

Competing through Photos on the Web

How Cumulus Delivers Content for the Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board

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Campaigning for the Dairyland State

Stimulating demand for Wisconsin's Dairy products

The Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board (WMMB) is the state-wide dairy marketing organization, established in 1983 by Wisconsin milk producers, that promotes Wisconsin's standing as America's Dairyland.

The WMMB targets the retail, foodservice, and food processing industries across the United States, media and publishing firms, and the American public at large. Since most of the state's raw milk is used to make cheese, the WMMB focuses much of its efforts on marketing Wisconsin cheeses.

The power of pictures

The WMMB works with supermarket chains, restaurants, national food distributors, Wisconsin school districts, and other constituents on promotional events and informational programs. For example, marketers at a supermarket chain may need help with new signage promoting Wisconsin cheeses. A nutritionist planning menus for a school district may be looking for new recipes featuring dairy products. A publisher producing a new cookbook may be seeking photos of cheddar cheese, wrapped in red and black wax.

Photography and graphic design are essential tools for communicating Wisconsin's milk marketing messages. The WMMB uses the power of pictures to compete for the mindshare and market share of American consumers. It now relies on Cumulus from Canto to manage all of its digital assets.

Making the Transition to Digital Media

An integrated communications program

The WMMB maintains an integrated corporate communications department, staffed with a graphic design team, to develop the content for its marketing campaigns. The design team manages and delivers hundreds of projects per year.

Lessons learned

- Implementing a digital asset management solution takes time. Learn from one project as you build another solution.
- Create a comprehensive plan for your digital asset management solution, focusing on how you organize, store, and deliver images to your target market groups.
- Be sure to tag your photographs and art work by the meaningful categories that make sense to your target market groups.
- Determine the formally defined categories, the ad hoc keywords, and the operational criteria you need to track, retrieve, and manage assets throughout their lifecycle.

The WMMB funds the photo shoots, creates the art work, and produces the collateral for trade shows, county and state fairs, supermarket promotions, gourmet food tastings, educational campaigns, and other co-sponsored activities. It then archives the photos in an image library, and seeks to reuse them as needed.

Transparencies, stored in physical file cabinets, are a bottleneck

But the WMMB had a major problem finding and distributing its photographs. Here's what was happening.

The WMMB maintains an extensive image collection of the Wisconsin Dairyland, and adds upwards of 1,000 new photographs every year. These include photos of Wisconsin farmers, farm families, farms, cows, cheese factories, and foods made with different types of cheeses. Over the years, the organization has assembled a sizable photo archive, more than 50,000 images in total, the majority of which are stored as transparencies in physical file cabinets.

In the past, accessing and reusing photos was a time consuming and labor intensive process.

- When staff members or third parties requested photos, they had to rely on an image librarian to find them within the collection.
- The image librarian, in turn, would have to browse through contact sheets of photos, select the images that best met the requestors' descriptions, identify the reference numbers, retrieve the transparencies from the file cabinets, and finally send them the physical assets.
- Moreover, if the requestor was from a publisher, business, or other external constituent, the image librarian first needed to send a usage agreement to the requestor (specifying royalty free reuse provided that the WMMB receives the credits), and then wait to receive the signed agreement before sending the requested photos.

Often the WMMB was not able to respond rapidly to requests from constituent groups. The WMMB needed to create a self-service environment, both for its own staff and for its external constituents.

The need for in-house capabilities

By the mid-1990s, the WMMB was feeling the pain of the transition to digital media. The graphics design team was swamped with unorganized sets of CD-ROMs. "We were receiving digital assets from all of the advertising agencies who did work for us, and needed to store the files online," reported Matt Wilhm, Director of Creative Services at WMMB. "Our color separator also offered to maintain our digital archives, but we needed to maintain control in-house."

"For a number of years, we tried to build something on our own, only to find that it was too expensive and too time-consuming. Finally we decided that we needed to sit down and take a close look at the whole project. We also knew we wanted to put our photos on the Web."

