



CASE STUDY

Crown Media Selects Lattus Object Storage to Extend Online Storage for Content Explosion

Crown Media Family Networks, one of the nation's largest providers of family-oriented video content, found itself challenged to keep up with sharp growth in original content production and distribution that threatened to swamp its workflow infrastructure. The right answer was combining Quantum's Lattus™ object storage with StorNext® 5 workflow-optimized storage. With this new approach, the workflow scales easily as the content grows, and all assets are readily available and automatically protected from loss through multi-site, object storage-based archive.

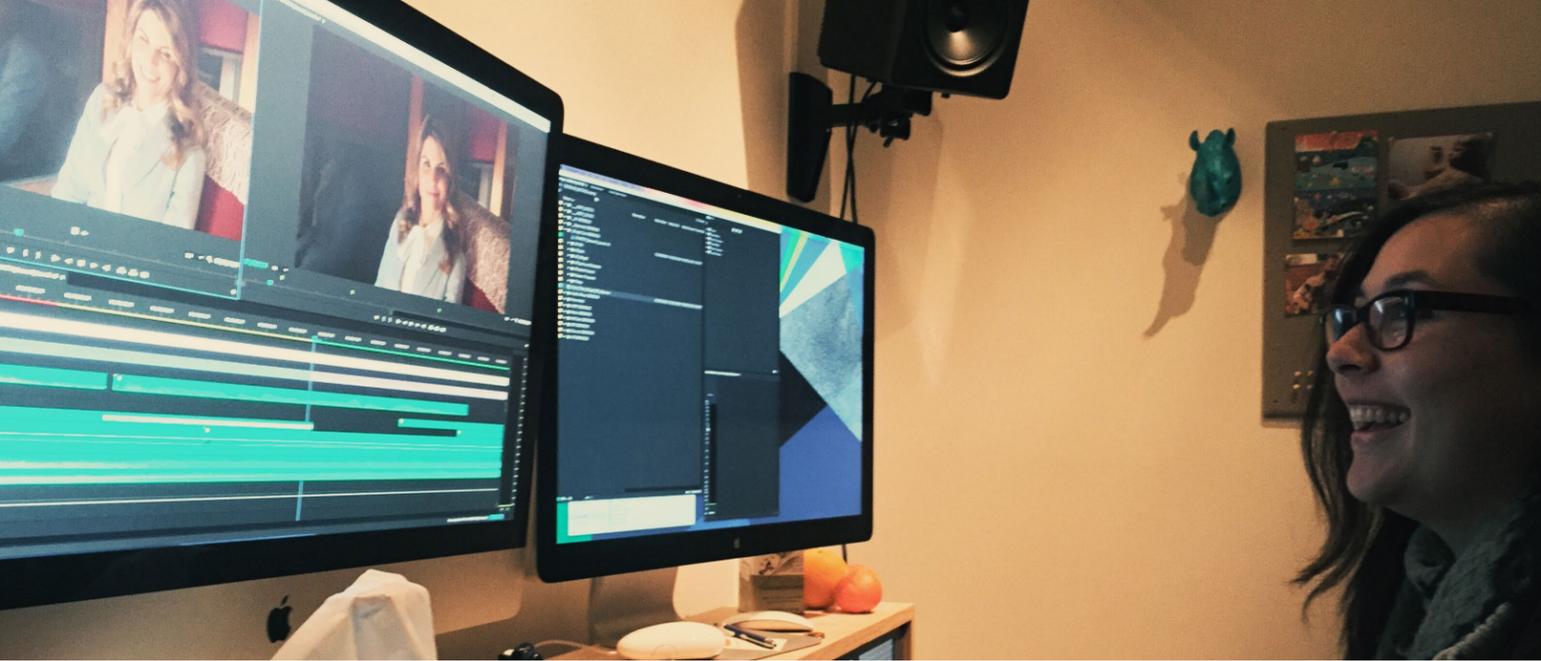


FEATURED PRODUCTS



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Roy Burns, Crown Media's Director of Digital Asset Management



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Roy Burns, Crown Media’s Director of Digital Asset Management

Media asset management was provided by Levels Beyond Reach Engine and transcoding by Telestream Vantage. In the legacy system, files were ingested into the online storage for active editing and moved to the tape archive when they were no longer active. Whenever existing content was needed for re-purposing or re-broadcasting, it was pulled out of the tape archive and staged back on online storage.

