

Case Study Project: English Heritage



Sector: Cultural & Heritage

English Heritage (EH) maintains a collection of over 500,000 images, mainly transparencies with the long-term aim of digitising over half of this collection. Additionally EH have around 25,000 digital images on CDs that are requested internally by editorial, marketing and design departments and by external clients. The ongoing strategy requires facilities for accommodating the creation of born digital photography. Other digital objects and supporting material for archival posterity needed to sit alongside the photographic assets.

What was needed:

- Facilities to improve the workflow of assets in digital or analogue state between different departments, the archives unit – National Monuments Records (NMR) and external requests
- Tools to improve the cataloguing and uploading of digital assets from any location
- Tools to reduce the laborious and labour intensive image processing and tracking tasks
- Increase the accessibility and thereby raise awareness of culture through the discoverability of heritage content
- Facilities to enable revenue to be generated through the commercial sale of photos

What we did

Phase one resulted in the installation and customisation of Phocus our Digital Asset Management (DAM) system for the photo library and key users of the system within the archive and photographic departments involved in the cataloguing of assets.

The workflow enabled the upload of digital photography directly by photographers on location, and the cataloguing of assets from different locations across EH. Bulk uploads of large volumes of digital assets at scheduled intervals overnight ensured server loads and processing minimised the impact on users searching for assets. Flexibility of the system allows assets to still be uploaded and made available for download by users requiring immediate access.

Archivists are also able to upload pdfs, sketches and drawings for aligning to specified categories. New assets placed unto the system followed a workflow that automatically alerted the next catalogue moderator of assets by email that are available and awaiting approval. Approval results in the immediate release and availability of assets for searching and requesting by the whole of EH and approved clients.

Other back-office products that accompanied this phase installation included an accounts ordering and tracking facility to enable assets to be requested and tracked through the workflow to billing.

Phase two resulted in the installation of the Catalogue module, which integrated with the corporate intranet to enable searching and browsing of digital assets. Collaborative working tools also allow comments to be associated with assets that can then be submitted to colleagues prior to submission for approval by the moderator for the use of the assets.

Related

Technical

Contacts database

- * Clients - groups and subsidiaries
- * Photographers - commissions
- * Agencies - commissions
- * Search Contacts

Accounts database

- * Raise Requests
- * Raise Delivery Notes
- * Raise Invoices, Credit Notes
- * Approval Workflow
- * Create Accounts Reports

Secure Protocols

- * Open SSH and SFTP secure transfer
- * DMZ configuration for data transfer
- * XML data transfer
- * Server Management

Design and Creative Site Look and Feel

Tools Used Content Management System

Digital Asset Management



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The outcome

- Increased accessibility to extensive back catalogue of assets that remained hidden in the archive
- Improved workflow has accelerated the time taken to get new born digital images onto the workflow system for departments to source and use
- Planned rollout now underway for fully integrated E-commerce solution to enable the general public to purchase images for prints and reproduction directly from the photo library thereby increasing revenue streams and the ability for the library to be self funded

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