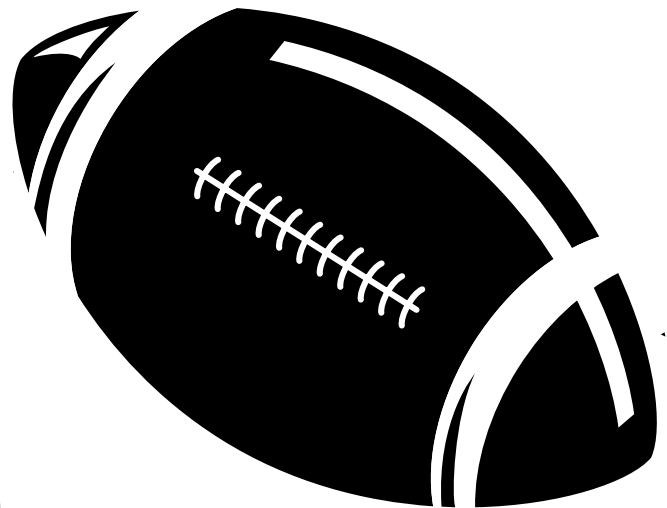


CONNX™ Case Study

NFL Films

**The Winning Solutions -
Veteran production company manages vast
football video library with CONNX.**

- NFL Films successfully tackles massive video cataloguing project using CONNX.
- Company scores efficiency gains using CONNX to create new barcoding system - without having to rewrite its database.
- Organization's game plan includes orderly migration to PCs, with CONNX providing on-going access to its VAX system.



With dozens of pro football teams playing on Sunday, and hundreds of news outlets seeking first-rate video for stories airing mid-week, NFL Films faces a level of pressure rivaling that encountered by the players themselves. To help producers of sports programs satisfy fans' insatiable appetite for dramatic and comprehensive coverage, the organization must rapidly catalogue and quickly retrieve key segments from the vast quantity of footage it shoots weekly during the season.

Every Sunday, award-winning NFL Films dispatches two crews to each NFL game. For high-profile contests, the standard coverage - a ground level camera and one above the press box, - is augmented with long lenses and an end zone camera. Four or five games may also have special sound crews. The 16-millimeter film is processed, edited and transferred to video immediately after the games.

Dave Franza, Director of Information Technologies, had developed an extensive "Vault", or tape library system used by the production,

scheduling, sales and accounting departments throughout NFL Films since 1988. However, Franza saw both a need and opportunity to migrate the system from a VAX/RMS-based one to the more robust client/server platform, which would eventually provide a much more substantial footage logging, archival and research system for producers.

After researching several software vendors and commercially available logging packages, NFL Films decided to develop the system in-house, thereby retaining all rights to the finished product. Franza's tools of choice were Powerbuilder and SQL, running on the Windows NT based network in place at NFL Films as of May, 1995. Enter one John Murphy, an experienced Powerbuilder and systems programmer hired by Franza to consult on the logging system project.

As a first step, Murphy needed to interface the company's legacy Vault application to a new logging one designed to record content. The new client/server application would provide access to the RMS files on

the VAX, with the new content-oriented database housed on clients. In addition to the information about logistics, the new logging system also needed to display two other key pieces of information from the RMS files: a master file record that exists for each tape, and an activity log for each time a tape leaves Vault.

In a previous job, Murphy had used DBIntegrator as an interface, but found it slow and hard to work with. "It seemed to blow up on large results sets," he recalls. "If we had a few thousand rows to retrieve, it went belly up." He had replaced DBIntegrator with CONNX, a software tool from SolutionsIQ in Bellevue, Washington. Among its many features, CONNX provides read/write access to RMS files on a VAX. It also includes an ODBC driver to provide fast access to RMS files without a major programming effort. Murphy knew that CONNX would enable him to meet the interfacing challenge he confronted. "When I got this job, there was no question what I would use," he says, "especially when I learned that CONNX included an ODBC driver."

NFL Films Case Study continued

Murphy used Powerbuilder for Windows and Windows NT to create the new, content-rich logging system. Between Monday morning and Thursday afternoon, a logger watches each video and records what's taking place. The program is all menu-driven, with drop-down boxes containing the various categories of content. These categories enable the logger to note details about the tape with great precision - that a throw was a bomb, over the middle or a sideline pass, for example. The logger can also key in additional information that does not have a predefined category - such as "coach shouting at a player from sidelines."

"There were three major advantages to CONNX," according to Murphy. "First, CONNX works - especially with large results sets. Second, CONNX has special fields defined that help implement RMS files, particularly in the date and numeric processing areas. That means our old COBOL and Basic program structures still work. And finally, there are real performance gains. CONNX is much faster than the alternatives."

Over the next two years, NFL Films will continue their move from terminals to PCs. During the transition, many producers will keep using the Vault system on the VAX. "We currently have about 100 users with

old VAX terminals, as well as 60 PC users." Murphy explains. "As we add PCs and switch to new software, CONNX makes it possible for us to continue to run our old key searches from a terminal or a PC. Without CONNX, we wouldn't be able to preserve the data that's on the VAX." For those users still on VAX terminals, Murphy re-did some of the screens, bringing a new look to the old VAX system.

After the success using CONNX to create the new logging system, NFL Films decided to use the product to extend the Vault system by creating a barcoding system. NFL Films uses the barcoding capabilities to print barcodes for the tapes, drawing on information in the Vault system. "CONNX enabled us to augment Vault, instead of having to rewrite it," Murphy says. "We can use the data from the barcoding program without touching the database on the VAX. Using CONNX also enabled us to develop a whole new set of PC tools and a new relational database - again, without touching the database on the VAX."

According to Murphy, for NFL Films' high-profile, high-visibility and high-stakes needs, the key benefit of CONNX is that "it makes the impossible possible. As far as I'm concerned," he says, "it's the whole ball game."

NFL Films produces numerous television series and syndicated specials seen throughout the year in over 100 countries, and houses the largest sports film library in the world. As the teleproduction arm of the NFL, their works include "NFL Films Presents," "Road to the Super Bowl," team highlight films and an annual series of home videos. Headquartered in Mt. Laurel, NJ, NFL Films shoots and catalogues over 3,700,000 feet of film a year.

SolutionsIQ develops and markets CONNX and was recently cited as one of America's fastest growing companies by Inc. Magazine, and one of the nation's fastest growing technology companies by Deloitte & Touche and NASDAQ. CONNX is a unique client/server programming tool that allows Windows applications to read and write to enterprise data without the need for lengthy or expensive re-engineering of legacy systems. Founded in 1979 and headquartered in Bellevue, WA, SolutionsIQ also provides high-end software consulting and development services and software contracting services to clients such as Microsoft, IBM, STARWAVE and Oracle Corporation.

The logo for SolutionsIQ features the word "SolutionsIQ" in a serif font, with a stylized arch over the "i" and "Q". A trademark symbol (TM) is located to the upper right of the "Q".

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