

Film & Sound Archives: Channel 4

DURING 2001, IRON MOUNTAIN UNDERTOOK A MAJOR TRANSITION OF CHANNEL FOUR'S TAPE ARCHIVE FROM ITS EXISTING LOCATION TO OUR FACILITIES IN WEST LONDON.

This was a highly complex project that required Iron Mountain to move over 320,000 individual media items, while ensuring that all media was available for retrieval by Channel Four at any time - day or night.

In order to minimise service disruption, the entire operation was undertaken at night. Iron Mountain made 370 separate pick-ups over 51 days to complete the massive move of tapes.

Once delivered to the Iron Mountain vault, all items had to be scanned on to the system and made available for delivery to the customer the following morning. On one occasion, 11 staff were involved in transporting, scanning and racking 20,700 VHS tapes in one night.

Iron Mountain spent four months carefully organising the complex operation. This involved not only planning the uplift, but also developing new vault areas to accommodate Channel Four's tape library. Iron Mountain increased the capacity at two of its facilities and installed customised racking in both to meet the exact storage requirements of the customer.

Channel Four is now secure in the knowledge that its vital tape archive is stored in the safest possible environment.

“ We had two major aims at the outset of this project - to ensure all our videotape media would be securely stored in a state-of-art environment at the most competitive price commensurate with firstclass service levels, and concurrently undertake an audit of our entire broadcast and VHS tape archive accumulated since 1982.

Initially we had some misgivings that it would be possible to transfer this quantity of items with minimal operational disruption in a heavily constrained timescale. We recognised from the outset that this would require the closest co-operation from all concerned and that jointly devising a realistic and practical strategic plan in the greatest possible detail was the key to success.



In addition it was essential the Channel 4 videotape database was updated in parallel with the tape movement process to allow accurate location of media items required throughout the transfer period. We were well aware that unexpected disruption at any stage of this project would result in delay from which it would be hard to recover without missing critical deadlines at best, and could result in a temporary inability to locate urgently needed videotapes at worst.

The Operational and IT departments in our respective organisations worked closely together to ensure that neither of these concerns were realised; both the physical transfer and the electronic tracking of all tape movements being accurately and reliably achieved throughout the entire process.

We were delighted that this critical project was completed on time and on budget with minimal impact on day-to-day operations - and it doesn't get much better than that in the real world! **”**

Richard Eagle

**Manager Technical Operations and Deputy Chief Engineer
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