

Great Moments In Sports: Preserved for the Ages, Positioned for the Future

Broadway Video Guides Content Owners in Asset Digitization and Monetization Opportunities

Content delivery platforms are the new frontier and certainly dominate the industry headlines—mobile devices, VOD, broadband, the list goes on. Yet getting less attention is the management of the very video content libraries that will play on these emerging platforms—assets that are literally decaying as they sit on shelves.



Mark Yates
*President, Video Services Group,
 Broadway Video*

Broadway Video, long recognized as a premier post production facility, knows this is a critical time for managing such assets, and in 2004 launched a new division, Digital Media Services, specifically to help content owners protect, preserve and ultimately monetize their libraries. The Digital Media Services division assists content owners in identifying and implementing the best and most cost-efficient means to move content to digital storage, and they are developing an initiative to create a standard for making that content accessible in ways it has never been before.

The New York-based company is involved in the digitization of its own landmark TV series, "Saturday Night Live," and is doing the same for other major producers and organizations including the United States Tennis Association (USTA) which, like so many other sports-based organizations, is sitting on vast amounts of one-of-a-kind, irreplaceable footage.

"The shelf-life of videotape is incalculable," said Mark Yates, President of the Video Services Group for Broadway Video. "Estimates vary widely, but in our practical experience we know that tapes can suffer serious degradation in as little as five years when they are stored in less-than-ideal conditions. Given that videotape has been the storage medium for more than 40 years, there are potentially millions of hours of unique footage to be protected and preserved."

The USTA is a case in point.

"We had almost 9,000 to 10,000 video tapes of varying lengths and on varying—and sometimes obsolete—formats," said Tom Norris, the organization's archivist and records manager. "A good number of these were from matches for which there is no other record of the event or the moment than what we have."

The USTA sensed it needed to move as much archival footage as it could to digital files. Such files are easy to replicate and are created on a standard that is "future

proof," one that won't die when the current media delivery platforms are replaced by future delivery generations.

"Once digitized, the material ceases to be subject to media degradation and disintegration," said Dirk Van Dall, General Manager of Digital Media Services for Broadway Video. "It's easy to migrate for delivery and for storage. The client can be confident that their library is safe."

Mr. Norris added, "Broadway Video immediately understood and got their arms around what we were trying to do. Many of the places we considered tried to sell us on their production capabilities, but we didn't need that. Dirk Van Dall understood that. He was ready with objective information."

The USTA wanted its materials digitalized so they could spin-off copies, and they wanted to position their library to take advantage of new media opportunities. They also wanted them stored in a system through which they could find relevant clips efficiently.

"We did not have the resources to digitize everything," said Mr. Norris. "So far only 10 percent of our library has been catalogued. We established and worked from a fairly simple criteria—all finals, semifinals and quarterfinals of the U.S. Open matches would be stored. In addition to that, anything our experts say will be historical moments for the ages.



Dirk Van Dall
*General Manager,
 Digital Media Services,
 Broadway Video*

"For example," he continued, "We have footage of Jimmy Connors from one of the few matches where he just blew his cool, more like John McEnroe. That's the sort of action for which we get requests, and is something we want to be sure is secure."

Led by Mr. Van Dall, Broadway Video's Digital Media Services created a two-file archive for the USTA: a master file that is stored at 50 Mbs per second, and a WMV (Windows Media) file with lower resolution that allows easier catalogue access so, as Mr. Norris said, "You can see what you've got and what you want."

Broadway Video's services for the USTA have saved its footage and brought the organization new marketing ideas. "We're finding stuff we didn't know we had," said Mr. Norris. "And the refurbishing they've done has given much of it a better look."

Another prime example of the spectrum of emerging digital needs in the marketplace is found in Major League Baseball's Web site, MLB.com. Broadway Video is collaborating with MLB.com in exercising thought leadership to address some of these problems in the public domain.

The technological advances that save video footage can also be used to make that footage user-friendlier by revolutionizing the search for desired clips or even moments on a reel.

The basis for this search is the metadata, the text-based information that describes the essence of a media asset.

"Let's say you want to find moments in games where (NY Yankees pitcher) Randy Johnson is dominant, where he's striking out batters," said Joe Inzerillo, Major League Baseball's Senior Vice President of Multimedia & Distribution. "You need a system, a means of finding those moments in your



USTA

digitized library. We have a system now that does this but in a proprietary way. We had to develop most of the software ourselves and with our partners. We're working with Broadway Video and collaborators including academics to find a common language, a way to access the materials through a flexible standard."

The movement towards that standard is called OMNI—Open Metadata Nomenclature Initiative. With asset management systems expected to generate \$3.43 billion in overall market revenue by 2009, Mr. Van Dall thinks this is a must.

"We have to find a common means to search digitized materials. That's the future of television," he said.

The OMNI standard that Broadway Video and MLB.com are heralding will be, they say, a Rosetta stone to connect content owners to consumers through providers. Mr. Van Dall insisted, "You'll have a searchable metadata tag that unifies information gathered through voice recognition, scene recognition, and image recognition."

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"We hope to have the draft of a proposal for this in six months to a year," noted Mr. Inzerillo. "How big is this task? Enormous, but it will be solved with collaboration, and we're excited to be working with Broadway Video on this."

Mr. Yates added, "We're thrilled to be solving the immediate needs of our clients while also creating standards and technology for the future. For Broadway Video it's as if we've been entrusted with preserving history. We're proud to know that the services we provide to our clients now will continue to benefit these organizations long into the future."

—Lee Alan Hill



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