

Extensis Helps Christian Aid Promote its Work

The charity Christian Aid strives to work wherever the need is greatest. As an international development agency, Christian Aid's staff is involved in many long-term projects working with over 600 overseas partners. These experiences are recorded through field trips, stories, film and photography. Each trip, of which there can be 20 per year, can result in up to 500 photographs. After natural attrition and editing, Christian Aid's Photo Unit physically archives almost 6000 images per year with each one credited to the photographer and copyrighted.

THE CHALLENGE

Christian Aid has been exposing the issue of poverty through images for many years. Over time, the archive had grown to over 80,000 images held on 35mm transparencies. Attempts had been made to index the collection using a simple Paradox database, but two full time staff members were required to manage image enquiries and loans.

Furthermore, as industry trends and technological advancements indicated that digital would overtake film as the dominant medium for the photography market, many of Christian Aid's regular freelance photographers were migrating to digital. This resulted in higher and unbudgeted costs for the charity in order to convert digital to film transparency.

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*Jonathan Parsons,
 Technical projects manager for the
 Common Knowledge Programme*

The need to reduce labour intensive processes, make photo research services more accessible to Christian Aid's 500 staff, and an ever increasing demand for images from the developing world led a new group at Christian Aid – the Common Knowledge Programme team - to look into a digital asset

management solution as part of a rollout of new technologies at the charity which would dramatically improve access to information by staff. The digital asset management system was to enable effective

OVERVIEW

Company Profile

Christian Aid works in some of the world's poorest communities in more than 50 countries. Christian Aid acts where the need is greatest, regardless of religion, helping people to tackle the problems they face and build the life they deserve. At home and overseas, Christian Aid campaigns to change the structures that keep people poor, challenging inequality and injustice.

Industry

Charitable Organisation

Solution Implemented

- Portfolio Server
- Portfolio NetPublish
- Portfolio SQL Connect

Christian Aid websites

- Corporate site - www.christianaid.org.uk
- Campaigning site – www.pressureworks.org.uk
- ISP – www.surefish.co.uk
- Children's site – www.globalgang.org.uk

management of IPR, metadata, retention policies and centralised control of stock for super users whilst providing a web-based self-service tool for everyone else.

THE SOLUTION

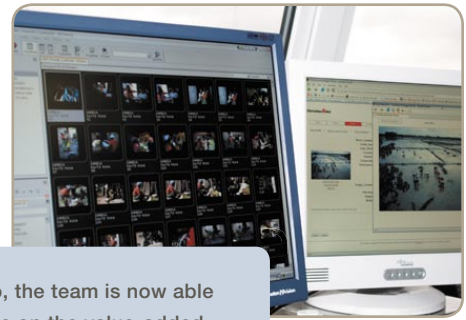
After extensive research, the Common Knowledge Programme team identified Portfolio from Extensis to be the best product for its needs based on cost, performance and ease of use. Christian Aid adopted Portfolio SQL Connect in 2003 and has subsequently upgraded to version 7 and Portfolio NetPublish Server. Portfolio enables photographers, graphic artists and other individuals and workgroups to organize, retrieve, repurpose, and distribute digital files quickly. Add-on module Portfolio NetPublish automates the process of dynamically distributing Portfolio catalogue contents through the Internet.

Jonathan Parsons, technical projects manager for the Common Knowledge Programme comments, "As a charity, Christian Aid is accountable for every pound it spends, therefore budget was a huge driver. Key to our needs was finding a product that was flexible in scope, simple to operate/maintain, fully cross platform and demonstrated a viable strategic road-map. In our research we had encountered huge and expensive proprietary systems, but in comparison found that these would offer little more functionality over the Extensis offering with Portfolio."

THE RESULT

Having previously manually archived all photo stock in filing cabinets, cross referencing each stock item with a proprietary text-based catalogue system on a single non-networked PC, the Christian Aid Photo Unit was operating under a very labour intensive process that was only clear to the photo librarians. Furthermore, loans of original media were getting lost and damaged. The introduction of a collaborative, data enriched and visual system via Portfolio has dramatically changed the way the Photo Unit works.

Parsons continues, "Images are edited in Photoshop after being scanned or downloaded from the camera. Image metadata is either transferred during this process or entered whilst editing and the image is then added to the Portfolio catalogue. The communications staff are informed new content now exists in Portfolio, via email



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notification, and using the Portfolio client on their own desks can enter custom field description data. Previously captioning and metadata had been handwritten by communications staff sat at a light box in the photo unit – a hugely inefficient process that wasted staff time and prevented other photo research from taking place."

On completion of this activity, each image is marked as available and can from this point be visible to all staff via a website created by Portfolio NetPublish directly from their desktops. Parsons continues, "Again this has proved a huge benefit to staff, especially our colleagues working away from our main building in London. Previously they had to request slides for use in presentations to volunteers and local groups. The process could take days, they weren't always sure that they'd get the image they wanted, and media could get lost or damaged. Now staff anywhere within the WAN (Wide Area Network) are able to conduct their own photo research via an internal website created by Portfolio NetPublish and download PowerPoint ready images to use immediately."

"Of course the biggest benefit has been for our talented team of three Photo Unit staff," states Parsons. "Before Portfolio, the team were forever fielding enquiries from staff and managing the stock. They're now able to concentrate on the value-added activities of making sure images carry the most powerful impact, providing detailed photo research for media activities, and shooting stories."

CONCLUSION

By utilising Portfolio NetPublish, Christian Aid has opened up its entire digitised image catalogue to staff thereby encouraging self-service. The web based nature of the product means that any Christian Aid staff on any platform can access the catalogue. “The immediate benefits we’ve experienced have been awareness and persistent re-use of archived material. Previously most staff could only recall the last 100 or so images used in campaigns, which could sometimes lead to over use.”

“There really is no comparison to our previous method of archiving photography,” concludes Parsons. “Christian Aid is now able to offer a greater proactive service, something that is critical following a major event such as the Tsunami in 2004. Our media department was inundated with requests for comment and interviews - whilst taking the call, media staff were able to search the image database and email prospective images to journalists immediately.”

Extensis Portfolio is used by a wide variety of charitable organizations and other non-profit organizations. Richard Bamford, European Business Manager for Extensis explains, “The public perception of a charity is often based on witnessing the good work that goes on. Portfolio helps in this way by organizing and showing all the project work that may have previously gone unnoticed.”



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