

# Bulletin

## **Coca-Cola's Archive Research Assistant: Using DAM for Competitive Advantage**

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### **IDC Opinion**

*What applications are companies using digital asset management systems for?*

Digital asset management (DAM) systems are starting to be used in a variety of vertical industries and horizontal applications.

The Coca-Cola Company is one of the first organizations to move its advertising and brand history to a digital media environment. It is also one of the first consumer packaged goods companies to employ a DAM system. With the help of IBM, Coca-Cola employees worldwide now have online access to thousands of historic documents, still images, and video, including many of the company's most famous advertising and corporate icons. The company is leveraging the intellectual capital and lessons learned from decades of advertising experience to develop and collaborate on future campaigns worldwide in a fraction of the time.

This bulletin explores the use and impact of DAM in The Coca-Cola Company's Archive Research Assistant.

Coca-Cola is one of the best-known brands in the world. Over 115 years, The Coca-Cola Company, a globally recognized packaged goods company, has produced some of the most memorable, almost iconic, television commercials and advertisements. Many of us can recall these jingles with little or no prompting.

A year ago the company promised to provide the Library of Congress copies of its television advertising for preservation. However, while preservation of over a century of historical corporate marketing assets is important to the company, providing internal access to these assets is even more so.

## The Problem

Frequently, associates in any of the 200-plus countries the company serves want to create a new localized promotion or marketing campaign. How would they find and get hold of appropriate video, icons, still images, text, or supporting marketing materials from Coca-Cola's corporate headquarters?

Most of the time, associates had no idea what was available. They would send a fax or phone one of the company's archivists with what they thought was a detailed request, such as "a video and still image of Santa drinking a Coke."

The archivist might know of several videos or pictures and describe them to the associate in a reply fax or phone conversation, or he might look in one of three different places where video, still images, or text are stored. This might repeat a few times before content was chosen. The archivist would then copy or bring the media essence to an external production house to be reproduced in the appropriate format, onto the appropriate medium, and then have it sent by courier to the overseas destination.

This process might take as little as a few days or as long as a few weeks. When it was finally received and viewed, it may have been what was desired... but often it wasn't, and the process would have to be repeated.

In possibly the worst of cases, the company's Japanese associates might send a team of account executives to Coca-Cola headquarters in Atlanta for three days to directly search for and select appropriate marketing materials! Clearly, these approaches were expensive and time-consuming.

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The Coca-Cola Company was suffering, as many companies are today, from its inability to efficiently manage, access, and fulfill requests from internal employees and affiliates for historical corporate marketing assets for use in other projects. In summary:

- Associates, brand managers, and other employees did not know what historical corporate marketing assets and information were available.
- They had only indirect access, through an archivist, to material.
- Video, still images, and text assets were centrally stored (geographically) in multiple and distinct libraries.
- Many assets were in analog or physical formats and not cataloged or available in a digital format.
- Fulfillment took days or weeks, and there was no guarantee that the material received would fit the need or request.
- The process resulted in substantial costly inefficiencies, such as delayed campaign and promotion creation, but which were often difficult to quantify in hard dollars.

### **The Initial State**

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Coca-Cola has been looking into DAM technologies for nearly three years. A couple of years ago, it considered several companies but decided instead to build its own image library to house over 9,000 photographs, pictures, point-of-sale materials, two-dimensional items, and other icons.

In addition, the company had an established document library for the more than 7,000 marketing materials, which include press releases, policy statements, internal memos, and publications outlining the history of the company and its evolution over time. It also had a video library containing more than 25,000 television ads, executive presentations, company-sponsored films, sales meetings, and internal corporate videos. Most of these items were in analog formats, stored on film or videotape.

Coca-Cola wanted to manage all these materials in a manner seamless to their users. This meant:

- It wanted one place or site for a user to go for all materials.
- The materials had be globally accessible.
- The materials would have to be available in a digital format.
- Accessing materials had to be easy to do.
- Security and authentication had to be maintained.
- The system would need to transparently search and access the three data sources under the covers.
- The system should streamline asset fulfillment as much as possible.

