

# The British Film Institute and Forte



## Working Together

Founded over sixty years ago, the BFI is dedicated to raising awareness of film and the moving image through its education activities, its extensive collection and preservation work and its programme of film-related exhibitions and screenings. The BFI operates the National Film Theatre and the recently completed London IMAX® Cinema on London's South Bank. The BFI employs over 450 people, has an annual turnover approaching £35m and controls assets of over £45m.

### Decision

In 1996, BFI took the decision to replace their character-based financial management system with a modern system to provide a robust platform for the continuing development of their management information needs. User-friendliness was important, as was the ability to provide interfaces to other systems in use - such as their Performing Rights Management System. Also high on the agenda was their clear aspiration to use their in-house report writing skills, making this a key area in any replacement system. BFI reporting requirements reflect the multiplicity of its activities and funding and include many views and dimensions reflecting this diversity.

### Selection

The selection process was conducted by a Project Director and a group of key users who subjected all applicants to rigorous examination and analysis to ensure the required fit against their objectives. Essential to their choice of *Forte Financials* was the team's belief that Cyberscience and its key employees could provide the support and cooperation required for this important project. The order was placed in November 1996 and the software was delivered and installed during December. With just three months to implement, the project team faced a demanding timetable to put the new system into use by April 1997.



David Niven in *A Matter of Life and Death*,  
screened at the National Film Theatre March 2000

### Requirements

Recognising that a well-defined Chart of Accounts is an essential prerequisite to a well-ordered accounting and management information system, early attention was focused on ensuring that the new coding system met the new demanding requirements. The flexibility of the *Forte* coding responded to that challenge so that *Forte* provides for each required perspective as an automatic consequence of everyday system use.

***"The new reporting is significantly better and our in-house use of Cyberquery enables us to meet all our user demands".***

Similarly, there was a need to control access to functions and data reflecting the matrix of budgetary and functional responsibilities that existed. The access control facilities that are inherent in the *Forte* design were utilised to provide that control.





***“We particularly appreciated the support of the Cyberscience Project Manager during this period”.***

## Implementation

During the implementation period, Forte consultants worked closely with the BFI project team and end-users to ensure that deadlines and objectives were met. Cyberscience provided training of key staff and in-house trainers and this then cascaded through the organisation using in-house expertise. Cyberscience technical consultants, working in cooperation with BFI IT staff, converted selected static and transaction information from the old system to Forte. They also cooperated closely with other system suppliers to provide interfaces to and from other systems.



*The IMAX® Cinema on London's South Bank*

*“We particularly appreciated the support of the Cyberscience Project Manager during this period”,* remarked Ian Nelson, Head of Finance and Project Director. The ledgers went live on time in April 1997 and then provided all requirements for General Ledger, Sales & Purchase Ledger and Purchasing. It now processes 49,000 purchase invoices and 12,000 sales invoices per annum. From the start, reporting was an automatic by-product of the everyday accounting process but BFI personnel, assisted by Cyberscience consultants, built on this initial provision to provide the management information which was essential to the organisation.

Extending this provision on an on-going or ad-hoc basis is necessarily a continuous process and *Cyberquery*, integrated to provide all *Forte* Reporting facilities, enables this requirement fully.

Ian Nelson sees this as a major advantage - *“The new reporting is significantly better and our in-house use of Cyberquery enables us to meet all our user demands”.*

Purchasing is a key component of financial control in any organisation. At the BFI, with any of 250 staff members able to initiate or approve orders and thus participate in financial decisions, this was particularly important. *Forte* was able to fully support the necessary procedures by enforcing division of duties and assistance with best buying practice.

## Benefits

Once *Forte* was established, the benefits began to be realised. One controller now manages the sales ledger where three were previously required.

Automated bank reconciliation and general savings associated with the purchase ledger have provided similar savings. Additional interface automation and internal exception chasing reports are just examples of other advantages. Overall, the staffing and efficiency levels now compare favourably with those typical of the commercial sector.

There were other tangible and highly visible benefits. Previously, the Management Reports Pack for the Governors' Meeting was tabled at the meeting held on the last Wednesday each month; now it goes out with the agenda on the 15<sup>th</sup> – a 7 day saving, that's 1 week in 3 – a clear and very useful advantage.

Now fully established and providing total financial control and on-demand financial information, *Forte* is well placed to assist BFI with the challenges of change and the variety of demands which are inevitable in such a dynamic environment.



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