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USER REPORT

DAD Eases Audio Delivery, Playback

Chicago Public Radio Likes the ENCO System's Modularity and Utilities Such as Dropbox, Gateway

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CHICAGO When I arrived at Chicago Public Radio a little over a year ago, the station was just beginning the process of replacing its broadcast platform. Discussions between the IT and engineering departments with staff and vendors were a daily occurrence. What did this new system need to do? What functionality would we gain by choosing option X? What functionality would we lose?

After careful consideration and much research, we decided that ENCO's Digital Audio Delivery, or DAD, system was the hands-down best option for our organization. We were able to maintain a work flow that was close enough to what our on-air staff and producers were used to while adding back-end functionality that eliminated most of the manual upkeep and maintenance the old system required.

The first thing that stuck out as a major selling point was how modular the system was. Each computer could be designed for a specific function. From basic workstations to backroom powerhouses, we were able to pick and choose from a list of options.

Chicago Public Radio is unusual in that not one hour of programming is automated. ENCO's list of utilities made it easy for our content providers and on-air staff to deliver audio to the system and play it back with ease. Creation and



The author (right) stands with WBEZ IT Director Dmitry Shub and the station's DAD.

down by not having to purchase a full system for every user and also limited the number of people that required training to on-air staff and board operators. This was accomplished by using the ENCO utility called Dropbox.

Dropbox essentially is a network folder that is continually scanned for new material. When a new file is found it is ingested into the DAD database automatically. It also can be converted to/from multiple formats, normalized and placed into the appropriate organizational unit by using a predefined rule set in the Dropbox config file.

We were incredibly happy that Dropbox made it so easy to deliver audio to the new system. However, we wanted to avoid installing the DAD software on

The Gateway function lets audio move between libraries, from the general network to a Dropbox location, from a defined FTP/remote network location to local storage.

modification of playlists is a breeze. Organization of on-air audio is simple and automatic. I am still impressed by how flexible the DAD system is while maintaining the reliability we demand.

Accessing DAD's files

One of the major design features we wanted to incorporate into the new system was to provide a way for staff and content providers to deliver audio without having to access the actual DAD interface. This allowed us to keep costs

every computer in the facility, so we needed a way for staff to access the files in the DAD database remotely. The ENCO utility WebLib provided this functionality.

WebLib looks directly at the DAD database or a copy thereof, and provides a simple, searchable interface from any computer in the station. We have our WebLib system configured to point to a copy of our main library, which has a different delete schedule. The difference in delete schedules allows for access to

files that are no longer needed for broadcast. We also have the WebLib library include a PCM and MP3 copy of most every file to give users an option when downloading.

Copying the on-air library, converting formats and defining delete schedules are done through the application called Gateway.

The Gateway utility is a robust and powerful application for broadcast. It uses a rule-based system for transferring any amount of audio data from one location to another. The entire background opera-

tions system of Chicago Public Radio is handled by Gateway (a 7 MB utility). Audio can be moved between libraries, from the general network to a Dropbox location, from a defined FTP/remote network location to local storage. It is simple, powerful and reliable.

Technical support is important to us; if we chose the DAD system we'd have to have access to the support we needed. We have not been disappointed. Shane Toven and Matt Walther were (and still are) incredibly helpful during the initial setup and implementation of the DAD

system.

The combination of preproduction by Chicago Public Radio staff and ENCO's design team led to a broadcast platform that suits our organization. Its flexibility and reliability provide the range of solutions necessary for a station of our size.

For more information, contact ENCO in Michigan at (800) ENCOSYS (362-6797) or visit www.enco.com.

