



Telling Africa's story to the world

Telling Africa's story from Africans' point of view is the mission of Africa Media Online, the agency representing African media professionals to the global market.

"In the 'information society', if we are to create some semblance of global information democracy, it is important that Africans are heard from their perspective," says Africa Media Online's David Larsen

His company has created systems to gather, market and deliver media to users and markets around the world. For the benefit of their world-wide customers, media from a comprehensive range of African picture libraries, museums and archives are available in one place, and managed in conformity with global standards. As well as using the latest digitisation technology, e-commerce systems make financial transactions easy, secure and quick.

The technology driving all this is MEMAT 2.0 (Media Market Technologies), which is an online content management system, developed in-house using open source technology, and launched in 2004. This software provides each member organisation with the facilities to organise their libraries and archives, backed up by training and technical support.

As well as being relatively inexpensive, it is highly scaleable. This means that it can power the collections of individual photographers such as South African news photographer, Rajesh Jantilal, but also the multiple collections of a media organisation such as Cape Town's Oryx Media and the world-class Bailey's African History Archive, based in Johannesburg, South Africa.

In addition to running their own websites, African picture libraries and media archives recognise that they benefit by working together in a form of 'co-opetition'. They can do this by also offering their images through 'africanpictures.net', which David Larsen describes as an 'online superstore'.



Clearly this offers great customer benefits as the global audience can find most content in one convenient place.

David Larsen, a photographer and journalist, set up Africa Media Online Pty. (Ltd.) in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa in 2000, along with Paul De Villiers, an internet entrepreneur. Paul sold his shares in 2006 and new investors were attracted to the company, including Kabusha Technology Investments Pty. (Ltd.), a black-owned enterprise which now controls the single largest shareholding in Africa Media Online. This relationship demonstrates a clear commitment to social transformation, according to David Larsen. The investment structure brings financial resources to the company and at the same time creates an organisational structure which is fitting to the local cultural and political environment.

In its first seven years of business, Africa Media Online has concentrated on photographic images but its systems have always been designed for multiple media forms. The company is aligning itself to the convergence of media so that it will be able to also offer documents, sound and video files. This will mean an even better service for its global distribution partners and clients all around the world.

Links

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[More about Organisational Structures](#)

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