Collaborative Workflow Infrastructure

era

Background

For the University of Salford, the delivery of a new state-of-the-art campus at MediaCityUK would allow it to deliver new graduate and post-graduate courses that were relevant in a digital era to students and help it train tomorrow's broadcast journalists and production specialists. The multi-purpose building was also established to house first-class media research facilities and to provide a sought-after location for the UK and international commercial production community.

Customer Challenge

Traditionally, the University's studios, post-production areas and laboratories operated in silos, with media transported on disk or tape between units and all media management carried out manually. In addition, none of the media systems sat on the core IT systems, so functions such as access control and security management were managed by departments' own technical staff.

The move to new facilities provided the University with the ideal opportunity to resolve this lack of integration and deliver the right technical infrastructure to meet the changing demands of a more agile, global media community. Creating a file-based collaborative working environment was central to this vision. By enabling students and departments to share and collaborate on projects would both enhance creative output and deliver significant workflow efficiencies – making media assets more easily accessible and improving inter-departmental project delivery deadlines.

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IMPLEMENTATION
2012

APPLIED TECHNOLOGIES
- Mediasmiths bespoke MAM
- FilmPartners MXFserver
- PixIT storage
- IBM TSM archive
- Cisco switches
- PipelineFX Qube! rendering

ERA's Solution

Media and IT system integration specialist ERA was chosen to create the infrastructure that would deliver the collaborative working environment the University was striving for. The system designed and delivered by ERA provided storage and archive, render management, Active Directory based authentication, networking and servers - integrated into a complete and efficient file-based workflow.

From a workflow perspective, the project was complex due to the sheer volume of content being created and the number of users accessing the system. To meet this challenge, ERA deployed a bespoke Media Asset Management (MAM) solution developed by Mediasmiths to connect the islands of content. By integrating the MAM with FilmPartners MXFserver media platform, ERA was able to connect and support the University's 160 NLE systems, mainly Avid, FCP and Adobe Premiere edit stations – creating a powerful collaborative workflow for users across the campus.

MXFserver was chosen not only for its good API integration with Mediasmiths MAM platform, but also for ease of use as it runs on a generic IT infrastructure. With bin-locking, improved project sharing, switching and merging between the NLE editing systems, MXFserver allows up to 20 projects to connect simultaneously. Connection to media is based on virtual files and is therefore fast, safe and secure. Its open agnostic structure enables content to be easily accessed, transferred, managed and shared – all without the use of additional software; providing the University with exceptional flexibility to tailor workflow and courses to meet changing student and industry demands.

To enable this level of secure project sharing, ERA designed and built a scalable, robust and efficient IT backbone to link all the editing stations and other stations on the network. The IT architecture features PixIT storage and archive servers, an IBM TSM archive tape system, Cisco switches, PipelineFX Qube! render management software with full power backup.

Following successful delivery of the project, ERA's team continues to provide full support and maintenance services for the systems deployed.
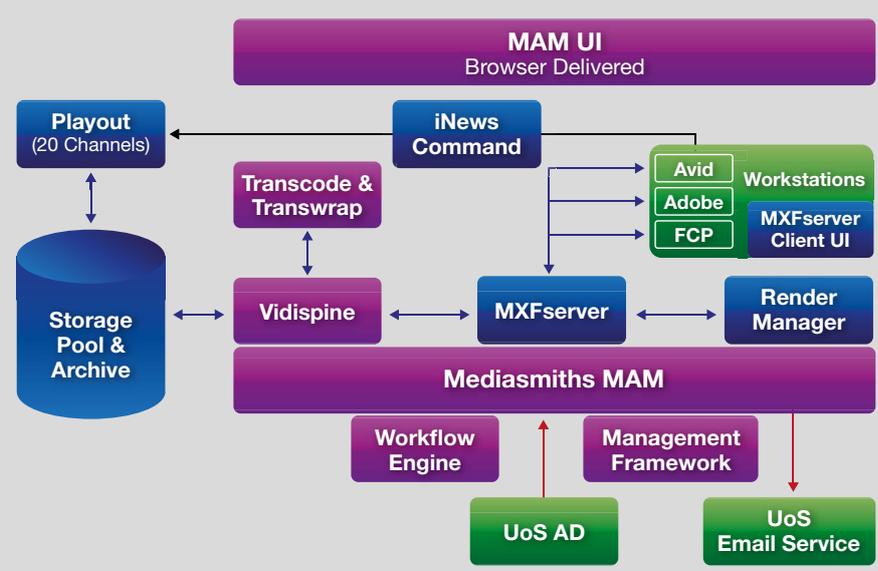
Solution Benefits

- A secure collaborative post-production environment, delivering workflow efficiencies and enhancing creative output

- Integration of a bespoke media asset management platform and editing infrastructure to offer improved content access, effective project collaboration and maximizing productivity

- An open and scalable IT infrastructure, integrating to legacy systems, providing future-proof flexibility as workflows and technology continue to evolve

- Peace of mind offered by ERA, delivering throughout the project lifecycle, from initial workflow analysis, solution architecture and system build to ongoing maintenance and technical support

Collaborative Editing Platform

KEY

- Mediasmiths MAM System
- Other Elements
- Client Systems
- —— USMC network
- —— UoS