What is Digital Asset Management - and what are the key features?

iBase Professional Digital Asset Management

1 What is Digital Asset Management?

While most applications of a digital asset management system will fit under one or more of the following headings -

- Internal digital asset management.
- Public or internal multimedia library.
- Marketing or brand asset management.
- Museums, art galleries and archives.
- Commercial digital image / video / audio library.
- Academic, science and technology.
- Sport and culture.

- and the term 'digital asset management' is easily defined in outline -

> *Storing and organising digital assets in a central location so that they can be uploaded; have textual data (metadata) associated with them as required; searched for; and if required downloaded.*

- this doesn't necessarily help much with understanding how digital asset management systems are actually implemented for the various applications that they're used for.

Digital Asset Management is a methodology designed to overcome the inherent problems that crop up when a user or organisation has built up a large collection of assets. These assets may range from physical exhibitions in a museum, to video files stored on a company's servers.

Without some form of management this will obviously become unwieldy, and typically resources will be stretched in an attempt to accommodate the ever-expanding archive. It will become harder and harder to locate one particular item and productivity will fall sharply.

To solve these issues, a digital asset management system is created with three main components. A repository, a database and an interface.

- The repository is what will hold the assets themselves or a digital representation. Physical assets can be digitised into videos, photos, audio files or any other format which would adequately represent them.
- The database stores all the information you have about the assets in question, typically replacing the thousands of scattered documents found in outdated models. Databases are specially designed to be efficient with both space and speed, increasing the amount of assets that can be referenced whilst simultaneously making sure users can access them as quickly as possible.
- Finally, the interface is the portal through which the end-users can search for, modify or otherwise interact with the digital assets. Many times, this will be in the form of an

on-line application or website, which helps users gain access wherever and whenever they need it. (The interface can also be linked in with other systems to produce integrated solutions. For example, a payment gateway can be linked in to allow for the generation of revenue.)

When done properly, Digital Asset Management is incredibly powerful. It's also amazingly flexible and it can be tailored to suit practically all requirements, as each component can be uniquely customised to produce different effects.

1. Firstly, the repository can be altered to store assets in different formats to suit any given need; an example would be to store different resolutions of a video file so that it may be accessed on multiple device types whilst improving bandwidth efficiency.
2. After that, through customising the data structure stored in the database, the system architect may choose what information is held on each asset as well as altering asset relationships and how they interact with one another within the system. By doing this effectively it is possible to position all your assets in one place regardless of how diverse they are.
3. The most obvious customisation to the end-user will be the interface. Everything from branding to layout to workflow can be modified to assist the user in getting to where they need to be, a well-designed interface will significantly reduce the costs of dealing with user queries.

All of these points help lower costs and drastically increase productivity when working with large quantities of assets or attempting to distribute them over a large area.

2 Key features of a digital asset management system

In outline, the main requirements of a good DAM system include the ability to handle any file type, ease of uploading and the adding / editing of metadata. Automatic keyword tagging and facial recognition are massive aids to manpower productivity, and fast comprehensive search options are essential.

A flexible permissions structure to control access will usually be needed, downloading and sharing via email and social media are often also prime requirements. Commercial sites will use e-commerce, and the options of local or cloud-based hosting should be available.

Other significant features and aids to productivity include -

- No local software is needed, just a standard browser.
- A smart-phone or tablet can use all of the functionality, including uploading.
- A system manager can control users' permissions to view, edit, download and so on, whatever is needed should be possible.
- Digital assets of any type can be uploaded e.g. image; video; audio; text; spreadsheet; PDF etc…
- Uploading and metadata editing can be done in batches.
- Assets can be linked with social networks.
- Embedded metadata can be imported and exported automatically.
- Item selection, ordering and payment are available as required.
- E-commerce.
- A developer API.
- Unlimited users and data.

- A flexible metadata schema.
- Hierarchical keywords.
- Map representation using Geolocation Data.
- Fuzzy searching.
- Hierarchical Keyword Search.
- Watermark images or videos.
- Export metadata.
- Crop or rotate Images.
- Audit log and reporting.
- Rights-managed or royalty-free licencing.
- On line training.

At the time of writing - October 2017 - iBase Media Services has 24 years of digital asset management experience under its belt, with all of these features available.

Contact us by email or phone for more information or to request a free system.