## The Solution

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*It gives Coca-Cola employees worldwide the ability to easily search, access, preview, and order copies of the material for future projects.*

*From their desktop anywhere in the world, authorized users can log in and search simultaneously and transparently across all three text, image, and video libraries with a single query.*

*Fulfillment of audio and video is automatically farmed out to third-party production houses, which will reproduce the essence in the desired format, on the desired media, and ship it directly to the requestor.*

The Coca-Cola Archive Research Assistant (ARA) is an advanced, enterprise-scale DAM solution. ARA makes over a century of corporate marketing and advertising assets available at the desktop through a global internal network. It allows Coca-Cola employees worldwide to easily search, access, preview, and order copies of the material for future projects. In essence, it serves as a common, online knowledge management system for storing, accessing, updating, managing, and disseminating these historical assets.

Over 3,000 registered users have access to the tens of thousands of assets currently stored in ARA, with 40 to 50 concurrently online at any given time. It is available 24 hours a day — a requirement of the company's worldwide employees and associates. Coca-Cola said users stay on the ARA system for an average of 20 to 30 minutes, which is longer than users do for their corporate intranet site, implying that they are using the system to service real marketing needs.

From their desktop anywhere in the world, authorized users can log in and search simultaneously and transparently across all three text, image, and video libraries with a single query. Despite its global use, English is the required business language of the company. Hence, all searches are expressed in English and performed by Content Manager across both the metadata and document content. Searches can use a specific keyword, a year, a brand, an image, or a specific piece of text, and can be federated across decentralized content sources.

If a Coca-Cola advertising team is currently working on a new Christmas campaign, an associate can search ARA for “Santa Claus” and pull up the entire spectrum of print and video advertisements on the subject. After the system returns a list of all assets (i.e., documents, images, and video) that match the search criteria, the team can view the work online. It can view low-resolution proxies of all search results for quick decision-making or play low-resolution video on their PC. Users can also view rights, permissions, and usage restrictions for each asset.

Finally, they can order high- or low-resolution graphics and copies for reference materials online. Interestingly, fulfillment of audio and video is automatically farmed out to third-party production houses, which will reproduce the essence in the desired format, on the desired media, and ship it directly to the requestor. There is currently no digital transmission-selected high-resolution content.

ARA tracks both asset and system use. Special internal metadata available only to the archivists is used to describe not only digital assets but physical assets as well. For example, a 1930 calendar in the archive might have metadata about its size, physical storage location, condition, value, and its creator. It also tracks how many people are using the system, how many are using it to place orders, and who's ordering what. Combining these, ARA functions as an inventory registration and cataloging system for all kinds of objects. As a result, the archivists don't need to maintain a separate registry to track loaned items.

## The Process

The Coca-Cola Company selected IBM to help it build the Archive Research Assistant. They selected IBM in part because of an existing strategic relationship, but also for IBM's Content Manager product, the company's longevity — it wanted to be certain that its technology provider would be around in five years — and its ability to work as a team with Coca-Cola.

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Each company had a core team of about six people. However, over the course of the nearly two-year project, each company drew from expertise and specialty knowledge from many different people across Coca-Cola and IBM. A team of IBM Global Services project managers, application developers, Web designers, and systems integrators worked jointly with Coca-Cola to tailor and ensure that selected technologies, including Lotus Domino and Notes, IBM Content Manager, Virage Video Logger, Tivoli HSM, and IBM pSeries servers, would provide the functionality, interoperability, and depth of integration required by Coca-Cola.

Coca-Cola provided internal expertise on its archives, intranet security, firewalls, testing labs, and system support. Both teams contributed to workflow analysis that was completed to define the needs and requirements of ARA users.

While the project was initiated and directed by Coca-Cola's Corporate Archival group, it required significant interaction with corporate IS. The IS organization insisted and was assured that the digital system would adhere to corporate security and access standards, provide expected levels of robustness and reliability, and be fully able to support and manage it at the end of the project.

Some content had to be converted into a format appropriate for Content Manager, or Content Manager had to be modified to accept new types of content. Documents were converted to a retrievable digital form through a custom conversion utility that scanned documents and performed optical character recognition (OCR). The system stores text, PDF, and Microsoft Word, Excel, or PowerPoint formats, among others.

