

World class Digital Asset Management for brand owners

»We Will See a Reward in Productivity«

Northmann's MediaServer6 is highly attractive for mail order companies who want to increase their productivity in pre-press and design. UK Group of Book Clubs Readers' Union are one.

By Anette Schulin-Zeuthen

»We know the benefits of asset management. We have already experienced how it can make considerable cost savings.« Juliet Strickland, Studio Manager explains the reason why they have recently acquired a Northmann system. Together with Prepress Manager Stuart Batley, they compiled a well founded list of requirements for a new asset management system, and found that Northmann's system was best suited to meet their needs.

Successful Publisher of hobby books

Readers' Union is owned by US F+W Publications Inc, and UK sister company David & Charles is Britain's largest publisher and distributor of illustrated hobby books. They are well established, founded in Newton Abbot in 1960; a town in pastoral Devon. However, despite the idyllic area one finds an ambitious, worldwide publisher and group of book clubs, with an annual turnover of over £23 million and 150 staff. As they are constantly striving to improve their productivity, they have already installed a digital asset management (DAM) system, but needed a new system to further modernize their workflow. »We simply need an asset management system. It would be impossible to manage and re-purpose 30,000 image assets;

David & Charles is Britain's largest publisher and distributor of hobby books



you need a powerful system to manage them. Our old system is no longer supported, and we have moved across from OS9 to OSX. Now is the time to implement a new system,« explains Stuart Batley. Juliet Strickland adds: »We work to very strict schedules; the added functionality of the Northmann System will have a significant impact on our workflow.«

More than a traditional DAM System

Batley and Strickland both emphasize that they were in search of a new system which could do more than traditional DAM systems. »We looked for many benefits; we wanted more than just a picture asset management system – we have that already. We wanted something

RGB and CMYK The RGB format allows you to store an image once, and then make the system generate images exactly for the purpose you want. Thus, to profit from the Digital Master Concept one has to store master images in RGB format. The Northmann system can easily handle CMYK duplicates, just as CMYK files can be reformatted to work as Digital Masters.



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Juliet Strickland, Studio Manager



Stuart Batley Prepress Manager

that would add benefit to our workflow and further streamline our current PDF creation rather than just hold our image assets.«

So they did a comparison between different systems, keeping a look-out for a system which could easily cope with the migration of their current data, and offer their designers a comfortable work platform. »We looked at this over a two year period before we decided to go with Northmann. There have been a lot of systems that have left the market. This was always a concern for the future. With that in mind whatever system we would go with, it would have to be a substantial system that is proven and easy to use,« says Juliet Strickland.

Cuts down Designers' time consuming make-ready

At Readers' Union the designers are looking forward to the new system so they can focus their time on designing and less on the optimization of data, make-ready and page layout. The Northmann MediaServer allows digital master images in RGB format to be held and rendered quickly as needed, on the fly. For a designer who needs to resize a high-resolution image on the page, for example, a call to the server for an image generates a copy meeting local demands in terms of size, scaling, colour space, cropping, resolution or file format. The original image remains untouched, and the local workstation is saved a lot of effort. Strickland and Batley summarize their expectations of the new system: »We want it to do everything our existing DAM system does plus, add value, add functionality, speed up our workflow, and finally save us money.« They are looking forward to losing the time consuming processes. »If this cuts down the time consuming work – that labour intensive period of time before you can actually be creative – it will be, increasing productivity from the start« says Juliet Strickland.

Juggling CMYK duplicates

At the moment Readers' Union have approx. 31,000 CMYK images stored in their database. Each asset is re-purposed. On average they use their assets 13–14 times across different campaigns. One

result of implementing a PDF based workflow has been that all that leaves the building for print is now a PDF file. However, in preparing the PDF file they still have a time consuming job of collecting, checking and processing all the data.

Implementing an RGB Workflow

In the future Readers' Union will only have to store one master file in RGB format, as the Northmann system is based on a digital master. Avoiding duplicates having only one digital master to store also explains why Northmann's system requires 25–50% less storage and transmission capacity than other systems. »We are still in a CMYK environment that we control ourselves. The hi-res images that we produce are generated through digital photography, external scanning and hi-res data from other publishers. During the last year we went over to InDesign and a PDF workflow.

So the whole thing really leads us to an RGB workflow. Now we intend to build up such a workflow,« says Stuart Batley. »When the Northmann system has been implemented we plan to move over to an improved RGB workflow. We will convert all our existing CMYK data into Digital Masters, (RGB TIFF files) this will allow us to benefit from Northmann's enhanced workflow capability from the outset.«

Expect ROI in 12 months

Readers' Union are now ready to harvest the benefits of the new system. »The time spent in the design and production, photography, handling incoming and outgoing data will condense. The time from capturing an image to using an image will condense, and from a 'time is money' situation the more productive we are the cheaper the process becomes. We estimate over the next 12 months we will see a significant increase in our productivity and reduction in our lead times« says Juliet Strickland.

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