

March  
2022

apac

Association of  
Performing Arts  
Collections

# Options for digital preservation:

National Theatre Case study



Prepared by APAC Digital Preservation  
Working Group

# OPTIONS FOR DIGITAL PRESERVATION - NT CASE STUDY

---

## INTRODUCTION

We used The National Archives digital preservation repository systems spreadsheet in order to identify preferred suppliers based on information included in our Request for Information (RFI) document. A link to this guidance is included in Digital Preservation Series Part 2: Options for Digital Preservation. Due to commercial sensitivity we are unable to provide a complete copy of our RFI. This document will summarise the key elements we included.

We wrote the RFI in collaboration with a Project Manager in our IT department. This was of great help, specifically for the more technical aspects of the project and for integration with existing IT systems and networks.

## STRUCTURE OF REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

Our RFI contents page was structured as follows (also covered in part 1 guidance Making the case - writing a business case):

1. Introduction
2. Background
3. Objectives
4. Summary of Requirements
5. Workflow Requirements
6. Storage Requirements
7. IT Infrastructure
8. Queries
9. Timetable
10. Other Information
11. Appendices



## SUMMARY OF REQUIREMENTS

We included the following in our Summary of Requirements section as these were the key functions we needed any potential digital preservation system to have.

1. Fully OAIS compliant.
2. Manage assets with a wide range of file formats, including various image formats, Adobe project files, image sequences, graphics and FCP project files (as identified from our Digital Asset Register).
3. Allow addition of metadata tags and allow browsing of content via tags or as collections.
4. Allow for easy identification and upgrade of discontinued file formats.
5. Provide access to enable researchers to view material or watch screening of recorded performances without the need to separately download the material and view locally. This should include a sophisticated search facility.
6. Functionality to integrate with CALM from Axiell which the NT uses as its cataloguing system.
7. Provide a comprehensive workflow system to ingest data.
8. Provide flexible storage to accommodate the requirements of the Archive as the system grows.



## WORKFLOW REQUIREMENTS

The National Theatre Archive is a business archive that services a large organisation with a number of specialist departments. As such, we required a system with the capability to handle a large volume of digital material in a range of formats created across the organisation. This was particularly important in relation to content created by the NT's Digital Media (DM) department, for example video recordings of shows. The Archive already enjoyed a close relationship with DM, however as the volume and scope of content by DM increased, we required a product that could maintain and strengthen our workflows.

We were interested in obtaining a system whereby staff could access archive content from their desks and also potentially ingest content themselves. We have worked to establish retention schedules across the organisation and wanted a product that could make the transfer of material to the archive more efficient.

## STORAGE REQUIREMENTS

There are large volumes of digital material held across the organisation in a range of storage media including external hard drives. We identified an initial 100TB of commercially valuable video material held by the Digital Media department as a priority. The Archive also holds an approximate 100TB of digital material on local servers and LTO tape. In total we expected to require 142tb of storage in year one, 187tb in year 2 and 234tb in year 3. This was based on our Digital Asset Register and a generous allowance for business as usual processes. It was also assumed that not all data from Digital Media could be transferred immediately, so we required a buffer in year 2 and 3 to allow for the transfer of all this content over three years.



## APPENDIX C

One of the appendices was a requirements checklist. This was split into separate project areas:

- **Architecture** - covering storage inclusion, exit plan, search functionality, metadata, system upgrades, usage and ingest statistics, batch processing etc.
- **Support and system administration** - covering training and support, live and test environments, user community, service desk etc.
- **Integration** - covering integration with CALM, active directory, Mac and PC use etc.
- **Digital preservation functionality** - covering international standards
- **User set-up - staff** - covering access levels, concurrent users etc.
- **User set-up - researchers** - covering public access portal, disabling downloads etc.
- **Ingest** - covering batch upload, creating and editing workflows, progress charts etc.

We had 59 requirements in all, split into these sections, and each one was labelled essential, highly desirable, desirable or nice to have. We asked suppliers to identify whether they could deliver these requirements as part of the out of the box solution, optional module, additional customisation or as a third party tool. We then asked for details of the features and how they would be supported.

We would be happy to discuss our RFI with anyone planning a similar project, please contact Malcolm on [mmathieson@nationaltheatre.org.uk](mailto:mmathieson@nationaltheatre.org.uk).

# Acknowledgements

---

Acknowledgement for the creation and development of this digital preservation series go to:

**Erin Lee** - National Theatre

**Malcolm Mathieson** - National Theatre

**Arantza Barrutia-Wood** - University of Sheffield

**Bethany Johnstone** - University College London

**Robyn Greenwood** - The Royal Shakespeare Company

with special thanks to the wider APAC digital preservation working group.

---

Stay tuned for  
***Part 3: Moving Image Preservation***  
to be published Summer in 2022.

## Contact

✉ [info@performingartscollections.org.uk](mailto:info@performingartscollections.org.uk)

🐦 [@apac\\_ssn](https://twitter.com/apac_ssn)

🔗 [performingartscollections.org.uk](https://performingartscollections.org.uk)