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WEALTH MANAGEMENT:

Not that long ago, if you took a look into an enterprise content repository, you were likely to see a whole lot of text files. You might see a few pictures, such as the company logo and some product shots. What you weren't likely to find were Flash files, videos, or a large supply of high-resolution photos—file types that generally remained relegated to the media and entertainment verticals. More recently, however, rich media files are entering the enterprise content repository in ever-growing megabytes. Suddenly, managing rich media is not just a niche concern. It's an enterprise content management problem.

Managing rich media content adds a magnitude of complexity to the content management issue, and not just because of the size of the files involved. Employees need to be able to find rich media files, and without obvious contextual clues found in text files, it's up to the content creators to generate metadata about the file. In addition, if you plan to expose the content outside the enterprise, you also have to worry about protecting your assets. Rich media requires specialized content management tools and techniques, which is why many companies turn to a digital asset management system (DAM) to help manage this growing content category.

WHY DO YOU NEED A DAM?

A few years ago, most companies almost solely dealt with text files, but Geoffrey Bock, an analyst with The Gilbane Group, Inc., says that is rapidly changing. "Let's say with the 1.0 generation of the odyssey, we largely dealt with text and the media assets were just pictures and relatively few in number. Now, we are suddenly talking about delivering an immersive experience and the needs for rich media management have exploded because there are so many options and so many ways to do things."

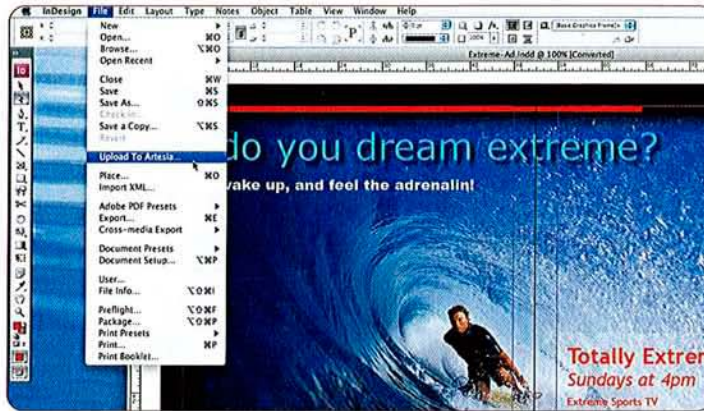
Scott Bowen, president of the Open Text Corp. Artesia Group, says that during this 1.0 time frame, managing rich media assets was mostly an area of concern for media companies: "The notion of media management, or digital asset management, evolved and emerged out of the media space about a decade ago." These days, Bowen says it would be impossible to have a media company without a DAM to manage the rich media, but as more companies are creating rich media files, there is a corresponding need for digital asset management in the enterprise.

This is particularly true when it comes to managing a company's brand across multiple platforms. Bock says, "The key use of rich media is around the notion of branding and the ways in which companies use rich media to develop and reinforce and create new brands." This

How to Make the Most of
RICH MEDIA



How to Make the Most of Rich Media



Users can move content directly into the Artesia repository from within tools such as InDesign without leaving the application.

makes rich media management all the more necessary, because there are so many forms that rich media can take and be leveraged to reinforce branding and build consumer awareness and involvement.

Bowen believes that all of these rich media assets are forcing marketing departments to change the way they have traditionally worked. "Today, given everything that's going on, from YouTube and ad zapping with [digital video recorders], the way that big advertisers must reach their target audience is changing dramatically," says Bowen. "That means the marketing departments need to have the same strategic infrastructure as media companies." In fact, he says that companies of all types should consider investing in DAM technology to manage their growing rich media inventory.

HOW DO CM AND DAM DIFFER?

