

Bloomsbury Turns a New Page, Publishing High-Res Digital Books with Cloudinary

50% reduction in publishing time

<1 second average load time for image-heavy pages

Up to 24 months of savings on digital transformation

Bloomsbury Publishing is a leading independent publishing house perhaps best known as the publisher of the Harry Potter series. But it has many other imprints and business units, including an Academic division that embarked on an innovative line of digital reproductions of encyclopedias, manuscripts, and museum collections designed for university libraries and researchers. With very specific needs for manipulation and serving of high-resolution images, and tight security so that only library patrons or paid users could access the content, Bloomsbury turned to Cloudinary. Cloudinary's digital asset management (DAM) solution serves as a single source of truth for high-resolution images, while its dynamic media manipulations enable real-time delivery of responsive images, right sized for users' devices, browsers and viewports.



"The best thing about Cloudinary is that we can set it and forget it. Once you load an image in Cloudinary, you don't have to worry about it. It's always available and always optimized."

— **Pedja Pavlicic**, Head of Digital at Bloomsbury Publishing



INDUSTRY

Publishing services

SIZE

501–1000 employees

HEADQUARTERS

London, United Kingdom



ABOUT

Bloomsbury Publishing

Bloomsbury Publishing is a leading independent publishing house, established in 1986, with authors who have won the Nobel, Pulitzer, and Booker Prizes, and is the originating publisher and custodian of the Harry Potter series. Bloomsbury has offices in London, New York, New Delhi, Oxford and Sydney. Bloomsbury's Academic division specializes in the humanities and social sciences, publishing more than 1,000 books and digital services each year.



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THE CHALLENGE

High Resolution Digitization of Books and Images for Education and Research

Bloomsbury Publishing may be best known as the publisher of the Harry Potter series. But its Academic division was seeking a way to make magic of a different sort happen in 2017. That's when it embarked on an ambitious project to digitize encyclopedias, studies, and images from museum and private collections, as well as archive ancient manuscripts and very old printed books. The finished digital products would then be offered for sale to universities and other academic organizations, who would make the content available to all students and staff for research and educational purposes.

“We required a new platform to serve this content to a variety of users,” said Pedja Pavlicic head of Digital at Bloomsbury Publishing. “We had very specific needs for image manipulation, wanting to capture an image once and store at the highest resolution as possible, and serve those images in a variety of formats and resolutions.”

The images of these books, manuscripts, and museum collections would be used as thumbnails for search results, merged into books view so users could digitally turn the pages, and zoom in and out. Also all products needed to be responsive, since visitors would access the content from both mobile devices and laptops.

Another critical requirement was strong, yet flexible, security. Some images would be freely available to the public as part of its marketing efforts, while those that were part of published content — inside books, encyclopedias, and collections of museum objects — needed to be restricted so that only purchasers and authorized users could access the content.

Bloomsbury considered trying to build a platform with this functionality itself. But they were on a tight turnaround to launch the project and didn't have the nearly two years it would have likely taken to develop it themselves to spare. “We were also concerned that a homegrown solution would be extremely work intensive for our editorial team, requiring them to learn how to size, resize, transcode, and manage images, which could extend the time it took to digitize each project,” Pavlicic said.

THE CLOUDINARY SOLUTION

Automating Image Management for High-Quality, Responsive Experience

Searching for alternatives to an in-house build, Bloomsbury discovered Cloudinary, which offered all the functionality it was seeking — from image manipulation and responsive delivery to security and a digital asset management (DAM) solution — in its cloud-based platform.

Bloomsbury was able to deploy Cloudinary quickly and kick off its academic digitization work with a project that involved archiving rare manuscripts from a private collection. This project, as with others that followed, enabled Bloomsbury's team to scan an image once, at 100 megapixels, so that this single high-res version could be stored, and then used in a variety of forms.

Bloomsbury also uses Cloudinary's DAM solution for storing and securing images, including an encyclopedia of architecture from the Royal Society of Architecture in the United Kingdom and traditional English monographs. Much of the digital content from Bloomsbury is peer-reviewed and not available on Google or Wikipedia, or is composed of curated collections.

Pavlicic noted that if the content is restricted to paying customers, the images stored in Cloudinary have unique IDs that are referenced in the XML schema, which is uploaded and examined in Bloomsbury's pre-publishing site. At the same time, images are loaded into specific directories for the product. The system knows how to display the image either from the user context or text design embedded in the XML, which matches either DocBook or TEI. The final product is then protected using HighWire SAMS Sigma, which uses various authentication methods to ensure that access is restricted to only authorised users.

Because it is cloud-based, the Cloudinary platform allows freelancers to leverage the XML publishing workflow when they're doing subject indexing.

The automation of image transformations, including format transcoding and quality compression, is particularly critical to the success of Bloomsbury's digitization work. For viewing books with images, Bloomsbury can set the parameters for how much space an image should take up on the screen, and then wrap the text around it. And, with responsive technology, Bloomsbury can immediately deliver the appropriate image size, resolution and format for each user's browser, device, and viewport.

"I think the auto transformations enabled by Cloudinary are absolutely fantastic," Pavlicic noted. "We simply leave it to Cloudinary to come up with the right image. And the ability to automatically center and crop the image properly around an object is particularly helpful within the context of our use case."

THE RESULTS

Speeding Delivery and Access to Innovative Digital Content

Since launching the project, Bloomsbury has digitized more than 100,000 documents totaling more than 300 gigabytes, and uses Cloudinary to responsively serve 7,000 requests and 40,000 transformations each month.

"Cloudinary is very flexible in meeting our unique business needs," said Pavlicic. "We're a different kind of customer, using 10 times more images than the average marketing website, and having much less traffic since our content is not available to consumers or the public."

Pavlicic said implementation of Cloudinary gave Bloomsbury at least an 18-month to two-year lead time compared to developing its own in-house solution. And the ability to scan a single high-res image and automatically transform that to meet individual users' needs cuts the production process in half.

He also gave kudos to Cloudinary customer service and support, which has answered Bloomsbury's questions and helped address project-specific technical problems in a matter of hours.

Because of its excellent experience digitizing its academic products, Bloomsbury is also rebuilding its main **Bloomsbury.com** website with Cloudinary as the foundation for all of its images.

"The best thing about Cloudinary is that we can set it and forget it," Pavlicic concluded. "Once you load an image in Cloudinary, you don't have to worry about it. It's always available and always optimized."

About Cloudinary

Cloudinary's mission is to empower companies to deliver visual experiences that inspire and connect by unleashing the full potential of their media. With more than 40 billion assets under management and 6,500 customers worldwide, Cloudinary is the industry standard for developers, creators and marketers looking to upload, store, transform, manage, and deliver images and videos online. As a result, leading brands like Atlassian, Bleacher Report, Grubhub, Hinge, Lyft, NBC, Mediavine, Peloton, Petco and Under Armour are seeing significant business value in using Cloudinary, including faster time to market, higher user satisfaction and increased engagement and conversions.

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