“About two years ago, because we had to double our online storage and had so much data that couldn’t be managed easily, we decided then it was time to look for another kind of solution,” says Burns. “The strain created by so much more new content meant that we were continually buying new online disk storage, managing larger tape archives that were hard to access, and not protecting content as well as we should. It was unacceptable.”

The Crown Media IT team talked to integrator Integrated Media Technologies (IMT) to explore solutions.

“IMT, in our opinion, is the leading reseller in the media space in the Los Angeles area,” says Burns. “They have helped so many other companies make the shift to fully digital media production and HD workflow that when they make recommendations, we know that it’s based on what really works.”

EXTENDING ONLINE STORAGE WITH OBJECT STORAGE

Based on IMT’s recommendation, the Crown Media team decided to move to Quantum StorNext 5 appliances and Quantum Lattus object storage. StorNext 5 provides storage management and continuity with the company’s previous online storage network from Active Storage / Apple, while Lattus object storage extends its online storage by providing a higher-speed alternative to tape archives.

Lattus uses object storage to create asset repositories that can hold up to hundreds of petabytes, spreading the data across a large number of disk resources.

The data objects can be distributed geographically to provide a self-healing environment that is both more scalable and more resilient than RAID arrays.

The Crown Media Lattus configuration began with 500TB of usable capacity, spread between the company’s Los Angeles headquarters and a second site near Denver. For added resilience, an additional controller was added at a third company site in New York. The configuration provides full protection for all the assets in the repository against the loss of any of the sites.

WORKFLOW COMBINES ARCHIVE AND PROTECTION FUNCTIONS

In the new system, content is ingested and transcoded, but now is also immediately copied to Lattus, replicated from the California to the Colorado site as soon as it is brought into the system.

“This initial backup step is very important for us,” says Burns. “It gives us two copies in different sites immediately, so we get much higher levels of protection than we had before. Best of all, the process is automatic, which reduces the load on our IT guys—it completely eliminates the overhead and delays of a separate backup process.”

When content is no longer being actively used, it’s removed from the online storage, leaving the only archived copies in the Lattus extended online storage. The editors, however, continue to see all the content through StorNext and Reach Engine, making retrieving files a transparent process that is fully integrated with the team’s media asset management.

“When files are stored in the Lattus archive, editors get them back almost instantaneously, much faster than before. That’s important for us, because we pull content out of the archive literally every day. Plus, we see everything through Reach Engine so we have a single point of management and control for all workflow assets.”

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SOLUTION OVERVIEW

- Quantum StorNext M660 Metadata Appliance
- Quantum Lattus Object Storage (500TB)
- Quantum StorNext QXS-1200 Storage (300TB)
- Quantum StorNext G302 Gateway
- Levels Beyond Reach Engine media asset management
- Telestream Vantage transcoding

KEY BENEFITS

- Scalable object storage archive provides petabytes of scalable archive with fast, disk-based retrieval times
- Object storage automatically creates copies of content, replicates it between sites, and provides site loss protection, eliminating the need for separate backup and providing higher resiliency than RAID
- Integration of storage management software, archive, and media asset management provides a single point of management, simplifying the workflow and increasing staff efficiency
- StorNext 5 continuity with Active Storage and Xsan solutions provides high-speed online storage network, protecting the company’s investment in storage infrastructure
- Appliance approach simplifies installation and ongoing management

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Director of Digital Asset Management, “So it is absolutely critical that we can get to them quickly whenever we need them. We also have to make sure they have the very highest level of protection.”

RAPID GROWTH CHALLENGES WORKFLOW STORAGE

For Crown Media, the storage infrastructure struggled to keep up with a rapid increase in content, coupled with an explosion of formats and platforms.

