

Dalet NewsPro at BBC Arabic Television

BBC World Service built a true multimedia content factory to launch its Arabic Television service and successfully position it on one of the most competitive marketplaces on the planet.

BBC Arabic TV originates in London and is free to cable and satellite viewers throughout the Gulf Region. Competing with al-Jazeera, al-Arabiya and other pan-Arab outlets, the Arabic language channel focuses on high quality news coverage. From the outset, aspirations went beyond simply creating a television platform. The project would augment BBC World Service's popular radio and web services by creating a true, multiuse, multimedia experience. BBC journalism content could accompany the audience throughout the day: with radio while driving to work, with the web while at work, with television at home in the evening; each medium would supplement and enhance the other.

the challenge

Set-up an integrated multimedia facility in a short time scale

There were daunting organizational and technical hurdles to overcome. More than a hundred journalists with Arabic and regional expertise were hired by the BBC and relocated to London. Many would adapt not only to new workflows and technologies but also to a new country and employer. Technically, several complex integrations were required to deliver the editorial vision for a seamless, file-based workflow for gathering, producing, sharing and broadcasting high quality news programming. The time scale was aggressive: fifteen months to build the TV facility from scratch. Simultaneously, the Arabic radio and online services and systems would be migrated and integrated into the new facility.

the solution

A MAM platform to empower an end-to-end file-based workflow

After a rigorous tender process, Dalet and IBIS were selected for different roles in the television production chain; both would integrate with the existing AP ENPS newsroom computer system. With its multimedia mindset, BBC mandated a

"hot desk" approach: from any desktop, journalists would have the necessary tools to produce content in any or all media types. In addition, content and metadata would be shared globally across departments. Further integrations and media exchanges with radio and online systems were needed. When Bob Gentry, Associate Director of Consultancy at Marquis Broadcast, became Program Delivery Manager for the Arabic Multimedia Project in early 2007, he understood the complexity of multiple systems integrations. He fostered a partnership between Dalet and other vendors to ensure that mission-critical systems would interact smoothly. *"We brainstormed the best way to integrate the systems together to produce the workflow. It was one of the project's great successes,"* says Gentry. *"It took a lot of detailed work over a period of time, but it would be true to say that the core architecture, workflow and development was all put together relatively quickly and simply."*

marquis

Marquis Broadcast Consulting services ensured the successful deployment of Dalet NewsPro at BBC World Service.

Dalet provides the foundation for content production at BBC Arabic TV including Arabic wire ingest, video ingest along with many essential tools for desktop production. *"Dalet performs the basic acquisition and ingest,"* says Gentry. *"It performs all the archiving, media asset management, numbering schemes and so on; it provides desktop editing, storage, archiving and all those other pieces that touch around the outside. You have the newsroom system [ENPS] sitting on top of that to drive the scripting [...] you have the playout [IBIS automation with Omneon servers], and graphics and other ancillary systems to operate as a channel. But Dalet operates as the core content processing and asset management function on the television side."*

The integrations between systems are transparent, never getting in the way of working journalists. DV25 content is ingested via 10 ports on the Omneon server or by FireWire connections at the desktop. From any Dalet workstation, journalists

news.bbc.co.uk/hi/arabic/news/
London, UK

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Mr. Bob Gentry
Associate Director
at Marquis Broadcast
and Program Delivery
Manager for BBC Arabic
Multimedia Project

www.dalet.com

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can browse video content as it arrives, edit in high resolution (up to and during final transmission), view wires, write a script in AP ENPS, and then record a voice over in Dalet. An Edit Decision List (EDL) is produced and then rendered over a *placeholder* by a background server process, to produce the final package for playout. Integrations and XML exchanges between Dalet and IBIS meet the BBC's unique requirements for this *placeholder functionality*. The majority of packages are edited at the desktop and published in Dalet straight to the transmission system and a few Apple Final Cut Pro editors are available to add finesse to longer stories and promotions.



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Dalet enables clip and metadata exchanges between the BBC Arabic service's radio system and the BBC Jupiter production system. Dalet also installed Dalet Video FIFO recorders to provide clean feed recordings of the broadcast channel output. These FIFO (first in-first out) recorders give instant access to studio and live content, enabling journalists to quickly repackage on-going or past interviews, debates, or breaking news for future use. FIFO recordings are also used for archiving. Dalet integrates tightly with the Xendata Hierarchical Storage Management (HSM) system and Qualstar tape library, providing search and browse of low resolution video, and expanding metadata capabilities. *"There's a lot of descriptive and nontechnical metadata that can be used over and above the standard BBC metadata set,"* says Gentry. *"Not only that, Arabic has a complexity to it, with phonetic spelling and the language itself. In Dalet, descriptive metadata can be added at any stage in Arabic or in English and it's searchable by journalists in phonetic Arabic."*

the benefits

A cross-platform production and playout platform delivered on time and on budget

The journalists received hands-on, product and workflow training and there was a pilot stage before the channel's successful launch. The Dalet desktop provided a unified working environment and the journalists were fast learners. *"I think the ease with which they were able to pick it up in a very tight time scale is a mark of how well the integration of the products and how well the products themselves can be used,"* says Gentry. BBC Arabic Television is currently airing 12 hours daily and has plans to expand to 24/7 later this year. With Dalet empowering the production workflow, content is moving seamlessly across different platforms.

The project met its time, budgetary, technical and multimedia workflow and sharing goals. From Bob Gentry's perspective, the advantages continue to grow. *"We're now into the environment of using file-based news acquisition to its full advantage and that is definitely happening every day,"* says Gentry. *"You can see the channel is very flexible; it's producing high quality news, it's meeting the editorial vision and it's doing that in a way that can only be achieved when you have this very flexible set of systems working together as well as they do."*

infrastructure

130 Dalet workstations
(100 with Dalet MediaCutter
desktop editing tools)

HP application servers

Exanet clustered storage (23 TB)

Omneon Media

Spectrum media server

Qualstar tape library (52 TB)

integration with AP ENPS,

BBC Jupiter, Jutel RadioMan,

Xendata HSM and IBIS automation.