Virage's video logger was used to digitize and ingest video into multiple low- and high-resolution (MPEG1) formats — optimized for different fulfillment paths — and create metadata (information about the video) for video. The metadata is stored in and can be searched by Content Manager for asset retrieval.

The teams put significant effort into defining and creating metadata, not just for video but also for all assets. Beyond typical file information, metadata included who authored the document, who produced and directed the video, who wrote the music, when it was written or created, or what talent was used to performed the song or to appear in the video.

The system also stored as metadata the rights and permissions for the asset. Knowing the rights will save time and define costs for

*Over the next year, Coca-Cola expects the archive to increase by 15,000 to 30,000 new assets.*

future users of the asset, who may have to acquire the rights to use the audio or video and/or pay royalties to the talent.

To date, over 3,000 of the 25,000 audio/video pieces have been ingested into the archive. Over the next year, Coca-Cola expects the archive to increase by 15,000 to 30,000 new assets of all types. Current Coca-Cola advertising and marketing materials are automatically stored in digital formats and subsequently will be added to the company's digital archive to ensure an ongoing historical record. Ultimately, ARA will hold the entire history of the company in an accessible digital format.

The project broke new ground inside the company. It increased the understanding and cooperation between the archive group and corporate IS and established a model, guidelines, and in some cases standards for future similar projects. The greatest challenge for the archival group was partnering with IS and working with what they considered was "cutting-edge technology."

### **The Benefits**

*ARA provides both soft and hard benefits that collectively result in a substantial competitive advantage.*

ARA provides both soft and hard benefits that collectively result in a substantial competitive advantage. ARA improves communications and collaboration by giving Coca-Cola users worldwide a powerful, online research tool that can easily search, organize, distribute, and share historical assets and information.

Already the company has seen productivity gains, is seeing incremental cost savings, and has already realized substantial time savings. Asset search has been reduced from days or hours to minutes. Overall request-fulfillment cycles have been reduced from a week or several weeks to a few days, with fewer people involved. Associates now know the rights and usage costs associated with using an asset ahead of time and are making decisions faster.

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The company estimates that it starting to see reductions in the development time for ad campaigns and promotions by 50% or more. Lastly, the increased ease of access to assets has enabled users to see more of what's available, and this has led to new ideas and additional partnering opportunities. As a result, the company is anticipating that its licensing revenue will ultimately increase.

Hence, ARA gives The Coca-Cola Company a competitive advantage by allowing the company to be more responsive to collaborating participants, thereby enabling faster and more accurate development and release of advertisements and partner promotions.

*ARA serves as a training vehicle for new brand managers.*

ARA serves as a training vehicle for new brand managers. For example, the new Sprite brand manager can use the system to more rapidly learn about the history of a brand, see its past promotions and advertisements, and understand how it had been positioned and marketed in the past. Functioning as an educational tool, brand managers are brought up to speed faster and the potential to "reinvent the wheel" is significantly diminished.

*High-resolution asset fulfillment is now significantly more automated, and self-service.*

High-resolution asset fulfillment — the process of creating and delivering requested assets in specified formats on specified media — is now significantly more automated, and self-service. This streamlines the workflow, decreases delivery time, decreases fulfillment costs, and relieves archivists from labor-intensive fulfillment tasks. This is a hidden cost savings as the archivists can now focus on other tasks and work to increase the quality of the archive.

## **Conclusion**

The Coca-Cola Company is one of the first organizations to move its advertising and brand history to a digital media environment. With the help of IBM, Coca-Cola employees worldwide now have online access to thousands of historic still images and video, including many of the company's most famous advertising and corporate icons. Creative staff can now leverage the intellectual capital and lessons learned from decades of advertising experience to develop and collaborate on future campaigns in a fraction of the time.

Management is excited not only because a digital archive has been created but also because the assets are no longer dormant. The company can now start to realize their value, in all the different ways — through additional licensing, faster promotion and ad creation, more knowledgeable brand managers, or increased market share. In this way, the Archive Research Assistant provides substantial competitive advantage and is helping The Coca-Cola Company transform how business is conducted.

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**Document #:** 26278

**Publication Date:** December 2001

**Published Under Services:** Rich Digital Asset Management;  
Document and Content Technologies

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