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[Widen Release Media Collective Version 8.0](#)

by Ralph Windsor on January 22, 2015

The timing of this update from [Widen](#) regarding their Media Collective SaaS DAM might not be entirely ideal (from their perspective) as a segue to our recent item about [DAM innovation](#) (or lack thereof). I would imagine they might prefer to take an alternative view. Here are the highlights:

- Targeted ‘visual announcements’ with notifications to specific user groups
- Spotlight searches and spotlight collections
- Real time activity feeds (stream of key events like uploading, downloading, comments etc)
- Upload to a given workflow using their drag and drop UI
- Box and Dropbox integration
- Publication to social media like Facebook, YouTube and Twitter
- Asset popularity score (based on views, downloads and social media shares)

As per my discussion about this topic last week, it does seem a bit thin and more to prove my point rather than offer any evidence to the contrary. For anyone requiring further validation of this general trend (not about any specific vendor) they may refer also to [this recent post by Theresa Regli](#).

On the features themselves, I did think Widen had the social media integration aspect already covered, although I have seen this mentioned many times now by numerous other vendors and it is quite easy to lose track of who has done what and when in this area especially (also the specific social media channels might be different to ones they offered previously).

Normally this would be the type of update that you expect to get referenced as a 'point release' (i.e. version n.n, rather than n.0) but it's a full new major release (at least as far as Widen are calling it). I would have to acknowledge that SaaS vendors like Widen tend to go for shorter release cycles since they usually have sole discretion over when updates get rolled out to their customers, but even so, this is not what I would call substantial.

Taking the first update 'visual announcements', this is effectively a MOTD ('Message Of The Day') feature. All manner of other applications provide this and there are much older examples too (its been in the UNIX operating system for about 40 years, for example – albeit without rich media like images). Real time activity feeds is working off the existing tracking they already record, in the sense that they are making use of this data, this is positive, but I think it will have more appeal to marketing managers to verify that when people say they have downloaded a given asset they can check up to see if they really have. The 'popularity score' is aggregating stats using some metric of their own composition, which may or may not be useful to you (that would be a point you would need to check with Widen and 'mileages may vary' as the saying goes).

Overall, it's hard to get that excited about this type of release and it follows the general DAM software industry trends for innovation shifting down to a lower gear in 2015. DAM vendors like Widen aren't going to admit this in public, since it's a cue for prospective users to ask for money off and to shop around as the products all converge in terms of functionality provided (or possibly go for their cheaper SmartImage edition instead). I can't see much on this update that is significant in terms of winning or losing them clients. If you were or were not going with Widen already, I doubt many would change their minds on this strength of this update alone.

What gives the game away about the underlying fundamentals of the situation is the divergence between the rhetoric used and what you actually get for your money that is new. Contrast the functionality described with the phrases used in the PR:

Widen Expands Media Collective Into a Marketing Content 'Command Center'

Also, this quote from Deanna Ballew:

"Marketers now compete on the basis of customer experience, and easy access to great content plays a central role in differentiating one brand experience from another. With Media Collective 8.0, our aim is to give marketers an edge in this arena. Media Collective has evolved to be a true marketing content 'command center' that will facilitate better collaboration, distribution and decision-making so that marketers can achieve better customer experiences." [[Read More](#)]

This is a well-known ploy for software marketing and has been used for many years (in older industries also). Rather than make the product more innovative (with all the cost and risk that entails) change the name to something more impressive sounding instead; or widen the goalposts instead of getting better at scoring goals (if you'll excuse the pun).

So, where once we had the now humble sounding 'Digital Asset Management System' (which was quite possibly an over-aggrandised description in its own right) now we have 'Media Content Command Centre'. To use a topical theme, this is the technology equivalent of quantitative easing. If you've got yourself into a functionality deficit, inflate the description instead and hope that something turns up that will fill it in for you before anyone notices.

It must be said, Widens are far from unique in using these kind of methods within the DAM software sector. I sense some general moves to try and escape from the term Digital Asset Management by a few vendors because of the associations with what I previously referred to as the 'hard and boring' problems with DAM: like having to catalogue an ever-growing stock of digital assets and still not being able to find anything other than via rudimentary methods from the network drive era (i.e. remembering the filename or hoping someone else has sifted and collected them into a nice ready-made zip file for you). The users are beginning to figure out that for all the promise of the software, that is only part of the story and a lot of the long-term effort is going to need to be provided by them with the tools offering only a supporting role.

In my analysis of the statements offered by [Bynder's](#) Chris Hall in our [DAM innovation article](#) he refers to DAM as a 'technical' subject, a theme repeated in the comments provided by their marketing and PR people under the same item. I think Chris and colleagues have confused 'technical' with 'operational'.

What they mean is that DAM is about operations management issues associated with the nuts and bolts of assembling media libraries (like cataloguing, workflow, metadata, taxonomies and batch processing etc). This is what I would generally refer to as the real work of DAM and why not many people want to get involved in doing it- the [DAM doughnut problem](#) once again. This issue isn't going away, in fact it is getting worse and the less people are prepared to acknowledge it, the more expensive it will become to fix.

