



# RWF Collaborate to Keep Memories Safe with EditShare

RWF World founders Gwynne Roberts and Sadie Wykeham have embarked on a 30-plus year mission with a single purpose: to tell the world about human rights violations through the eyes of its survivors. Through the course of their journey, these truth-seekers have informed the world of late 20th-century injustices and genocides through a number of groundbreaking stories.

Their renowned work has earned RW Films major recognition, including an Emmy Award for Outstanding Investigative Journalism for documentary, "Saddam's Road to Hell," and the Edward R. Murrow Award for Best TV Documentary on Foreign Affairs for "Iraq's Killing Fields." Proving RWF's innate ability to factually document human rights violations over time, footage excerpts from "Iraq's Killing Fields" were used as evidence during the trial of Saddam Hussein for his crimes against humanity.

With a focus on the Middle East, and more specifically Iraq, Gwynne and Sadie have established a vast network of connections that have allowed them to amass an unusually large archive of footage shot in the Kurdistan region of Iraq during the past 60 years. The irreplaceable content, which now contains interviews of more than 700 survivors of the Anfal,

Saddam Hussein's genocidal campaign against the Kurdish people during the late 1980s, serves as the foundation for RWF's The Kurdistan Memory Programme (KMP). The ambitious research project documents the triumphs and tragedies of the Kurds in modern times and aims to inform the world about the significance of Kurdish history.

"The Iraqi Kurds thought of it as vitally important to have a filmed testimony of what happened during Anfal," comments Sadie Wykeham, co-founder, RWF. "Anfal survivors were keen to tell their stories. It's critical for us to capture their testimony, and even more so to keep them safe so their stories can live on."

With the production team located in UK, America, Brussels, Hong Kong and Iraq, RWF needed to re-visit the access to their archives. "At the beginning of this project, we had very little digital infrastructure that would properly manage the volume of content we were about to deal with, never mind allow for global access," states Tom Roberts, IT and post production supervisor, RWF. "We knew we needed to move to a platform that was not only secure and could hold a mass amount of content, but that would also allow us to collaborate around the world. We found those capabilities in EditShare."

The RWF team first began shooting interviews for the KMP in 2009 with a Sony PMW-EX3. Soon after, they added a Canon 5D and Nikon D800 using an Atomos Ninja external device for recording from the SLRs. “Simply put, the SLR cameras were more portable. For the territories we needed to work, this was key,” Tom says.

But using an assortment of cameras resulted in a plethora of formats to work with. “In the beginning, all of our media was stored on individual drives. If we needed to cut anything with material stored on a particular drive, we would import it as an MXF into a separate drive attached to the NLE. We were essentially duplicating the archive which was both time and space consuming.”

RWF utilises Avid for editing and began standardizing media into the DNxHD format to simplify the media management. But with the sneakernet set-up, the storage multiplied quickly. The team reached out to EditShare for a solution. Tess Booyesen, archive and postproduction manager at RWF World, recalls the evolution of the storage infrastructure. “We initially started with a small EditShare Metro, which eliminated the need for duplicating media, as content was copied directly from the camera. We then upgraded to EditShare Energy and eventually on to the full media management platform that consisted of Flow, XStream and Ark, giving us tremendous media oversight and the ability to realize the full potential of the archival material.”

RWF invested in an EditShare XStream HT 32TB workflow storage solution with integrated Flow and AirFlow Media Asset Management. They also purchased an EditShare Ark 2U Tape Library, building a robust media management infrastructure designed to securely store decades-worth of valuable content. Flow’s clever media management tools offload manual tasks, such as logging on Microsoft Excel spreadsheets, while opening doors for collaboration with access to media from any Flow-enabled location.

Tess elaborates on the workflow benefits of the new platform saying, “Flow really improved the level of detail we could capture and the way we could track it. Not only were we able to track the data that was once

tracked in the Excel spreadsheet in Flow, we are able to search from any RWF location and pull up the media with all of the related information. This is a significant improvement in the way we are able to do our research.”

Flow manages media ingest straight to the EditShare XStream simultaneously, transcoding material into DNxHD and creating a proxy database of searchable assets. Flexible metadata forms let the team log footage details against a specific project, such as “Historical Event,” “Kurdish Culture,” “Tribes,” “Political Party,” “Religion,” and more. Each Flow Asset contains information such as copyright, language, location and other important attributes that make searching deep into the RWF archives much faster, and with better results.

“Because it’s digital and fully integrated, EditShare has made it much easier to back up content and make sure it is kept safe in the archive,” says Tess of the ability to back up their interviews. “It takes just one pass for ingest – no need to copy media from one drive to another. We log the important details and set the media to be stored in the tape library. Instead of combing through spreadsheets to find a specific shot, we can just search the Flow database and review the media right from our desktops. With a click or two, we can pull the actual file from the archive and restore to the main EditShare storage.”

Flow serves as the control layer over the EditShare Shared Storage and Ark Archiving, tracking media assets and managing migration of media from one storage platform to another. Tess’s colleague, Tom, echoes the value of the new workflow: “Because we were storing media on so many drives, it was hard to get your head around the content and what you actually had in front of you. Having a system that encapsulates all of the content in a way that is digestible for not only editors, but our researchers as well, is incredibly valuable.”

The end goal is to have EditShare Ark eventually maintain the entirety of the RWF archive. Tom explains, “We have an array of legacy content that came from various VTRs such as Umatic and DigiBeta. This existing archival content is being migrated to the

EditShare Ark and once that content is co-located, we will be able to search, review and retrieve it as easily as the content we capture today.”

Though the team is not in full edit mode with KMP, they are leveraging some of the cutting edge remote collaboration features in AirFlow. Tom explains, “While the primary use of AirFlow is for the team in remote locations to access the archive research or to do translations, our DOP, Kawa Akrawi, who spends part of his time in Iraq, along with our edit producer, Helena Appio, who is based in Hong Kong, use AirFlow to edit content and share packages with team members back in the UK. This type of collaboration was impossible before the installation of Flow.” And because AirFlow is a private cloud-based production tool, RWF can ensure that politically and personally sensitive content that they capture is safe and secure.

Sadie talks about EditShare and its future use saying, “While right now we are doing research and continuing our interviews for KMP, we also have plans to make documentaries and EditShare is a key component that will continue to help us tell our story. It’s much more than storage. EditShare is a creative tool that allows us to better mine our vast archives in their entirety and in a manner that brings that critical piece of content we are looking for right to our desktop with all the details required for making the most high quality and informative documentary that RWF is known for.”