*LuAnn Gracyalny
Manager, Interactive
Communications.*

Under Wilhm's urging, the WMMB began to develop the in-house capabilities that would meet its needs for doing business in the digital age. At first the WMMB decided to digitize its entire archival photo collection. After an eighteen month project, the WMMB realized that it had selected a proprietary solution, suitable for a research library, but one which lacked the capabilities to index or distribute images over the Web, or to manage the continual updates of a marketing organization.

"For a number of years, we tried to build something on our own, only to find that it was too expensive and too time-consuming," explained LuAnn Gracyalny, Manager, Interactive Communications. "Finally we decided that we needed to sit down and take a close look at the whole project. We also knew we wanted to put our photos on the Web."

The business case for a digital asset management solution

By 2001, the WMMB had learned enough from practical experience that it was able to define its business requirements for a digital asset management solution. This included the ability to:

- Manage many different types of digital assets within a shared image library.
- Store images for easy and rapid retrieval.
- Search for images using keywords.
- Maintain high quality images, including those color corrected by a photo editor.
- Catalog assets by many different criteria, based on business needs.
- Support multiple internal users who can access the shared image library within an corporate Intranet, from either PC or Macintosh desktops.
- Provide public access to the image library over the Internet.
- Simplify the digital rights management process.

Once the WMMB defined the kind of solution it required, it surveyed several digital asset management solutions on the market, before choosing Cumulus. "We chose Cumulus because it is cross platform and supports many different file formats," Wilhm stated. "We looked at a number of competitive products but they were expensive. Cumulus was affordable. Out-of-the-box, we knew we could customize Cumulus to meet our needs."

From a technical perspective, "Once we looked at what we wanted to do, there wasn't anything else out there in our price range that could match the capabilities of Cumulus," Gracyalny remarked.

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*Matt Wilhm
Director of
Creative Services*

Implementing the Cumulus Solution

Taking the time to 'do it right'

The WMMB proceeded to work with a systems integrator and a professional librarian to implement a comprehensive solution using Cumulus. This solution was designed to:

- Substantially improve the organization's internal production processes.
- Ensure rapid access to photos by the general public over the Web.

"We took the time to 'do it right' by developing the business processes, the metadata, and the file naming conventions to streamline our digital asset management system," said Mary Litviak, Creative Services Coordinator and person responsible for the day-to-day administration of the image collection. "There was a bit of time invested in building the image collections and defining the metadata. We now have some pretty unique capabilities that made the financial and time investment well worth it."

The WMMB decided to exploit Cumulus' capabilities to maintain multiple libraries, to tag assets within the libraries by a comprehensive and consistent set of metadata, and to label files using a well defined file naming convention.

Maintaining multiple libraries

The WMMB now maintains multiple image libraries, each defined around separate business functions. The libraries include:

- Collections of digital photographs for use only within the organization.
- Collections of digital photographs available to external users.
- Art files, including Adobe Illustrator, Adobe Photoshop, and Quark files, produced by the graphic design team.
- Archival collections of scanned transparencies and art files.

Internal staff members, partners, and other approved users can log into the library designed for their needs. They can then search the library and download selected images on demand.

As shown in Illustration 1, all of the libraries are accessed through Cumulus, running on a central server. The graphics design team continues to use their Macintosh systems, while marketers and managers can rely on their Windows systems. Cumulus supports both native Macintosh and Windows desktop clients, as well as Web access through Web Publisher Pro. The WMMB has customized this browser-based access to the look and feel of its own Web site.

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*Mary Litviak
Creative Services
Coordinator*

