



Victoria & Albert Museum

A Viglen Success Story

IT's Personal

V&A Goes Digital With Massive Image Library From Viglen

Overview

As the world's largest art and design museum, the Victoria and Albert museum takes the responsibility of sharing its collection with the public very seriously. It developed a Digital Asset Management (DAM) system to build a digital image archive of all collection pieces and needed a robust, scalable and easy-to-manage storage platform to support it. The solution, delivered by Viglen Storage Group (VSG) is scalable for up to seven years and fits perfectly with the V&A's business continuity and disaster recovery strategy.



The customer

The Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) was founded in 1852 and is the world's largest museum of decorative arts and design. A landmark building in London's South Kensington, it covers 12.5 acres and features a collection spanning 5,000 years.

As part of this ongoing commitment to preserving and disseminating the world's cultural heritage, the V&A has, for the last five years, been working on a project to bring its collection online. By taking high quality photographs of each item and making them available through its web site, the museum plans to make its collection accessible for people all over the world, who may never have the chance to visit the museum itself.

The challenge

The web site and its eight subsidiary sites currently hold 50,000 images and receive four million hits every month, but the museum wanted to increase both its image library and its online audience.

Head of Information Systems Services at the V&A, Sarah Winmill, explains: **"We'd made a good start with our DAM system, but to continue to grow we needed to upgrade our storage platform. Our existing one was very hard to manage and we were running out of capacity. We were also keen to ensure our business continuity and disaster recovery arrangements were robust. We're responsible for preserving a priceless cultural archive for the nation so it's imperative we do all we can to keep it safe."**

The V&A team initially assessed the market to identify what solutions were available to meet its needs. It then produced a series of pre-qualification questions for solution vendors to find the right combination of storage equipment and expertise in developing large scale archiving projects similar to the one the museum was seeking. This enabled the team to draw up a short list of three vendors, which were then assessed in more detail and measured against key requirements.



Great
Minds
Think





VICTORIA & ALBERT MUSEUM

A Viglen Success Story

The Solution

“Our first concern was scalability,” says Anton Benjamin, infrastructure manager at the V&A. **“We needed a solution that would support strong and continued growth both in terms of assets stored and users accessing them. It was also important that it was simple to manage in house, with training and support available when necessary. Finally, we needed a solution that was quick to implement while being robust enough to reliably last a long time without needing to be replaced or upgraded.”**

As part of the decision process, the team removed all vendor and cost details from the proposals in order to judge them impartially on their technical merits alone. **“Not only did the solution from Viglen win against all of our criteria,”** Benjamin comments, **“but we then found out it was the most cost effective solution too!”**



“We also liked the fact that with the Hitachi based platform we can spin down disks that we’re not using. This was a key differentiator for us. The project has also enabled server virtualisation which means that, by the time this project is complete, we will be able to turn off up to 25 pieces of equipment, making us even more energy efficient.”

Sarah Winmill
Head of Information Services
Victoria & Albert Museum

The Implementation

The V&A chose to deploy two Hitachi Adaptable Modular Storage 1000 systems, each equipped with 60TB of capacity. One was installed at the museum’s main site in Kensington, while the other was placed in its secondary site a few miles away. Training in how to manage the new platform was delivered to the IT team at the V&A to ensure that they could maintain their close involvement in running the DAM.

“The services provided by Viglen were of a particularly high standard,” says Winmill. **“They were very sympathetic to the type of organisation the V&A is and ensured we got a solution that was matched to us.”**

The Result

The museum’s hope when looking for its new DAM storage platform was that it would provide enough capacity for the next three years, with scalability for the next five.

The advanced scalability of the Hitachi solution with up to 200TB of potential capacity means that, in fact, the deployed solution will provide the V&A with the scalability to cope easily with data growth for at least the next seven years. This is a huge advantage given the scope of the archiving project that Winmill and her team are managing.

“We’re not just creating one image of each item,” Winmill explains. **“It’s a lot more complex than that. We have as many as 20 images of each piece, as we need to record different stages of restoration work, for example. We’re also recording copies of our own intranets to preserve details of how the various museum departments work.”**

“This solution is a great example of how organisations like the V&A can really harness today’s technology, enabling them to deliver a state-of-the-art digital experience in what is in its nature, an historic subject matter.”

Bordan Tkachuk
Chief Executive
Viglen Ltd.

