

Managing the storage transition

BY CARLTON SMITH

One of the key challenges in the transition from traditional broadcast architectures to new media is the need to develop practical strategies for the storage of content. The video and audio formats we have relied upon for decades are now obsolete: no new VTRs are being made, and the supply of parts to keep existing hardware running is dwindling.

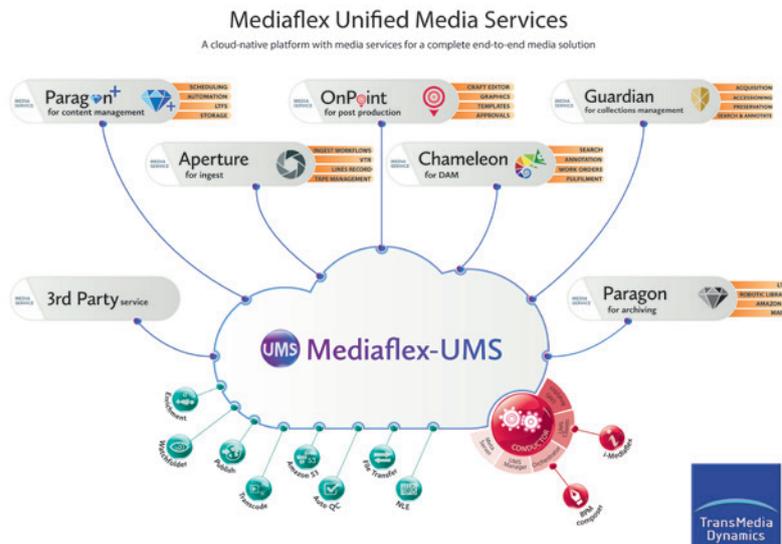
Content archives have to be digitised. At the same time, new content is coming in as files, and needs to be thoughtfully handled, in a way that ensures the material is secure and, more importantly, can be located when it is needed.

So even while broadcasters, media companies and audio-visual archives are developing asset management strategies, there is a need to implement file-based storage today. To achieve any degree of efficiency in the organisation calls for a means of indexing and searching content that is more sophisticated than a simple file and folder structure.

To meet these applications, TMD, the leading provider of asset and workflow management systems for digital and physical assets, has developed a number of standalone media service applications. These can be used as an individual solution, or combined to provide additional functionality. Most important, they are built on software elements from TMD's Mediaflex-UMS (Unified Media Services) platform, ensuring investment in one of these standalone applications is protected as it can be used as the foundation for a more comprehensive asset or collections management system in due course.

Paragon is an easy-to-use, proven storage management and archiving solution, allowing broadcasters, content owners and production companies to protect their assets as digital files now. Running on the Mediaflex-UMS platform, it contains much useful functionality as standard, making it ready to use. It automatically generates, stores, manages, and makes available browse resolution proxies, for example, allowing users who need it to provide wider access to the material.

Paragon is supplied with a



▲ TMD's Paragon and Guardian solutions are both built on the company's Mediaflex-UMS platform, which offers a modular suite of business software applications.

standard metadata schema, but the latest version — to be first seen in Asia-Pacific at BroadcastAsia2017 — adds the ability for users to customise the database structure. Users can add descriptive fields as well as technical metadata, making the archive more dynamic for multiple users and more powerful searches.

It provides an ideal user interface for standardised storage systems, which otherwise are limited in their operations. TMD has a Preferred Partner status with Quantum, for example, so a storage network can be quickly implemented with the StorNext 5 platform and Paragon acting as its front-end.

The flexible nature of the underlying Mediaflex-UMS platform, and the ease with which interfaces can be built, means that access to storage can be implemented through Paragon from other devices. Avid users, for instance, can use Paragon to search on Avid locators, making it easier to search on and use content.

Paragon can also provide a long-term archive layer. Most users will opt for a tape-based system, and Paragon supports up to the latest LTO-7 format, as well as the universal LTFS archive format. Users can also opt for long-term, low-cost disk storage.

Broadcasters with extensive legacy content, audio-visual archives, and national collections, have an additional layer of complication when planning their technological future.

Collections management requires both digital and physical assets to be

catalogued, tracked and available. Physical assets can include content, which may one day be digitised, such as film or gramophone records, but may also include items which cannot be digitised, such as costumes or props.

Collections management systems, therefore, have to be able to track the location of physical assets, including the ability to loan items to other collections. Where appropriate, the system also has to allow archivists to plan for the protection of the assets, which might include film restoration work and digitisation. These activities tend to require long-term planning.

TMD has a wealth of experience in collections management, and has now created a standalone product, Guardian, to provide the core functionality. It has been implemented at the Asian Film Archive, in Singapore, for example.

Mediaflex Guardian scales from an entry-level configuration for smaller collections to a solution supporting millions of assets.

Most important, like Paragon, Guardian runs on the Mediaflex-UMS platform. When the need comes to add further functionality, additional applications can be integrated to continue to provide more services, without losing any of the investment in hardware, software and cataloguing effort, but building on it for the future. **APB**

Carlton Smith is CEO of TransMedia Dynamics (TMD)