

Success Story: Yale Media Net

TAKING ART DIGITAL AT YALE



New Haven, Conn – As media director for Yale University's Digital Media Center for the Arts (DMCA), Lee Faulkner is always looking for the next cutting-edge way to connect art and technology. During the spring of 2004 he was months into his search for a cost-effective way to manage his department's ever-expanding library of digital images and video clips. Lee found what he was looking for in Image Portal – a Web-based Digital Asset Management (DAM) solution from NetXposure built specifically for the Apple Mac OS X platform.

About Yale University DMCA

The Yale University Digital Media Center for the Arts (DMCA) was founded in 1999 as a multi-media facility created to establish connections between traditional art and the computer age. In addition to being a resource for labs, equipment and instruction, the DMCA sponsors and promotes programs designed to facilitate the merge of art and technology such as the Yale Mobile Media Mix (YMMM). This is an on-going series of projects designed to enable student artists to produce and distribute artworks on the internet while away from the Center. The DMCA also hosts lectures from visiting and returning artists and curators who have embraced the confluence of art and technology in their work.

Yale University schools, departments and institutions using the DMCA as a technology resource include: Architecture, Art, Art History, Drama, Theatre Studies, Music, Film Studies, IT Services, Yale Center for British Art, Yale University Art Gallery and the Yale Arts Library.

The Challenge: Digital Asset Management as an Artist's Tool

The need for a digital asset management system was recognized at the DMCA in 2001, two years after the Center was launched. As the volume of work from student and faculty artists from every discipline – painting, sculpture, music, photography, theater, etc. – started to pile up, traditional disks and hard drives proved to be an ineffective means for storage, retrieval, and most importantly, collaboration. The Center directors were looking for a solution that would work like a "digital pool" of materials that all DMCA artists could draw from and contribute to. The ideal application would allow the artists to easily search among a diverse supply of resources and materials available within the university's artistic community and inform or augment their own projects accordingly.

For example, a graphic artist may regularly work with hundreds of shades of the color blue. A theater production set designer may search for that perfect shade of blue to use as a sky background. And a sculptor may be looking for just the perfect blue to bathe, via projection, a new piece on exhibit. With a Web accessible "digital pool" each artist could make refined searches for the desired materials, find exactly what they are looking for, or get new ideas from the past projects of every department. With controlled accessibility to all works, and search and retrieval through innovative metadata keyword association, the ideal solution would make this process much more efficient.

The Solution: Image Portal

Under Faulkner's leadership, the DMCA directors began searching for their new solution. They evaluated several applications – some were quite affordable but lacked some critical features.



CRIB NOTES

Challenges

- Department and university wide access to digital materials
- Efficient storage, search and retrieval of digital materials
- Project collaboration via a "digital pool" of resources

Solution

- Image Portal A/V – a Web-based Digital Asset Management solution
- Operating System: Mac OS X server
- Server: Apple Xserve G5
- Storage: Apple Xserve RAID

Benefits

- Better access to resources = More organized and collaborative
- More efficient digital production workflow = Time saved
- New presentation medium = More exposure for Yale arts community

Others had everything they needed and more, but were too expensive. A few came close to what they needed but were desktop applications and lacked Web-based accessibility. Then the team discovered Image Portal. Of all the systems reviewed, they found this product's user interface particularly intuitive – a key requirement if this solution was to be adopted by non-technical artists throughout the university and become a truly creative tool. Out of the box, Image Portal's robust feature set solved the core issues they were looking for in a DAM solution. For their unique workflow issues, Yale found NetXposure to be a partner willing to work with them to customize the solution.

"Image Portal does more than let us store, archive, locate, transform and process all our still and moving image assets in an easy-to-use Web-based interface, it gives us the power to really put them work in our digital production environment."

Lee Faulkner, Media Director
Yale University DMCA

Success Story: Yale Media Net - "Taking Art Digital at Yale"

Image Portal A/V



The Solution: Image Portal (continued)

One such example was with the viewing of QuickTime video clips. The DMCA needed more than just storage and preview capability. They needed keyframe display, the option to select thumbnails from keyframes, and the ability to transcode formats such as: MOV, 3G, DV, AVI, MPEG-4, AIFF, AU, WAVE, and iPod. Rather than do a quick fix or ignore the request altogether, NetXposure brought the DMCA into the development process to help architect the new functionality. NetXposure engineers and project managers were appointed by the DMCA as Yale Research Fellows, working with the DMCA to deliver an affordable solution that met the all of the requirements and exceeded the original expectations. The result was Image Portal A/V.