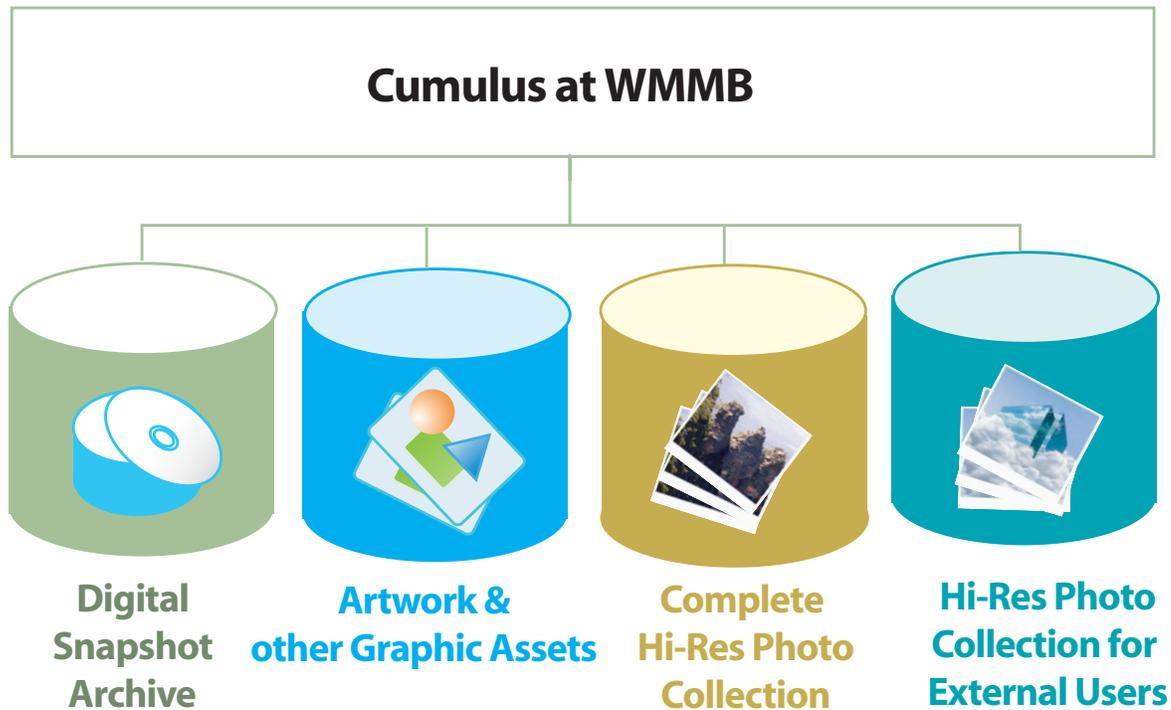


Illustration 1. Cumulus at the Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board provides access to many different image libraries, containing various photo collections and artwork.

Behind the scenes and transparent to their interactive experiences, all of the images are stored once on a central server. Cumulus manages all of the storage, access controls, searching, and retrieval for maximum efficiency.

A comprehensive and consistent set of metadata

The WMMB carefully tags all of the photographs, art work, and other assets within Cumulus by a comprehensive and consistent set of metadata. The WMMB is using the same set of metadata to tag assets across the multiple libraries. The metadata includes predefined categories, keywords, and operational criteria.

Predefined categories

The WMMB maintains a formally defined taxonomy of terms—topics and subtopics—for categorizing assets. WMMB personnel, contractors, and external users can then browse through the image libraries by these predefined categories. For example, the topic “cows” includes subtopics “calves,” “close-up,” “feeding,” “grazing,” “in-barn feeding,” and “milking parlor.” An image can be tagged by multiple terms. For example, a photo of a calf in a pasture can be tagged as both “calf” and “grazing.”

Keywords

In addition, the WMMB extensively tags images by descriptive keywords—terms that further define the contents of an image and help when searching for assets. For instance, a photo of a calf can be further tagged by breed (Jersey, Holstein), by surrounding items (tree, fence), or people (boy, farmer, veterinarian). A person searching for a photograph of a “Jersey cow” might find an item also tagged as a “Jersey calf.”

Operational criteria

Finally, the WMMB tags images by a set of operational criteria—attributes essential to maintaining assets within the image library. Some of these metadata attributes are descriptive. For example, every image has a title. Some of these metadata refer to related indexing criteria—such as the record name, the original publication, the cross reference number to a CD-ROM, or whether a physical copy of an asset is available.

An image librarian completes a cataloging form to define all of the metadata terms when adding an image to Cumulus, as shown in Illustration 2. The tagged images can easily be found by multiple different criteria.

