

# Channel 4 Media Access Project

Channel 4 is a UK public service channel and has been commissioning and transmitting programs since 1982. It is partly funded through commercial activities such as the sale of advertising. Channel 4 is a multi-platform broadcaster and distributes its wide range of services on Freeview the UK's digital terrestrial TV service, digital satellite, broadband and mobile.

## The Challenge

Since 1982 Channel 4 has amassed a very large video tape archive which requires labour intensive day to day management and large amounts of storage space.

To increase access to archived material and to be able to offer new media services, such as Video On Demand and simulcasting to IPTV, Channel 4 needed to migrate from a tape-based to a file-based operation. Whilst delivering the operational benefits, the solution also had to reduce costs and increase operational efficiencies. A new concept for the broadcast process was required.

Pharos Mediator Enterprise was selected by Channel 4 to provide media management and a new workflow to facilitate such a large and complex change in working practices.

## Business Benefits of Mediator for Channel 4

- Increase revenue by offering new services
- Enter new markets with new formats
- Reduction in operating costs
- Reduced consumables
- Repurpose existing assets
- Collaborative desktop workflow
- Browse for 400 concurrent users
- New storage technology
- Minimum operational overhead

## The Solution

To manage the huge archive of material effectively and to preserve its program heritage, CH4 initiated the Media Access Project (MAP). This involved migrating its current tape based operation to a totally file-based acquisition, archive and media access system.

The Media Access Project uses a multi tiered storage architecture which is managed by Mediator transfer manager. Incoming programmes and clips are digitised to Omneon ingest servers. The high resolution files are then moved onto a central storage server provided by Isilon which also stores all the browse proxies. The 42TB Isilon iQ cluster comprises 8 nodes offering extensive bandwidth for immediate access to the stored material. The storage architecture is complemented by a Sony Petasite near-line archive which contains 2000 LTO-3 tapes, each of 800GB capacity, currently the largest LTO-3 Petasite in Europe. Archive management is by Xen Data under the direct control of the Mediator transfer manager.

Mediator Enterprise workflow ensures the quality of material, by only allowing the transfer of "approved" material into central storage. All material is available for browse at the desktop ensuring easy access to material within the digital domain. Material on the Isilon cluster is transcoded and transferred to Pinnacle servers for playback.

As well as traditional playback, the Media Access project provides Outgest and allows for delivery to new media projects. Material is copied to DVDs for internal distribution, copied to LTO-3 tapes for external archiving, copied to Digi-beta for external clients and provided over FTP for internal edit-suites and external clients. Material is transcoded and delivered for simulcasting on IPTV and for VOD.

Mediator enterprise provides complete file-based asset management, maximising the benefits of a digital operation and allowing the easy implementation of new multiplatform digital services.

### Kevin Burrows - CTO, Channel 4

"Our intention is to derive the full benefit of file-based operations by making the complete transition to server-based content handling and playback."



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## Why Pharos?

Channel 4 and Pharos have been in partnership since 1998 and continue to work on a range of new projects. Pharos offer Channel 4 technology, software integration services and provide a service level agreement which covers Mediator and 3<sup>rd</sup> party technology including Omneon and Xen Data.

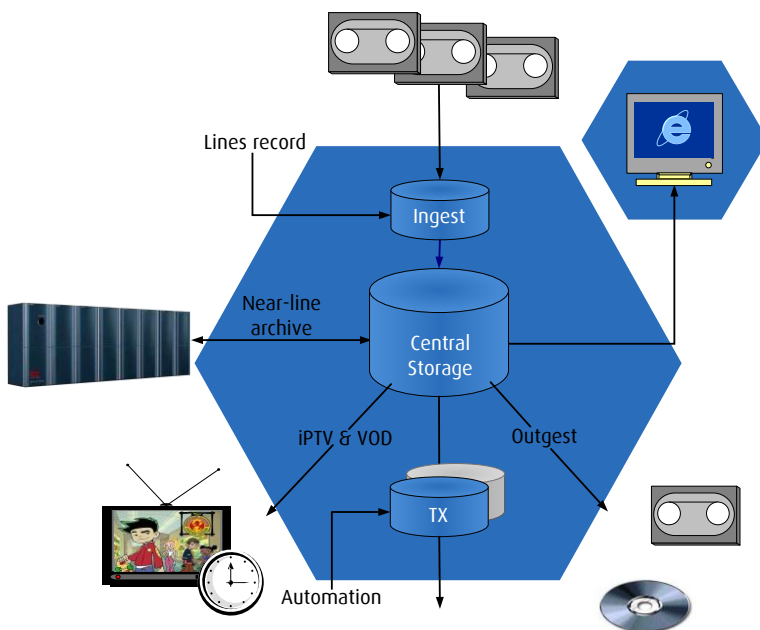
### Kevin Burrows – CTO, Channel 4

“Pharos enabled us to pioneer the use of server-based browsing of transmission content in 2003, reducing the need to circulate VHS preview cassettes within our Westminster headquarters. Pharos had worked with us to provided the backbone of our master control system, so the company was a proven partner for this new and more ambitious project”

### Robert Luggar – Technology Project Manager

“Pharos has always been very responsive and willing to listen when we have suggested extra functionality.”

Mediator manages ingest and file transfers between 3<sup>rd</sup> party technology



## Key Functionality of Mediator for Channel 4 Media Access

- Fast efficient ingest.
- Digitise once
- Enhanced quality control processes
- Desktop viewing at high and low resolutions
- Over 400 concurrent desktop users
- Multi tiered storage architecture
- Very high storage performance
- Resilient system architecture
- Integration with legacy equipment

## This case study

PHCS-3001.02 Channel 4 MAP

## Related information:

PHDS-3016 Pharos Mediator  
PHDS-3005 Pharos Rewrapper  
PHDS-1001 Pharos Playtime

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