

Feasibility Assessment: Transitioning from Fauxdora to an Open Source or Commercial DAM System

Created by Joe Barricella & Michael Reece

Introduction

This report assesses the feasibility of transitioning from *Fauxdora*, a robust and flexible homegrown Digital Asset Management (DAM) system to a commercial or open-source alternative. Webinars and online searching were key resources used to identify potential solutions.

The *Digital Collections Symposium with AM Quartex* provided insights into a commercial DAM platform, highlighting its capabilities in digital asset management, user engagement, and integration with preservation systems. Meanwhile, the *Introduction to Fedora Workshop* focused on the open-source Fedora repository, emphasizing its strengths in digital preservation, metadata flexibility, and community-driven development. This report incorporates findings from these events, outlining the advantages and limitations of both approaches as well as another possible solution.

Assessment of AM Quartex (Commercial Application)

Event Attended: Digital Collections Symposium with AM Quartex

Date & Time: Wednesday, February 26, 2025 7:00 AM - 12:00 PM (UTC-08:00) Pacific Time (US & Canada)

Overview:

The symposium explored the capabilities of Quartex, a commercial digital collections platform developed by Adam Matthew Digital. It emphasized its ease of use, digital asset management efficiency, and integrations with digital preservation systems such as Preservica.

Pros of AM Quartex:

- **Turnkey Hosted Solution:** Eliminates the need for in-house server infrastructure and IT management.
- **User-Friendly Interface:** Clean design and intuitive navigation for administrators and end users.
- **Integrated Workflows:** Built-in tools for digitization, metadata entry, and publishing.

- **Metadata Standards Support:** Compatible with IIIF viewers, Dublin Core, and other schemas.
- **Public-Facing Customization:** Offers branding and presentation options for digital collections.
- **Preservation Integrations:** Enables long-term preservation strategies through partnerships with systems like Preservica.

Cons of AM Quartex:

- **Proprietary & Costly:** Subscription fees may be prohibitive for institutions with constrained budgets.
- **Limited Backend Control:** Restricted flexibility for customizing backend features and database configurations.
- **Metadata & Workflow Constraints:** May not fully accommodate highly specialized metadata requirements.
- **Vendor Lock-In:** Migration challenges due to tightly integrated metadata and digital assets.
- **Less Community-Based Development:** Limited opportunity for open-source contributions and feature enhancements.

Conclusion:

AM Quartex provides a well-integrated, polished solution for digital collections management, but its cost structure and proprietary nature pose long-term sustainability concerns. Given our need for deeper customization and control, it is not the optimal choice currently. Further evaluation of open-source alternatives will continue.

Assessment of Fedora (Open-Source Application)

Event Attended: Introduction to Fedora Workshop

Date & Time: Tuesday, March 25, 2025 12:00 PM - 2:00 PM Eastern Time (US & Canada)

Additional Attendee: Michael Reece (Lead Developer)

Overview:

The virtual workshop introduced attendees to the capabilities of Fedora 6.x, focusing on its strengths in digital preservation, flexible metadata management, and migration strategies.

Key Topics Covered:

- **Technical Overview & Resource Management:** Features like Oxford Common File Layout (OCFL) for robust storage and preservation.
- **Migration Toolkit Demonstration:** Guided migration process from Fedora 3.x to Fedora 6.3.
- **Community Integrations:** Usage of Camel Toolbox for seamless system integrations.

Pros of Fedora:

- **Open Source & Community-Driven:** Eliminates licensing costs and supports collaborative development.
- **Preservation-Focused Architecture:** Supports versioning, fixity checking, and OAIS compliance.
- **Highly Customizable:** Enables tailored metadata modeling and workflow design.
- **Metadata Standards Compliance:** Supports MODS, Dublin Core, METS, and more.
- **Strong IIIF & Linked Data Integration:** Enhances discoverability and interoperability.
- **Institutional Control:** Provides full backend access for data management and security.

Cons of Fedora:

- **High Setup & Maintenance Overhead:** Requires significant IT infrastructure and expertise.
- **Steep Learning Curve:** Complex architecture may require extensive onboarding and training.
- **Upgrade & Migration Complexity:** Architectural changes necessitate time-consuming transitions.
- **Smaller Vendor Ecosystem:** Fewer turnkey support solutions compared to proprietary platforms.
- **Resource Intensive:** Preservation-focused features might require increased storage resources.

Conclusion:

Fedora offers robust digital preservation and customization capabilities but demands significant technical expertise for deployment and maintenance. While the application aligns well with our need for greater control and customization, careful planning for infrastructure and training is required.

Recommendations

Based on the analysis, the transition from Fauxdora to an alternative DAM system should consider the following factors:

1. **Customization & Control**
2. **Cost Considerations**
3. **Sustainability & Scalability**
4. **Preservation Needs**

The suggested outcomes below are only preliminary findings. A deeper evaluation of open-source platforms and potential hybrid solutions is recommended before we make a final decision.

Suggested Outcomes

AM Quartex

AM Quartex offers an interesting solution for digital asset management, providing a turnkey hosted system with integrated workflows and preservation partnerships. However, despite its strengths, the platform's proprietary nature, high subscription costs, limited backend customization, and potential vendor lock-in make it a less suitable option for our current and future needs. Given our requirement for greater flexibility and long-term sustainability, AM Quartex does not appear to be the right choice at this time.

Fedora (Most Likely Also Using Islandora)

Fedora and Islandora work together within a digital repository framework, with Islandora leveraging Fedora Commons to manage and preserve digital objects. Drupal and Apache Solr handle the user interface, content management, and search capabilities.

Migrating from a homegrown system like Fauxdora to complimentary setup of a Fedora back end and an Islandora front end presents several complex challenges. Fauxdora, while tailored to the specific workflows and metadata structures of our institution, may not have easily translatable features or matching data structures in Fedora + Islandora. Transitioning

to a system like Fedora + Islandora requires not only data migration but also significant remapping of metadata, file structures, and potentially rewriting of custom scripts or user interfaces. Additionally, the extensive institutional knowledge embedded in Fauxdora—deeply integrated with local infrastructure—has resulted in system dependencies that may be challenging to separate or work around during the migration process.

Another challenge lies in resource allocation. Migration is a resource-intensive process, involving staffing for data cleaning, system configuration, testing, and training. Even with the benefits of a robust, standards-compliant system like Fedora + Islandora, the upfront investment in time, staff expertise, and IT infrastructure must be carefully weighed. Further complicating the decision is the potential loss of features or workflows unique to Fauxdora that may not be directly supported by Fedora or other platforms without extensive customization.

Open-sourcing Possibility

An alternative path worth additional investigation is open-sourcing Fauxdora. This approach could provide several benefits. By publishing the source code and documentation, we could foster a community of users and contributors who might help improve and support the platform long term. Open-sourcing also increases transparency, facilitates external collaborations, and allows us to maintain the system's custom features that have proven effective within our local context. Furthermore, it could attract external funding or institutional partnerships for ongoing development, positioning Fauxdora as a Windows based, flexible alternative for institutions with similar needs who do not have Linux developers on staff.

Ultimately, while migration to a mature platform like Fedora + Islandora aligns with broader community standards and sustainability goals, open-sourcing Fauxdora may offer a route that preserves institutional investment, supports continued customization, and contributes back to the digital preservation community. A more formal assessment, involving feedback from users and stakeholders comparing these paths would help determine the best direction for managing and supporting our digital collections infrastructure moving forward.