

User Generated Content

Building a community and transactional structure around user generated content

A USER EXPERIENCE SERIES CASE STUDY

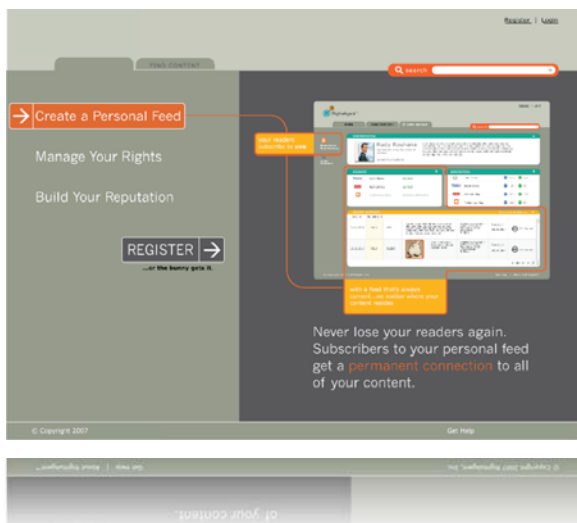
How do you build a loyal base of content authors, a value proposition to media outlets, and a profitable business model all in one Web application?

Introduction Our client had a unique proposition – to give content authors online the ability to build their reputation and make money through reuse of their content. The company needed an application that would give their users the tools they needed to manage content licensing across their sources – from blogs to photo albums, podcasts to Web video – all targeted toward a user community that demands excellence, and thrives on rich Web experiences.

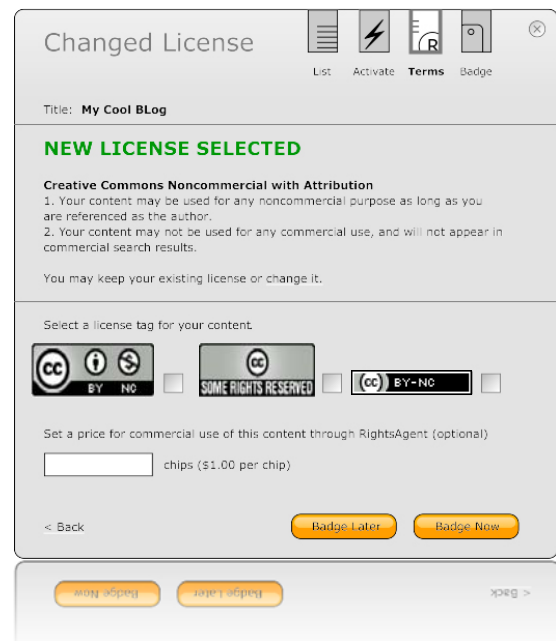
1 The user community is as diverse as the content they create, covering everything from casual photos on Flickr to commercial technology and legal podcasts, and even Harvard academic blogs. Users in this space are accustomed to and have come to demand rich experiences from sites like Flickr, FaceBook, and NetVibes. At the same time, they are extremely dedicated to their content, and become nervous about anything that feels unstructured or that does not have a well-defined workflow – qualities that sites in the Web 2.0 space to date have utilized extensively.

Developing an application to meet the needs of such a broad and demanding audience requires in-depth research, and judicious application of cutting-edge technologies – creating a rich and functional environment while providing confidence to users through precision workflow and state-awareness.

