabra
XVUE Ltd

2.3. When was the AAF Association created?

The association was incorporated in January of 2000. For more information, see our press release on the website: www.aafassociation.org

2.4. What is the mission of the AAF Association?

The mission of the AAF Association is to be the forum where users and manufacturers develop open interchange solutions that solve real-world business problems and create new business opportunities for content creation, production, post-production and rich media authoring.

2.5. How does the AAF Association accomplish its mission?

By promoting the Advanced Authoring Format as a means of interchange of program content and metadata in a mixed-vendor environment. By holding Developer Conferences to educate programmers so that they can more easily use the AAF SDK. By holding Awareness Events to educate the industry on the power of AAF.

2.6. Can anyone become a member of the AAF Association?

Yes. Anyone with an interest in the issues surrounding the exchange of program content and metadata in the rich media environment is welcome to join the AAF Association.

2.7. What are the benefits of becoming a member of the AAF Association?

For the broadcast and post community, involvement with the AAF association provides a unique opportunity to influence working practices of the future. For manufacturers, involvement with the AAF Association means active participation in a project that will have a fundamental impact on the markets for their products, allowing the full benefits of digital working to be realized. Additionally, member benefits include access to AAF Sample files, tutorials, example codes and UML. Members also are allowed to participate in Awareness Events, and to receive priority listing in our Developer Resource Directory.

2.8. What classes of membership are available?

The AAF Association has four classes of membership – Principal, General, Associate and Developer.

Principal Members

- Enjoy all the benefits of General Membership
- Are eligible for election to the Board of Directors
- Cost is \$10,000 per year

General Members

- May appoint voting representatives to each of the AAF Association committees
- May propose new extensions and additions to the AAF Specifications
- Receive electronic copies of all AAF specifications and publications
- Receive support for the AAF specification and associated Software Development Kit
- Cost is \$7,500 per year

Associate Members

- May appoint non-voting representatives to each of the AAF Association committees
- Receive electronic copies of all AAF specifications and publications
- Receive support for the AAF specification and associated Software Development Kit
- Cost is \$3,000 per year

Developer Members (with five or fewer employees)

- May appoint voting representatives to each of the AAF Association committees
- May propose new extensions and additions to the AAF Specifications
- Receive electronic copies of all AAF specifications and publications
- Receive support for the AAF specification and associated Software Development Kit
- Cost is \$500 per year

Note: In addition to the four classes of membership listed above, the AAF Association may also establish liaison relationships with other associations and standards bodies on a no-cost basis.

2.9. How does the AAF Association relate to work on the AAF Specification?

Work on the AAF Specification takes place in Working Groups established by the AAF Association.

2.10. How can I join?

The easiest way to join the AAF Association is to go to the web site, www.aafassociation.org, and click on the "Join Us" tab. Select the class of membership you are interested in, complete the application form and submit it online. An invoice will be sent and membership benefits commence when dues are received. You can also send email to: info@aafassociation.org.

3. The Advanced Authoring Format

3.1. What is the Advanced Authoring Format?

The Advanced Authoring Format (AAF) is a professional file interchange format designed for the post production and authoring environment. AAF solves the problem of multi-vendor, cross-platform interoperability for computer-based digital production. AAF does a number of things:

1. it allows complex relationships to be described in terms of an object model,
2. it facilitates the interchange of metadata and/or program content,
3. it provides a way to track the history of a piece of program content from its source elements through final production,
4. it makes it possible to render downstream (with appropriate equipment),
5. it provides a convenient way to "wrap" all elements of a project together for archiving.

By preserving comprehensive source referencing, and abstracting the creative decisions that are made, AAF improves workflow and simplifies project management. For more information, see the various resources under the 'Technical' tab of the web site.

3.2. Why do we need it?

Bob Turner has written an excellent article that answers this question, which is posted on the AAF web site. With the accelerating progress of digital technologies, an open interchange standard is essential to enable the digital production facilities of the future. The lack of integration of multi-vendor products has proven to be a significant obstacle to the rapid acceptance of computer based digital tools for professional production. AAF represents a broad industry initiative to remove those obstacles.

