ThirdLight

Case Study
The Postal Museum

Shaping the modern world

The Postal Museum is the leading resource for British Postal heritage. Its mission is to connect people through the evolving story of communications past and present. The museum uses an Enterprise package of Third Light's media software to manage more than 150,000 media files that document their collections.

In need of a solution

Before Third Light, the museum stored all of its digital assets on hard drives. The organisation of the drives mirrored the structure of the 'Calm' collection system used to document and manage the BPMA's items, but there were regular complaints from staff who could not find what they needed in a timely manner.

The **Postal** Museum

" Staff complained that browsing through folders for images took too much time.

One user estimated they spent half a day each week looking for the files they needed. "

The solution of choice

After comparing three image management solutions in detail, the Postal Museum agreed that Third Light had more features and cost less. They chose an Enterprise edition of our software, installed on their own IT infrastructure.

Sharing is simpler

All users of the Third Light software have the ability to create and share Lightboxes. The Museum team finds this extremely useful for staff to share files between themselves and with external agencies, such as the press and exhibition organisers.
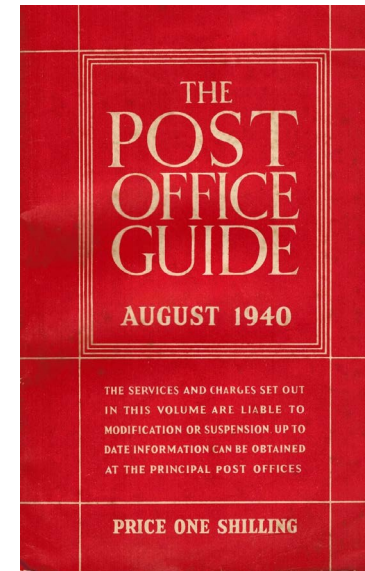
Easier viewing, tagging, and editing

With the Third Light software in place, the Museum gained access to tools it had previously had to get by without. These included:

- Easy viewing of digital images at full size.
- Tagging of digital images, with details including exchangeable image file formats.
- Cropping and reformatting of images.
- Use of images on the web; for use in social media and websites.

1957 4d Scouting Stamp, British Government, scan of original (Public Domain), Wikimedia Commons..

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What has impressed us from the start, and continues to do so, is the level of customer support we receive. Direct and rapid support from helpful people at Third Light means that problems are resolved quickly and with the minimum of fuss. More than that, they are open to new feature requests, and updates to the feature-set happen regularly.

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– Martin Devereux,
Digital Content Development Manager, the Postal Museum.

Success with software: User advice

After more than four years working with Third Light image management software, the Postal Museum staff reflect on their advice for adoption:

1. Let tags do the work

The Museum team warns against being too reliant on initial folder structures, to the detriment of tagging. Tagging make assets more findable in the long run whatever the folder structure, even when the files are moved to other systems. Third Light agrees: This is best practice.

2. Always enter metadata

In its original transition to the Third Light system, the Museum didn't enforce metadata tagging for reasons of expediency. The amount of time spent by central teams servicing requests for images from other teams has greatly reduced since IMS enabled self-service – but this could go further still, with better tagging.

3. Be open to evolution

The Collections team has been thinking about how it archives digital objects. The Post Office now offers digital services (also part of its ongoing heritage) and the archive of Royal Mail and Post Office from the 21st century will consist mostly of digital objects.

They point out that the Third Light software has many of the characteristics required in a repository of digital archives, and have suggested an 'authentication' feature as well as support for the storage of PRONOM-listed file types.

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The functionality of the Third Light system has grown steadily to incorporate changes to users' needs, such as plugins for Adobe Bridge, Lightroom, direct sharing to social media platforms and Dropbox.

Adding metadata and configuring the system is pretty simple and the level of reporting is great for tracking use and monitoring the way staff use the system.

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Third Light wishes to thank the Postal Museum's Ian Tolley and Martin Devereux for providing feedback for this case study. For more on the implementation of Third Light software at the Museum, please contact carol.parish@thirdlight.com.

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