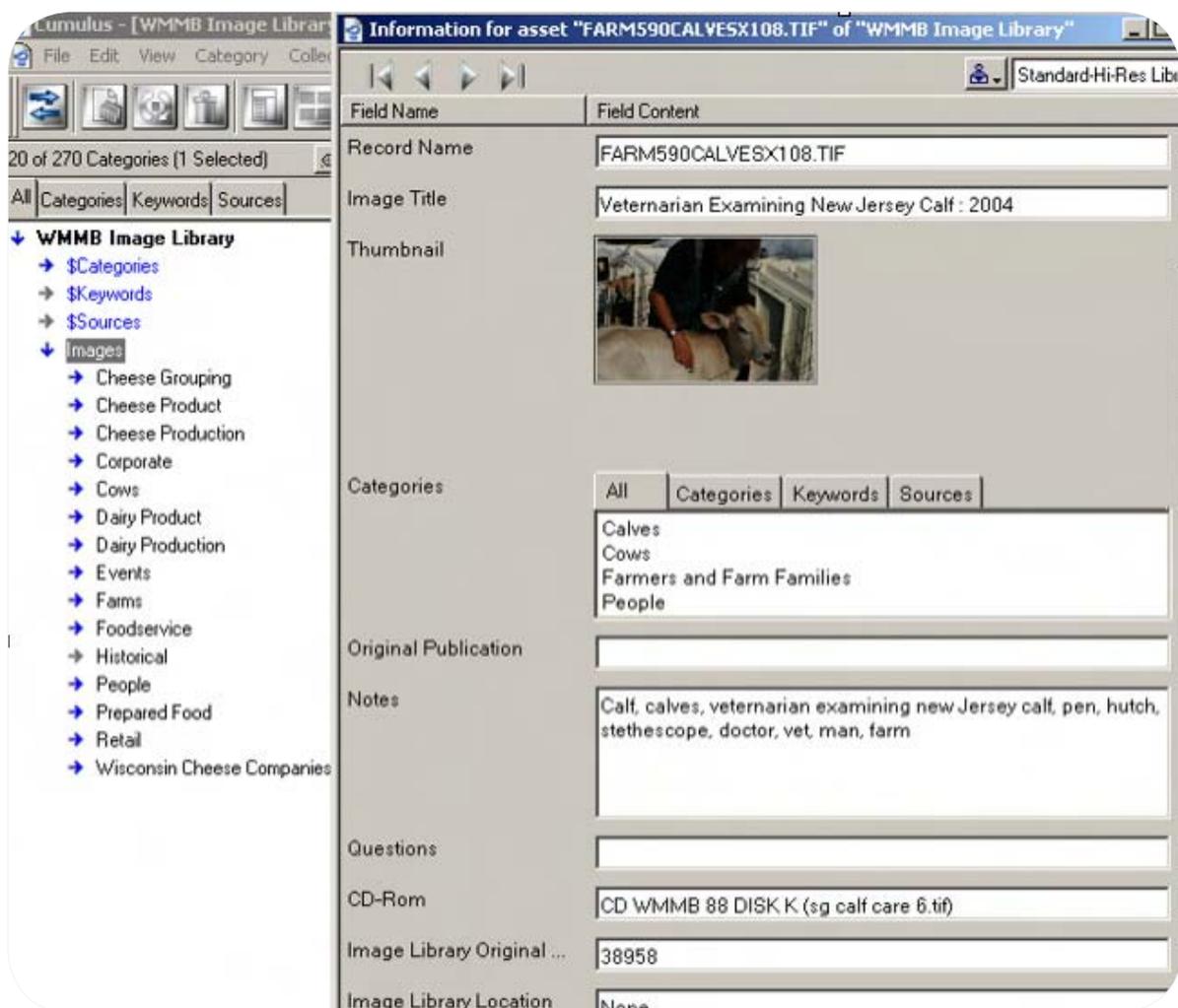


Illustration 2 :An image librarian indexes photos by defining an image title, and specifying categories from a predefined list. The librarian adds descriptive keywords in the notes field. Finally the librarian includes relevant operational level metadata, such as the original CD-Rom and the image library location.

