



A history lesson

The Raffles Institution, founded in 1823, is the oldest school and centre for pre-tertiary learning in Singapore. The independent school is now using Canto Cumulus for its Digital Asset Management (DAM) needs. Raffles Institution selected Cumulus to gain tools for organisation, keyword searching, and sharing of its extensive document and image archives.

Cheryl Yap, a teacher of Raffles Institution and head of the Raffles Archives and Museum, said "We needed a method to manage archival and artefact collection besides the traditional Microsoft Excel or Access.

"My main purpose is to implement an integrated solution which documents visual images of our heritage and 190 years of history for sharing with the current students, stakeholders and the many generations of alumni living and working in many parts of the world."

The history of Singapore and the school's namesake Sir Stamford Raffles are inescapably intertwined. The British statesman founded Raffles College to educate the children of the employees of the then East India Company, the most powerful multinational corporation of the Victorian era, for which he had secured control of the island that was to become modern Singapore.

Since that time it has evolved to become one of the nation's premier educational institutions. RI's alumni body, the Old Rafflesians Association (ORA), includes former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, and three other former presidents of Singapore.

To assist with the establishment of the Raffles Archives and Museum, Canto Cumulus DAM was purchased in March 2013 and the institution is now in the early stages of gaining familiarity with the software.

"We are barely scratching the surface of the powerful capability of Cumulus," said Ms Yap.

"We are currently trying to digitise our school annual magazine 'The Rafflesian'. The earliest two copies are from 1886-1887 and we are still trying to find the many missing issues. Besides the school magazine, there are many other publications that we are trying to locate and digitise. We also have many photos."

To begin managing the images digitally the first step in many

Head of the Raffles Archives and Museum, Cheryl Yap.

cases is to locate the photos that are stored in archive boxes or photo albums and begin the process of digitising them. A worldwide network of Old Rafflesians is also being asked to upload digital images via an online portal.

Currently the scanning of photographs, letters and other documents is being accomplished in-house via an Epson Perfection V700 Photo scanner with the help of an alumni student helper.

"Since mid-March we have scanned more than 5300 photos and documents," said Ms Yap.

"Once we start bringing in historical audio and visual resources, which has not begun yet, that figure could easily pass 100,000 items stored in the DAM.

"Our immediate challenge is accessioning and describing the photos (Accessioning is the formal, legal process of accepting an object into a museum collection). We hope to get alumni from the different decades to return to the school to help us with identifying the photos so that some basic description can be captured."

Cumulus offers a wide range of image processing and conversion as well as the ability for users to find images and download them as PowerPoint slides.

Raffles Institution is using Cumulus Entry with 3 concurrent user licenses. Cumulus Server is running on Windows 2008 R2 server. The system is currently only open to users within the institution campus. However a planned upgrade to Cumulus Sites will provide the ability to publish via the Web.

"I hope to be able to make it available over the Internet so that alumni can have easy access to some of our historical resources. All of our images are being scanned at 300dpi and to manage copyright we will probably upload at low res and place a watermark on our resources," said Ms Yap.

The ability to share and access multimedia content across a distributed network infrastructure can yield tremendous value and utility for organisations of all sizes. The Cumulus DAM will make photos easy to tag, search, share, and download in any format needed for the benefit of all those associated with the Raffles Institution.