“Our work has seen a dramatic upswing in the last few years,” explains Burns. “In 2013 we produced 29 movies. By 2015 we almost doubled that to 56. The schedule for 2016 calls for 78. We realized nearly two years ago that our existing storage systems could not support that kind of growth.”

The previous solution was built around 160TB of online RAID storage, a Quantum tape-based StorNext AEL Archive, and Quantum’s StorNext collaborative workflow software.

Crown Media Family Networks is the industry leader in producing and distributing family-oriented original content, both episodic television and feature-length motion pictures. In addition to airing on its own Hallmark Channel, Crown Media content is available on a wide variety of platforms, including Netflix, iTunes, Apple TV, and other over-the-top platforms.

The Crown Media workflow is storage intensive. Content from production teams is ingested into the company’s workflow storage, and media files are copied into the archive for data protection. The content is pulled immediately into media asset management, where it is logged, edited, and—on completion—transcoded for distribution and then archived. The editing team also pulls assets out of the archive to create promotional material and prepare for re-distribution, often years after the content is created.

“Crown Media’s business depends on these assets,” explains Roy Burns, Crown Media’s

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CrownMedia

FAMILY NETWORKS

FASTER, HIGHER-CAPACITY, STREAMLINED ADMINISTRATION

The media operations team at Crown Media reports that the new system solved their immediate workflow problems while giving them room to scale quickly and easily to support future growth.

“With Quantum’s Lattus object storage, we have an essentially unlimited archive capacity that lets us bring back assets much faster than before—at disk speed,” says Burns. “We’ve eliminated backup but have much better protection—there are always at least two copies of the assets, giving us full site loss protection. We’ve truly simplified operation and centralized administration using Reach Engine and StorNext 5.”

Deploying Lattus was Crown Media’s introduction to using object storage; the team worked closely with IMT and Quantum to get past the startup phase and into production. “Working with Quantum and IMT was fantastic,” Burns says. “They really knew how to make the system work and were great about advising us about how to get the

performance and resilience we wanted while staying within our budget. The fact that the systems all use an appliance approach was also a plus—it makes installation and ongoing management much easier.”

“When we started this project, many of us thought that it looked like overkill—that we’d need a couple of years to grow into it,” says Burns. “But a year later, we realize that we’d be dead without it—we wouldn’t be able to function—and we’re in the process of doubling the Lattus capacity. It’s been invaluable in increasing the efficiency of our workflow, from ingest to edit to delivery and re-use.”

“Customers like Crown Media are increasingly requesting storage options beyond RAID and LTO tape,” says Jason Kranitz, Senior Vice President of Sales at IMT. “The trick is the solution must integrate seamlessly into the existing workflow. With StorNext, Crown Media can not only easily deploy Lattus to take advantage of object storage today but also have the flexibility to add other technologies in the future, including Quantum’s Q-Cloud™ cloud storage.”

ABOUT CROWN MEDIA

Crown Media Holdings, Inc. is the corporate parent for the portfolio of cable networks and related businesses under Crown Media Family Networks. The company currently operates and distributes Hallmark Channel in both high definition (HD) and standard definition (SD) to 90 million subscribers in the U.S. Hallmark Channel is the nation’s leading destination for quality family programming with an ambitious slate of TV movies and specials; original scripted series, including *Cedar Cove*, *When Calls the Heart*, and *Good Witch*; as well as some of television’s most beloved sitcoms and series. Hallmark Channel is also home to the annual holiday franchise, *Countdown to Christmas*, featuring a lineup of 24/7 holiday programming. Hallmark Channel’s sibling network, Hallmark Movies & Mysteries, is available in 62 million homes in HD and SD and is one of America’s fastest-growing cable networks. Hallmark Movies & Mysteries features a unique mix of original movies and acquired series focusing on the lighter side of the suspense and mystery genres. The network is also home to the annual holiday franchise, *The Most Wonderful Movies of Christmas*, as well as presentations from the award-winning Hallmark Hall of Fame library. In addition, Crown Media Family Networks includes the online offerings of HallmarkChannel.com and HallmarkMoviesandMysteries.com.

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