News Workflow Is Rich Niche

By Douglas I. Sheer

Modern TV news handling began to change dramatically in the 1970s with a 'rough cut' transition from 16mm film capture and film editing to electronic camcorder capture and linear tape editing. The audio side for TV and radio depended on reel-to-reel recording, such as that provided by the ubiquitous Nagra portable audio recorder. That news technology now has become a complex series of related equipment systems called 'news workflow.' The latest report from my firm, DIS Consulting Corporation, called *News Workflow World tm 2008* studies the relationship between the different components and calculates the dimensions of a diverse range of gear. Just counting what we have deemed the core equipment genres: news room computing systems, news editing systems, news automation, news servers, news graphics systems, news storage systems (both Local, Shared and Mass), news prompting and closed captioning for news, the aggregated global value of those systems purchased in 2008 has been calculated at more than $2.4 billion US dollars. At the same time, the owned/installed systems of the same genres comprise an almost $5 billion US dollar base of equipment. And, that doesn't include the capture phase of the picture – because we cover camcorders and studio cameras in separate reports. And, of course, to the degree that you combine the many accessories and software that accompany these main system building blocks, the dollars go even higher.

At the outset, we have known, from seeing the news application feature so prominently in so many of our single-genre reports, such as *Video Editing World tm 2008* and *Broadcast Servers World tm 2008*, that it must represent a huge financial amount when considered as a related group of gear, which motivated the DIS creation of the survey. The field data was collected over the past few months from news operations, primarily from news directors, at TV stations, Cable stations and Radio stations, worldwide. Those respondents were queried as to their ownership and buying habits of news-related gear, by brand and type in the above product genres as well as their budgets and revenues from news, their influences and their most important technology concerns. In addition, the news report focused on the actual material flows from system to system, identifying and illustrating the most common pathways.

This year, in particular, because of the Beijing Olympics and the American presidential election, as well as the various wars, the news business has been undergoing heightened investment, in the very systems we covered in the report. Additional newsroom computing and news editing seats, more server channels, greater storage capacity and more investment was seen in virtually all aspects of the news workflow equipment range. At the same time tremendous technological pressure was felt and reacted to because of the demand for HD in news, sports and even weather, rippling through the broadcast world. And, the concomitant upgrades in radio audio for news. That demand translated into purchases and more plans for conversion that are expected to maintain the primacy of the news related technology spending over the next five years.

Of the major genres of news related equipment being bought in the biggest numbers, newsroom computers are running at a rate of over 70,000 units a year and will represent over $387 million dollars in 2008. Next to that sum, the $274 million being spent in 2008 on news related editing systems is pretty impressive too. But, the single most impressive category is news related servers that will represent over $700 million dollars, worldwide, in 2008. That's a rich niche!

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