The homepage



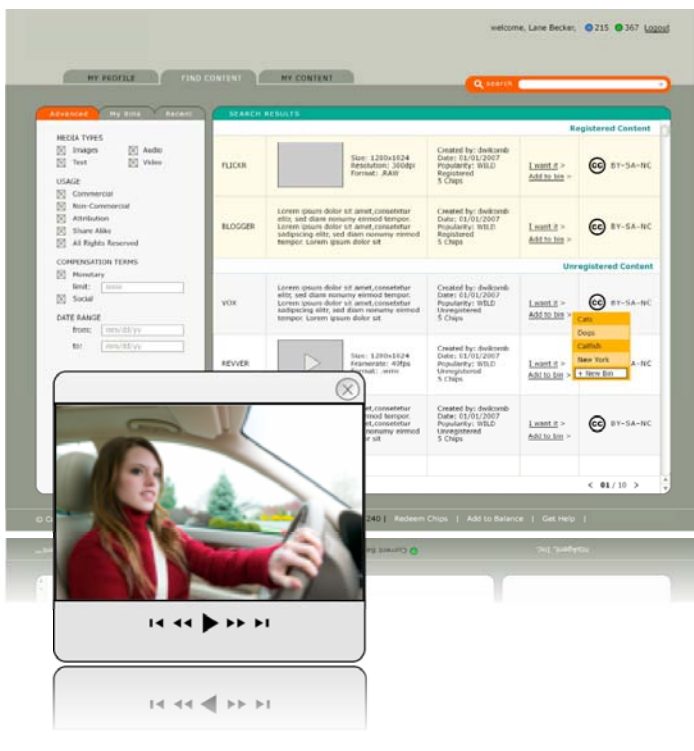
Content Source Licensing



2 The first component of the application allows users to register and license their content sources. User research revealed a very strong reluctance to change anything about the way in which content was authored or published. Users had developed an attachment to their tools, and the client needed to take a “hands-off” approach. To that end, the Axis team designed the application such that the location and method of publishing content is completely separate from the method of licensing it. Users are asked to provide the URL of their content; the application then parses the content at its existing location, authenticating the user, assigning a license, and even setting up a consolidated RSS feed, all without the need for content authors to change anything about their tools or their process.



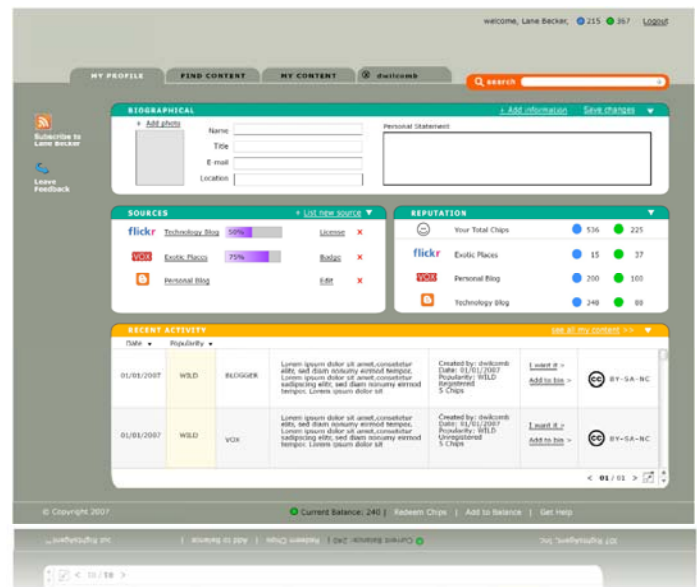
3 The second component of the application allows both registered and unregistered users to search the catalog of licensed work. An AJAX-driven search interface enables dynamic search filtering and content previewing, providing a search experience that is fast, responsive, and functional. Search results may be viewed or played depending on media type, narrowed based on multiple criteria, added to “bins” for later use, or licensed for reuse, all without a page refresh.



Search, filter, preview, save, and purchase content from one screen

4 While the business model is centered around license management, the greatest value to users may actually be the ability to consolidate their online content into an author identity. Utilizing a rich, modular profile page, the Axis team built an identity management tool focused on joining an author with their sources, providing reputation tracking, consolidated author feeds, recent activity listings, and biographical information. The result is a rallying point for community interaction – a comprehensive view of an author and their work around which to build dynamic circles of reuse. Upcoming functionality expands upon the profile and community creation to include centers of activity, LinkedIn-type network building, community visualization, and more. The power of the service is ultimately based on the activity of its users, and the application is designed to encourage, enhance, and capitalize on that activity in a flexible and ever-expanding way.

Author profile page



In Closing

The client's service needs to be sensitive to the changing needs and trends of a diverse and demanding audience. Axis designed an application that embodies the client's value proposition – a solid core of license management at the center of a dynamic and evolving world of online content reuse and community involvement. With a flexible information architecture and ideas for the future, our client is ready to take user generated content to the next stage in its evolution.