Many companies have a content management infrastructure in place today, but is that enough to handle the needs of rich media content management? The answer depends on whom you ask. Bock thinks for brand management purposes, ECM vendors may provide what you need. "I think the issue is what you are trying to accomplish by managing rich media. What is the solution model you are trying to implement? The ECM vendors have some important capabilities and by the same token, independent DAM vendors have parts of the story. If you are only worried about stuff inside your company, then my take is if you have adopted ECM, then it will have most of what you need to do brand management," he says.

Steve Sauder, CTO and co-founder of DAM vendor North Plains Systems, thinks the two systems are complimentary, not competing. "It revolves around [the] idea of looking at rich media as a special purpose data type that doesn't fit in the same mold as text data. On the other hand, there are other things that an ECM can do that digital asset management can't do, like records management or email management. That whole thing is much more oriented toward the general-purpose knowledge management space," he says.

One of the major differences between the two systems, according to Sauder, is the way a DAM integrates with creative applications during the asset creation process, and once these assets are in the system, the way the DAM handles large media files. "When I'm working with very large images, something that would be used in a magazine, a CMS—or a DAM that is part of the CMS and integrated into the CMS space—would give you a thumbnail and allow you to manage some data about it and that's sufficient." Sauder says that North Plains' customers don't find this sufficient; they want more than a thumbnail. "In the same way that Google Maps does, they need to [be] able to zoom into high resolution content in real time without downloading the whole 60MB file," he says.

This becomes even more important when dealing with video files. He says a DAM such as his company's product can take high-resolution video and present it as a low-resolution proxy. This enables customers to work with video files and



Users can edit a low-resolution proxy of a video in Telescope and grab frames to build a storyboard. This saves the bandwidth it would require to move the entire video file over the network.

Using ClearStory's ActiveMedia, users can access rich media assets quickly by navigating through an organized taxonomy. It's also easy to see metadata and permissions on-the-fly.

extract keyframes without moving huge files across the network.

EXPOSING RICH MEDIA CONTENT

To a large extent, choosing an appropriate solution depends on whether you intend to work primarily with internal users or expose the content to the outside world, for sales purposes or to share with partners or suppliers.

Bowen says digital asset management covers the gamut, from creation all the way through storage and distribution. In fact, he likens the DAM process to a physical supply chain with analog manufacturing on the left side of the chain akin to content creation. "On the far right hand side, you have the store front. This is the place where manufactured content will get consumed. In between, you have a warehouse. This is a place logically where inventory being manufactured needs to be stored and organized to be made available just in time to the downstream storefront."

Bill Sheeran, director of product management at DAM vendor ClearStory Systems, Inc., emphasizes the need for DAM vendors to remember the consumer constituency when it comes to retrieving and using rich media content. He says, "DAM is important to a small number of people—marketing, creative services—those folks who manage assets are a relatively small number of users compared to the number of users who consume content." He adds, "That consumer constituency has gone largely ignored. There has been a lot of focus in our application about ability to manage asset. Most of that is meaningless to

Using a DAM has enabled Harper Collins to expand its digital assets to include online versions of its books. Books can now be read online in their entirety using the new "Browse Inside" feature.



users. If I'm running a bike shop and I need to get digital media, I don't care about permissions or extra metadata. I care about whether I can find the content I need and how quickly can I get it in the condition I need to publish it."

FIND IT WITH METADATA

In fact, the way the bike shop owner or the enterprise user finds that rich media digital asset and makes use of it is related to the metadata that was attached to the asset. Sauder from North Plains points out that rich media assets are trickier because they don't carry any obvious contextual data outside of what gets added by the content creator. "It's one thing to manage Word documents where you can search

on the actual content inside of the file, but there is nothing really humanly readable inside of a tiff file," says Sauder.

According to Bock, companies deal with this by adding metadata. "My take on the technology right now is that most of rich media management systems require us to come up with ways to tag and categorize rich media before hand," he says. "This whole notion of defining rich media in terms of different types of metadata ... these descriptions of assets help us to organize and find information."

