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REPRINTED FROM JANUARY 7, 2004

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USER REPORT

ICTN Expands Services With Apella

by Kenn North

Chief Engineer

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IRVING, TEXAS

As the chief engineer at Irving Community Television Network (ICTN), a department of the city of Irving, I make sure the residents are able to receive professional broadcasts on the local cable systems. We provide three channels of internally produced sports, daily news and entertainment programs, as well as live city council, planning and zoning, and building and standards meetings.

While researching storage area networks last year, we determined that a Fibre Channel server would be necessary for on-air playout of our internally produced programs. We chose Video Technics' Apella Video Clip Server (VCS) since it was SAN-ready and directly compatible with our Incite nonlinear editing system.

We also required a hybrid linear/non-linear environment for some of our toughest news-style "crash 'n go" editing. The Apella VCS can be controlled by an external editing system as though it was a VTR—we use the Editware Fastrack VS edit controller.

HARDY AND ROBUST

The Apella VCS is currently used as our playout server for promos and PSAs, and we find it to be hardy and robust. As we

produce more in-house programming and export to Apella directly from the Incite NLE timeline, these playlists will be aired directly from the Apella.

We will also use the Apella/Fastrack interface to create and ingest media directly to the Apella/SAN from tape. We are using the Rorke Data ImageSAN file management software and Rorke Data drive arrays for the SAN storage and management. The Apella VCS works seamlessly with the Rorke Data storage solution and we have confidence in the way it handles our video.

FLEXIBLE APPROACHES

As we develop our workflow, the standard functionality of the Apella VCS offers our producers a few different pre-production approaches. The Apella Batch Digitize interface gives us the ability to batch capture from tape with EDL import and eight user-definable metadata fields, while the SDTI feature provides up to four-times-faster-than-realtime VTR ingest.

Additionally, an internal proxy server automatically generates a low-resolution MPEG-1 proxy every time media is ingested into the Apella server via Batch Digitize, Record Dialog, or importing of AVI or QuickTime files.

Proxy file browsing and editing will be a very useful tool for managing clips and media residing on the SAN without tying up network bandwidth. I can preview the media files from any workstation on the network and make non-volatile edits that

are saved to a unique ID and are instantly available for playout.

Our systems integrator and Apella VCS dealer, CineSys, comfortably merged the different aspects of our requirements into an incredible production system. The company's familiarity with different manufacturers and equipment made the process of integrating into the existing plant relatively seamless.

Overall, the Apella VCS has been a cost-effective solution to cutting-edge video hybrid tape/disk editing, storage and playout. ■

Kenn North is the chief engineer for the Irving Community Television Network. He can be reached at knorth@ci.irving.tx.us. The opinions expressed above are the author's alone.

For more information, contact Video Technics at 404-327-8300 or visit www.videotechnics.com.