A well defined file naming convention

The WMMB expects all of the images, stored within Cumulus, are likely to be downloaded and used by graphic designers, publishers, or other third parties. Consequently, the images need to have unique file names that can identify the files outside the shared library.

The WMMB has developed a set of alphanumeric codes for defining the operating groups within the organization, and the types of publications they produce. The WMMB can then create a unique file name for any image stored within Cumulus by concatenating the operational group, the type of publication, and the date.

An image librarian creates the file name for each asset stored within Cumulus by selecting the appropriate codes and entering them into the record name field of the cataloging form.

The Consequences of Systematic Cataloging

Speed and efficiency

Assets are systematically catalogued when added to the image library. The end result is improved speed and efficiency. “The search capabilities with Cumulus are extensive and very fast,” Litviak says. “Images that were once difficult to use because of their location and condition are now accessible and usable. Staff time once used to track down images and process image requests has decreased dramatically. The new photographs and artwork are processed and made available for use much faster than they were previously.”



Illustration 3. Industry partners can browse through an extensive and growing collection of photos about the Wisconsin dairy industry on the Web. They can search for photos based on predefined categories or related index terms. When they find a photo they want to use, they can download it once they agree to the copyright terms.

The WMMB now relies on Cumulus to manage approximately 5,000 high resolution photographs and other art work for use within the organization. Approximately 2,500 photographs are available for user-approved distribution, downloaded over the Web from the WMMB's external photo library.

The graphics design team relies on Cumulus to support its internal production operations. Photographs are now organized in a consistent fashion and little time is wasted rummaging through stacks of CD-ROMs to find particular images. "I can pull down photographs quickly to do my work," Matt Wilhm concludes from his perspective as Director of Creative Services. "We're saving time and money. Cumulus is giving us new opportunities to promote Wisconsin and the dairy industry."

Ensuring access by industry partners

Finally, with its external photo library now available over the Web, WMMB can fulfill a long, sought-after objective: providing photographs directly to magazine writers, publishers, foodservice, retail and media industries on demand, and with virtually no fulfillment costs.

WMMB provides easy access to its photo library—all that is required is a login and password, obtained through an authorization process, available to industry partners.

Partners with approved access who want professional photographs of the Wisconsin dairy industry can browse through the photo library on the Web, as shown in Illustration 3. They can click through pages of thumbnails or search by categories and keywords. Once they identify photos they want, they can add the images to a shopping cart and download them to their desktop systems, provided that they agree to credit the WMMB for its copyright of the asset. Cumulus includes a basic digital rights management capability.

In sum, delivering photographs of the Wisconsin dairy industry over the Web—the cows and calves, the people, the farms, the cheese plants, and the cheeses themselves—is an excellent way to campaign for *America's Dairyland*.

Cumulus provides the core infrastructure—the image library, the metadata management capabilities, the Web-based access, and the image download mechanisms—that enables the WMMB to compete for market share through photos on the Web.

Contact

For more information, contact your Canto sales partner. Or, you can visit us at: www.canto.com

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About Canto

Founded in 1990, Canto (www.canto.com) is the leading supplier of Digital Asset Management products and services, with more than 12,500 client/server systems installed worldwide. Canto's business focus is to deliver world-class solutions at a very competitive price to creative arts, publishing, and corporate communications groups, as well as to other industries.

The core product, "Cumulus," is designed to manage and archive all types of digital assets used in production, publishing, communication, and other workflows. It offers cross-platform and Internet capabilities that scale from easy-to-install and low-cost archiving solutions to globally hosted DAM systems.

About Bock & Company

Geoffrey Bock, Principal of Bock & Company, focuses on business strategies for content management and collaboration. An analyst and author with over twenty-five years industry experience, he tracks how organizations create, organize, and manage business information to sustain profitable relationships.

As a consultant and thought-leader, he advises software companies, end-user organizations, and government agencies in areas of business planning, technology innovation, and operational excellence. Geoffrey can be reached at geoffbock@gmail.com.