Photo library management of UNESCO world heritage carnival

"Daminion strikes a perfect balance between standalone 'wannabe' catalog software and DAM suites that are way too expensive and complicated for our purposes.

During those hectic festival days without Daminion, we had to choose between getting some sleep and delivering the best results. Now, with Daminion, we can do both!

Stijn De Naeyer
Archivist at "Documentatiecentrum voor Aalst Karnaval" vzw (DAK) - Belgium

About DAK

The "Documentatiecentrum voor Aalst Karnaval" vzw is a nonprofit organization that was founded in 1985 with the goal of documenting all aspects of the Aalst Carnival (Dutch: Carnaval Aalst), the world-famous three-day festival held every year in the Belgian city of Aalst. In 2010, the festival was added to UNESCO's list of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. The DAK team is making sure that Aalst Carnival will be remembered for ever and a day.

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What we do

Besides an informative 300-page A4-sized book containing all the details and highlights of the festival over the past five years, we also create a yearly photo album which includes a minimum of three pictures per every group of people.

Our own photographers in collaboration with dozens of festival goers send in pictures as part of our international photo contest. Once the deadline for incoming material has passed, our team has the mammoth task of uploading, renaming, sorting and visually verifying about 10K pictures! These are then catalogued and compared in a selection process that whittles them down to leave the top 100 for publication.

When finished, we create a 60-page A5-sized photo album that contains an overview of the three-day festival as well as details of the events that took place. Knowing that the presses start rolling only 24 hours after the first picture is imported, the whole team struggles to get a few hours sleep during this period. It's literally a race against time!

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Workflow for about 10,000 pictures without Daminion

Workflow for about 10,000 pictures without Daminion

In general, all of us had to wait or lost valuable time because:

- First of all, we had to back up our assets in order to avoid data loss caused by errors during copying or overwriting, or by inappropriate manipulation.

- All assets had to be renamed before uploading in order to avoid overwriting or duplicating filenames in the archive, and even then, instances still occurred.

- All assets had to be converted from RAW to JPG to keep them manageable when previewing. So that's 1.5 sec per file x 10.000/3600, which comes to a total of 4 hours wasted.

- All assets had to be moved in separate group folders to simplify the selection of a top five for each group. This process causes all other windows to constantly refresh their thumbnails, which is pretty frustrating.

- Once grouped, all assets had to be copied or moved again for final selection to print, which creates other openings for mistakes to creep in.

Personally, I'm still amazed we ever managed to do the job the way we did for so many years!

Although we tried different approaches, different hardware setups and several software suites, none were able to meet our needs for speed, teamwork capabilities and flexibility.

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How Daminion helped us

- Last year, instead of our usual 24 hours, it took us 6. During that time we copied and renamed the files, tagged them according to content and visual inspection, grouped them and made the final selection.

- With Daminion, delays are caused solely by the rate at which the necessary human activities are performed and not by the software or hardware, which allows multiple users to import assets while simultaneously tagging existing ones with virtually no interruption!

- Daminion imports the files, renames them on the fly using a highly configurable name template, and adds standard predefined tags without further interaction. Apart from greatly reducing the potential for human error, it also creates a unique ID for each asset, which can be used for further archiving and reference.

- Time-consuming conversion of RAW files is no longer necessary because Daminion displays our RAW thumbnails relatively fast.

- The misery of moving your assets has also gone, replaced by a simple user-definable tagging option, perfect for creating tags that you can select and group with a simple click of the mouse.

- And finally, the nested folder nightmare has gone as well! Now it's one folder, all assets, no duplicates or copies, and only one item to backup.

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Conclusion

1. Daminion saves a bunch of time by providing well organized structures and flexibility in all areas.

2. We can now find our assets in seconds rather than hours, days or, in the worst cases, never at all!

3. It frees up tons of hard disk space because it's no longer necessary to make multiple copies, and duplicates can easily be found and deleted.

4. Saves time spent on performing multiple backup procedures. There's only one place to backup, and it's automatically well organized from the start.

Daminion provides teaming, is fast, accurate and still is affordable for non profit organisations. It's not too complex to setup and does not require special hardware nor extra expensive server licenses.

* Huge time saving when importing, sorting and selecting a top 100 out of 8000 new assets within 6 hours! It took us 2 days before :-)

Stijn De Naeyer

5. Once tagged, any image can be found in the blink of an eye, whether the catalog contains 100 or 100K assets.

6. Now we know what we have, we know how many we have, and we know exactly where they are, ready to be used in an instant. No more reason to utter the once familiar and frustrating words: "We definitely have it, but I just can't find it..."

7. When correctly configured, the team server also protects us from direct user access to the hard disk, creating a secure location for our assets. Secondary versioning is available to undo changes made erroneously by other users. Other workflows totally lack this 'must have' functionality.

8. Two thumbs up also for perfect support after a couple of issues were raised. We can state without a doubt that this level of support is hard to find these days. Furthermore, we noticed that Daminion is undergoing (very) active development; updates are released regularly; we have found our issues answered and updated in a very timely manner. Great work!

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