3.3. What are the components of AAF?

- The NEW AAF Edit Protocol
- The AAF Object Specification, which defines the way AAF stores metadata and essence
- The AAF API Specification, which defines how software engineers can write applications
- The AAF Reference Implementation, which implements both these specifications in a completely cross-platform manner
- The AAF Software Development Kit (SDK), which includes developer utilities and validation test suites
- The AAF Example software, which demonstrates how to use the AAF SDK to produce AAF files
- The AAF Example files created by working AAF implementations

3.4. How will the next version of the specification be developed?

Technical development of AAF is under the control of the Engineering Committee. Work plans are developed based upon the interests and input of AAF members. Communication regarding development of AAF occurs at AAF technical meetings and over the AAF Source Forge project reflector at www.sourceforge.net/projects/aaf.

4. The AAF Software Development Kit

4.1. Where can I get a copy of the SDK?

A copy of the SDK is available on the AAF website – www.aafassociation.org – at the “Downloads” tab.

4.2. Who owns the AAF SDK?

The AAF Association controls the AAF SDK. About 95% of the code in the SDK was contributed by Avid, and is licensed under the AAF Public Source license. This license allows users to

1. use the software for free forever,
2. allows users to modify the source code,
3. allows users to charge others for their modified source code,
4. provides a patent pool for copyright protection.

Structured Storage, the persistent storage mechanism for AAF was contributed by Microsoft. The Structured Storage Specification is available to AAF members on the AAF website.

4.3. What is contained in the SDK?

The AAF reference implementation, including source code and examples of the majority of the Utilities. The SDK includes installers for Windows®, IRIX and MacOS® platforms. The SDK includes an AAF file dumper, a sample XML definition of AAF among other things.

4.4. What are the licensing terms for the AAF SDK?

The AAF SDK is licensed under a perpetual, royalty-free license. Users are allowed to download source code, make derivative works, include these works in their products and charge for these works.

4.5. Who would benefit from using the SDK?

- Developers of software applications for production and editing – to jump-start development
- Developers of video servers and production systems – as a test tool
- End user engineers – as a test and QA tool
- Content creators, catalogers and archivists – to build format-independent content databases

4.6. Why is the AAF Association producing an SDK?

We want to ensure that different implementations of the AAF specification are interoperable. Paper specifications are not enough for this kind of technology. Developers need a reference implementation against which they can test and verify their own code.

4.7. What is the current state of the SDK?

Please see our download section for the latest compiled versions of the SDK. The latest code from the CVS library is available at: <http://aaf.sourceforge.net>

4.8. What sort of support is available for the SDK?

- AAF members provide support through the Source Forge forum at www.sourceforge.net/projects/aaf
- Product manufacturers provide first-line support to end users of the SDK.
- Members of the AAF Association support each other through shared knowledge databases and email.
- Non-members may purchase support; the proceeds go into the general fund of the Association.

4.9. If I can get the AAF SDK free, why do I need to join the AAF Association?

You should join the AAF Association to get support for the SDK and to participate in the development of future capabilities of AAF. AAF is fundamentally a shared industry initiative, built out of the contributions of its members. No one is required to join; the association is open to everyone. Members share benefits such as access to the support network and participation in developer conferences and the technical committee. You may also choose to join the Association to gain access to Example code, sample files, and access to or a listing on the AAF Developers Resource page.

4.10. What platforms are supported by the SDK?

Windows 98, Windows NT and Windows 2000, Macintosh (System 8.x onwards), and (from DR3), various UNIX flavors including IRIX (V6.5 and later) and Linux.

4.11. What do I have to have in order to run the SDK?

A Windows®, Macintosh® (or from DR3, UNIX) computer of at least the performance indicated in the AAF SDK Release Notes, and a C++ development environment.

4.12. How much work has gone into the SDK?

Across all AAF Association Founders, the size of the engineering team is presently more than 15 people. The development effort is estimated at over \$3 million dollars.

4.13. Who wrote the current SDK?

The SDK was developed by Avid Technology Inc., with the assistance of Microsoft, Sony, Autodesk (formerly Discreet) and the BBC.

4.14. Can I make products using the SDK?

Yes.

4.15. Can I charge money for products using the SDK?

Yes.

4.16. Under what conditions do I have to pay for the SDK?

None.

4.17. Can I download the SDK "just to take a look?"

Yes.

4.18. Are there documents that support the SDK?

Yes, documentation for the SDK is available.

4.19. How do new changes get incorporated into the SDK?

Changes and additions to the SDK are submitted to the Head of Engineering. Development work is then done through an Open Source process with checks and balances and testing defined by the Engineering Committee of the AAF Association. No change is made to the SDK without a Specification Update, a Regression Test, and proven cross-platform performance.

For more information

For more information or to join the AAF Association, please contact:

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