Hitachi Data Systems Enables Innovative Information Delivery for Australian Associated Press

Australian Associated Press (AAP) was established in 1935 to support Australia’s metropolitan newspapers by bringing international news into the country. Since then, AAP has become a diverse news service with news wires, industry databases and data services. However, as it grew, the company accumulated information silos, many carrying critical services and new types of unstructured data. Expansion not only provided innovative and effective multimedia, publishing and business solutions, but it also created a drag on productivity, and spiralling and costly IT challenges. To support this growth and ensure business continuity, AAP opted for an infrastructure solution based on Hitachi Unified Storage.

Challenge
With about 650 employees around the world, AAP’s mission stands strong: To provide the Australian media (private and public sector) with a cost-effective, unbiased and reliable comprehensive news and information resource. Unlike many worldwide news agencies, AAP is not funded or influenced by its government.

Following its mandate to continually evolve, innovate and give a comprehensive and relevant resource for Australian journalists, AAP had reached a point where its information systems (originally built for linear newswire reporting) required an overhaul. With services such as racing and sport information, customer relationship management (CRM), information distribution, news monitoring, analysis and other information services, far more data was being created and used throughout the organization. The situation became worse as aging hardware struggled to keep pace with growing capacity demands. To further challenge the growing infrastructure, AAP acquired Media Research Group. The Melbourne-based, media monitoring and analysis company had its own data centre, which was added to the existing data “islands” within AAP.

Benefits at a Glance
- Real-time, asynchronous replication across 3 data centres.
- Single, unified platform.
- Support for mission-critical applications and services.
- Robust infrastructure ready for structured and unstructured data growth.

Peter Woods
Director of IT
Australian Associated Press

Knowing that Hitachi Data Systems is a pragmatic engineering company, which never overpromises or under delivers, we were confident in its ability to deliver the promised software and performance improvements.
For an organization that depends on the timeliness and availability of its information, the ability to innovate and quickly provision services is paramount.

Behind AAP’s challenge was the changing media consumption habits driven by digital media and new devices. This challenge will continue with the digitization of media assets, overall growth in rich media content, and the need to deliver it to new platforms. AAP needs to be able to flex to new consumption habits and provide information in a timely manner without introducing complex new workflows, formats or processes.

Solution
Following an extensive competitive review of the technology available from EMC, HP, Dell, IBM and Hitachi Data Systems (HDS), AAP selected HDS as its preferred supplier for the upgrade.

Peter Woods, director of IT at AAP during HDS solution implementation, said: “With an aging infrastructure, it was not economically viable to invest additional money in increasing the capacity of the old system. Instead, we made the decision to invest in new infrastructure.”

“Knowing that we had the opportunity to re-engineer the system from the ground up, we were careful to choose an IT partner that would have reliable infrastructure and the vision to understand our broader challenges. Architecturally, Hitachi Data Systems had the best experience in our sector and the most pragmatic understanding of our needs.”

During the tender and design process, AAP and Hitachi Data Systems identified a software solution that would give the Sydney and Melbourne sites complete replication and redundancy capabilities.

“IT was crucial for us to eliminate silos and unite the services with Hitachi Unified Storage in both Sydney locations and in Melbourne. Data redundancy and single management capabilities across all data centre assets were also key to the design of this solution,” Woods said.

Benefits
Hitachi Data Systems solution provides real-time asynchronous replication between the geographically separated data centres delivering business continuity for mission-critical services and applications.

Combined with Hitachi Unified Storage, Hitachi TrueCopy Extended Distance asynchronous remote replication software simplifies the data replication and recovery process and enables normal business operations to resume in minutes, rather than hours or days following a primary site outage. The software is ideally suited to deliver duplicate data from one HDS storage system to another, across metropolitan distances.

“With Hitachi Data Systems, we have a technology partner that allows us to build on our existing infrastructure as we’re looking to address these challenges in the future, all managed from a unified system with one common interface.”

Peter Woods
Director of IT
Australian Associated Press
AAP further enhanced its business continuity solution with Hitachi Universal Replicator, software that can serve multiple data centres. It enables tight, recovery point objective (RPO) time management capabilities and continuous and consistent data copying, even in the event of a network outage for added data protection insurance.

“This investment in our infrastructure will enable us to expand our current range of services while continuing to provide clients with the highest quality of service,” Woods said.

On the results of the upgrade, Woods was only positive.

“Silence is golden. Since the implementation, we have only positive feedback from the business and systems are purring. The performance improvements have been delivered and our ability to support the business is improving demonstrably,” he explained. “In terms of data replication, the redundancies in place are hugely assuring for our business units, should they ever need them.”

A Look Ahead

As AAP continues to innovate and introduce new services, the company can rely on Hitachi Data Systems. Hitachi modular storage architecture allows AAP to add further infrastructure and compute and data management capabilities under the same management system.

“From the broader business perspective, the investment in our systems, infrastructure and services ensures that we can continue to capitalize on the enormous growth in demand for our media services. Our clients will benefit from our ability to deliver real-time content and the business can be assured that our infrastructure caters to the high availability and performance demands of today and in the future,” Woods explained.

As far as future plans for system improvements, Woods said: “As the volume of unstructured data continues to grow in our organizations, we want to enable innovation by removing silos and operating off a standard, companywide content platform that is tightly integrated with our new data centre assets.

“With Hitachi Data Systems, we have a technology partner that allows us to build on our existing infrastructure as we’re looking to address these challenges in the future, all managed from a unified system with one common interface.”