

IDM

IMAGE & DATA MANAGER



Transforming the process of learning from a chore into a creative pastime that encourages students to teach themselves about the world certainly sounds like a very difficult task, but also a very clever move if you can pull it off. By Rodney Appleyard

ENLIVENING LEARNING IS THE IDEA BEHIND A NEW WEBSITE that allows students to download broadcast quality images and video footage to help them prepare for school and university projects. They even have the option of making their own personal documentary if they want to.

GlobeVista recently launched its website (www.gv.tv) to provide an educational resource centre for students to find digital assets, including audio, from 26 different countries

around the world, that would otherwise be inaccessible or too expensive to acquire. It uses Canto's Cumulus 6.0.2 software to index all of the assets.

Digitised video footage can be viewed and even downloaded to the desktop, free of copyright infringements, so that a student can manipulate the asset at will for research purposes. The creators of the site have already entered a wealth of content into the system that includes exclusive digital footage of the Shroud of Turin, video material and information about real Japanese archers, which can be compared to those seen on *The Last Samurai*, and categories based on subjects such as art, history and geography.

Aidan Montague, co-owner of the site, and the previous co-founder of Cisco Systems in Australia, is delighted with the quality of the site's content.

"We have a freelance camera team on board who have previously worked on many high profile programmes for TV stations around the world. For this project we have taken all of our own raw, broadcast quality footage, separated it into small clips and then loaded the footage, together with our stills collection, onto the website. The

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clips have been transformed into a format that is educational and informative for visitors.”

“Students can also use footage to edit their own documentaries too. We point them to sites where they can find the software to do this editing, and then we instruct them on how to do it too. The system provides students with information they need quickly. The Cumulus package made it simple for us to present the content exactly how we wanted it to look.”

Montague has found that Cumulus provides a framework whereby they can enter a wide variety of digital content into a logical format, which enables them to search, retrieve and alter these assets effortlessly. Cumulus divides the content into folders and arranges them into a hierarchical structure, allowing material to be dragged and dropped into a user-friendly, common sense structure.

100 schools in Western Australia took part in GlobeVista’s pilot programme, conducted last year. At the time, the Department of Education and Training of Western Australia asked GlobeVista to provide a platform that would allow students to search via keywords and then download images. All of these schools have now been granted full access to the new GV.TV platform, which has enhanced its user interface since then, and keeps adding to its ever-growing range of accessible content.

GlobeVista is offering single user licenses for \$50 per annum as part of an aggressive push initially into the education market place.

“From my days at Cisco, I learned that education users were the early adopters and we have priced our service accordingly. For less than the price of a textbook, students can have access to our entire collection of broadcast quality content,” adds Montague.

On the technology side of things, Tanya Izzard, a freelance producer and co-founder of the site, has been the major architect of the new GlobeVista platform. Using Canto’s Cumulus product, she has created more than 40,000 information categories all researched and catalogued to the latest metadata standards.

“It is the layers of research that we provide with every image and movie clip that sets GlobeVista apart,” believes Izzard. “Users can, for the first time, have well researched, professional content at their fingertips and use it in the creation of their own multimedia presentations or mini documentaries. We have about 100 hours of moving footage and over 50,000 images downloaded into the system.”

“We also provide lesson plans, so that teachers can integrate content ready material, from our website, into their classes. It could include instructions on how students

can make their own mini-documentaries from the content that they can pull down from our site.”

Of course, students could only access this high quality material with such ease through the use of an extremely clever back-end system.

The team that built the technology incorporated Macromedia Flash into a Cumulus package successfully for the first time ever. This format was chosen because the designers believed that it was the best way to make the site smooth to navigate, pleasurable to spend time exploring and attractive to browse.

Andrew Smith, the web development manager for the GlobeVista site, believes that the Cumulus digital asset management package was an ideal solution for helping them to achieve the site’s vision.

“It is set up to make sites like this fun to use, although it was a challenge to incorporate Flash and link it together with the XML database. But we figured it out so that users could start off on a category of interest, bring in extra assets and topics under one particular module to fit on the page nicely without cluttering the user with untidy information. Although we have over 40,000 different categories in the system, the site allows a user to focus in on one, then expand it effortlessly, whilst retaining the initial point of interest.”

“We used Flash to create interactive maps, which allow the user to click on different sections, find out information about a specific country or area and also download high resolution images or videos. The combination of Flash and Cumulus makes the whole site very intuitive to use.”

The navigation, says Smith, has been designed to create a cinematic style journey around the site, so that students learn as they search.

“Cumulus just slotted into to our design and functionality aims. It allowed us to add flamboyant extra features to its basic structure. Students will be able to benefit because they are able to browse around the site and pick content at will that is interesting and significantly helpful to their studies.”

GlobeVista will continue to add content to the site from countries all around the world and the team also intends to incorporate material on a wide range of subject matters suggested by teachers. In addition, they plan to be proactive about getting hold of topical content, for example, images of Greece, in respect of the interest that will surround the forthcoming Olympic Games. At the moment, they cannot see any limit to the number of assets they will be able to load onto the Cumulus system for the benefit of increasingly aware students. **IDM**