As noted on DAM News before, the term Digital Asset Management is reaching breaking point due to the variety of interpretations about its meaning and this might be the start of that process finally beginning to play out. The market could split between providers of DAM operations management software and DAM as a form of digital marketing communications, with the latter becoming very crowded and composed of many similar vendors (most of whom are only a few shades away from being considered digital media agencies as opposed to software businesses). Unfortunately, both aspects are still linked to each other and arguably while you could do without the latter, you will still need robust, scalable and sophisticated tools represented by the former to address the problem of your ever-growing collections of digital assets.

As some of my co-contributors have been advertising on their respective social media channels, this topic (and others) will be discussed in a series of follow-up pieces which we will be publishing next month.

{ [0 comments](#) }

[**DAM Innovation – Who Hit The Pause Button? \(Part 2\)**](#)

January 16, 2015 [Opinion](#)

In part one of this two part series, I discussed how the level of innovation in the Digital Asset Management industry has reached a plateau recently which the evidence suggests it cannot now advance beyond. I made reference to Jeff Lawrence's CMSWire article as it contained an aggregated selection of quotes from vendors who were [...]

[Read the full article →](#)

[**DAM Foundation Ten Core Characteristics Update – Vendor Compliance Reviews**](#)

January 15, 2015 [Industry News](#)

DAM Foundation have recently announced that they are now testing DAM vendors for their ten core characteristics, based on an article Elizabeth Keathley wrote last year. The ten attributes are formalised in this article by Mark Davey. They have checked and approved about 16 different vendor products so far (although I would expect that list to [...])

[Read the full article →](#)

DAM Innovation: Who Hit The Pause Button?

January 9, 2015 [Opinion](#)

This is part 1 of a series of articles about DAM Innovation. On CMSWire this week, Jeff Lawrence has given an overview of various DAM vendor roadmaps for 2015 via two articles. There are some interesting aspects to this, but for those interested in critically analysing our sector with a view to enhancing it, the prognosis [...]

[Read the full article →](#)

Digital Photographs And Trustworthiness Of Social Media Platforms: Survey Results

December 22, 2014 [Social Media and DAM](#)

Back in April of this year, we highlighted some research that was being carried out by Jessica Bushey of the University of British Columbia into Digital Photographs And Trustworthiness Of Social Media Platforms. Last week, Jessica emailed participants a copy of the survey summary report. The results are broadly in-line with what many DAM professionals would probably expect (certainly from my [...])

[Read the full article →](#)

Planning And Implementing Digital Asset Migration

December 16, 2014 [DAM Education](#)

A couple of weeks ago, CMSWire ran an article by Jeff Lawrence of Celerity with the title: Using DAM Content Migration to Maximize Asset Value. It has taken me a while to find the time to catch up and read this item but DAM migration is a subject I have some prior experience of, so I was interested to [...]

[Read the full article →](#)

Adobe Acquires Fotolia Stock Media Library

December 12, 2014 [Industry News](#)

According to VentureBeat yesterday, Adobe have acquired stock photo library, Fotolia for US \$800m. They cite the following statement from the official Adobe announcement: “Adobe today announced it has entered into a definitive agreement to acquire privately-held Fotolia, a leading marketplace for stock content. Fotolia will be integrated into Adobe Creative Cloud, providing current and [...]

[Read the full article →](#)

Canto Upgrades Cumulus To Version 9.2

December 10, 2014 [Vendors](#)

DAM Vendor, Canto, have announced version 9.2 of their long-standing DAM solution, Cumulus. The

key feature revisions are: Amazon S3 storage of assets Upgraded workflow with review/approval cycles What they call “Social DAM” Mandatory fields collected at the point of upload Duplicate asset checking This is the quote on the press release from Canto boss, [...]

[Read the full article →](#)

Selecting The Right DAM System For Marketers

December 4, 2014 [DAM For Marketing](#)

Anna Cotton Head of Marketing for DAM vendor, Brandworkz has contributed a feature article for DAM News: DAM Simple: How To Select The Right Digital Asset Management System If You Are A Marketer. The article covers a few pointers about ensuring the vendor you deal with understands what you want to achieve and avoids excessive technical jargon: [...]

[Read the full article →](#)

Feature Article: Part Two Of Who Needs A DAM Librarian?

December 2, 2014 [DAM For Librarians](#)

Deborah Fanslow, has provided us with the eagerly anticipated (and very well received) second part of her DAM News feature article: Who Needs a DAM Librarian? In Part II: Information Professionals: A Field Guide she continues her detailed analysis by describing the disciplines and fields that information management is composed of and where is DAM is placed within them: “This guide will [...]

[Read the full article →](#)

Solving The DAM Implementation Doughnut Problem

November 26, 2014 [Opinion](#)

On DAM Guru last week, there was an interesting interview with Laurel Calsoni, who you can follow on Twitter @DigitalArchivist. The item is a good one and Laura makes a number of points I would agree with. There is one, in particular, in answer to the question “what is your greatest DAM challenge?” “My problem with DAM stems [...]

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