ClearStory's Sheeran believes that the ability to categorize assets in this fashion and build meaningful taxonomies is one of the DAM technology's strengths. "The fact that rich media is visually-oriented



Harper Collins Gets Quick ROI With North Plains DAM

When you think about a typical DAM customer, chances are that book publishers don't come quickly to mind. But in a changing industry, Harper Collins, a worldwide publisher of books, found that using the North Plains Telescope DAM solution, it could move its publishing business in a new direction and get a very quick return on investment (ROI).

Rick Schwartz, CIO at Harper Collins, says when he came on board in 2001, the company had a simple asset management solution in place for author photos and cover art, but he felt that Harper Collins wasn't using a DAM to its fullest potential. He began to research it further. After 9/11 it became an easier sell to the executive committee when it became clear that managing digital assets was a bigger priority than anyone had previously thought.

He began looking for a solution and ultimately settled on North Plains Software's Telescope product because he believed it could help manage assets across the enterprise. "We are a global organization and we were looking for a distributed enterprise solution. One of the things that appealed to us from a technology standpoint was that we believed North Plains had a superior enterprise solution in terms of maintenance and distribution of assets." What's more, the workflow tools enable the company to move assets through a logical production and distribution cycle and the software routes the assets to the right place, whether that's ultimately the web development team or a printing vendor.

Schwartz says his company uses DAM to manage assets internally. "It is the vehicle where we capture and store all content as final truths within our business. The re-users within our organization are encouraged to find the latest author photo and cover image. If it's in the system, it's available for reuse."

Schwartz reports that the implementation went very smoothly. With help from North Plains and Accenture, Harper Collins used a rapid deployment model and was able to meet its goal of a 26-week implementation including installation, setup, and deployment. This included migrating 50,000 assets from the older system and adding 150,000 new assets to the new one.

Schwartz says one of the only things that didn't go so well was establishing an effective metadata model. "We blew the metadata model out of the gate," he says. "We gave the users carte blanche in terms of metadata and ended up with 140 elements in [the] metadata model." They have since gone to a three-tier model with basic book information in the first tier, editorial components in the second tier, and localization in the third tier. This has worked much better.

In terms of ROI, Harper Collins is owned by News Corp. and, as such, had to justify the dollars spent with hard dollar returns. The system helped pay for itself in real savings from printer and courier costs alone, according to Schwartz. Harper Collins has been thrilled with the effectiveness of the digital asset management solution and continues to expand the types of digital content it uses. Most recently, it added digital books on its website and a "Browse Inside" feature that enables visitors to read an entire book online.

Using DAM, Harper Collins has found a way to store rich media assets and distribute them throughout the organization, simplifying the management of these assets and lowering costs at the same time.

Companies Featured in This Article

ClearStory Systems, Inc.
www.clearstorysystems.com

The Gilbane Group, Inc.
www.gilbane.com

Harper Collins Publishers
www.harpercollins.com

North Plains Systems
www.northplains.com

Open Text Corp.
www.opentext.com

requires that you need to provide different renditions that make the asset visible to the user," he says. This enables the user to access a taxonomy, which helps locate the rich media assets and make logical connections.

Some tools are getting better at automating the metadata creation process. Instead of relying on human key entry, Sauder says his company's Telescope product looks for information about the asset as it moves through the creative development cycle. "We found if you took digital asset management and instead of making it purely an archive, an end of life tool, you integrated it into the creative process at the beginning, each user only had to add a little information and as it was going through review or approval, as those things are happening, the metadata gets picked up around the asset and makes the asset more searchable. So by the time you are done, the [metadata] information is already there," he says.

It seems clear that as more rich media content enters the enterprise content repository, it takes a specialized tool to deal with the unique nature of this type of content. By their nature, these assets tend to be large files, lacking a natural context. Digital asset management tools can help deal with the unique quality of this content and keep content moving, regardless of the file size or type, inside and outside the enterprise. ■

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