Yale DMCA students at work in one of the Center's labs

Image Portal A/V: Built for Mac OS X

Image Portal A/V is an enterprise class, Web-based solution for managing large libraries of digital images, documents and rich media files. Leveraging core Apple Tiger technologies, this solution was built specifically for the Mac OS X platform. QuickTime technology is utilized for auto thumbnail conversions and repurposing for a wide variety of image formats. Additional support is available for audio and video clips. Beyond standard previews, Image Portal A/V capabilities include keyframe display, keyframe thumbnail selection, format transcoding, and support for Podcasting of both audio and video files. Advanced searching options utilize Spotlight technology, allowing for quick and comprehensive search and retrieval of assets. Image Portal A/V is optimized for Open LDAP, WebDAV, Apache Tomcat, and Apache Axis, making it the perfect fit for Mac OS X. Performance and storage capability can be enhanced by running the software on an Apple Xserve or an Xserve RAID, complimenting Apple's strategy of delivering an enterprise level solution at a workgroup price.

Benefits: (continued)

A stage sound designer can provide a new sound cue instantly, even during rehearsal. A graphic designer working late at night in his/her room can locate the finishing touch to a web animation. It is access and workflow the way it should be... easy and invisible!

Finally, creating a digital repository of art projects online allows access by external communities, and provides greater exposure for both student artists and the Yale arts community in general. Yale's Image Portal A/V can be configured with an unlimited number of user groups, and system administrators can define which assets each group has access to. Administrators can also determine which system commands can be used by any group, choosing from seven different user levels. For example, an internal Yale DMCA user may have access to all stored images, with the ability to upload, organize, edit and download. However an external user may only have access to "public ready" images, with only the ability to request a download. The result is a new mode of media distribution that is entirely controlled by the Yale DMCA - a creative database they now call "Yale Media Net."

"Groups such as Yale DMCA are leaders in a growing trend among both creative organizations and university departments to unlock the true value of their digital archives by making them more universally accessible with Web-based technology. Image Portal A/V offers them a full featured digital asset management solution that is flexible, affordable, and easy to manage."

Scott Eilers
VP of Sales & Marketing
NetXposure, Inc.

What's Next for Yale DMCA?

Now that Image Portal A/V is facilitating creation and collaboration among Yale's arts departments, the next step is to explore new ways technology can connect artists and art lovers outside the university and around the globe. Yale DMCA and NetXposure have initiated a project allowing arts departments of other universities to join Yale and engage in interactive, rich media messaging through flat-screen plasma display panels. The project would utilize two NetXposure technologies: Image Portal A/V and Factory PDP. Factory PDP enables deployment of assets in an interactive rich media messaging format through flat-screen display panel. Once completed, students and faculty from various universities will have an organized, real time interactive media platform to present, share and explore each others projects in any multimedia form: graphics, text, photography, video, animation, or sound. Stay tuned as the "digital pool" evolves!

About NetXposure

NetXposure makes software products that empower organizations to efficiently create, manage, distribute, and archive digital content. Founded in 1995, NetXposure is headquartered in Portland, Oregon with offices in Tokyo, Japan and Bangalore, India. For more information visit NetXposure's website: www.netx.net or call 503-499-4342.



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FLEXIBLE
AFFORDABLE
EASY TO MANAGE
ENTERPRISE DAM

Benefits: Better Access, More Efficient, Greater Exposure

The Yale DMCA saw the benefits of implementing Image Portal A/V almost immediately. The unlimited user licensing structure allowed them to permit access to the system for the entire arts community, and the LDAP support module made access authentication painless since everyone could use their current email and passwords. As the "digital pool" concept came alive, the DMCA directors began to see a more organized and creative way of sharing production elements, archiving projects and working with media in the classroom itself.

As the software gains wider adoption, the digital production workflow grows more efficient by utilizing web access to the Center's creative content library. For example, a leading sound effects company, The Hollywood Edge, supports the DMCA by allowing use of their comprehensive sound library for Yale academic use including "on demand" searching and auditioning. A filmmaker in an edit bay can find the right ambience in seconds.