



# Preserving Flemish heritage

Meemoo and IBM Cloud open up a digital archive to enrich education

by Leah Valentine

5-minute read

Ask any teacher: getting and holding pupils' attention has never been easy.

But today's pupils, accustomed as they are to having a wide range of audiovisual materials at their fingertips, can be especially difficult to engage.

That's why teachers in Flanders, Belgium, are excited about The Archive for Education, an online platform developed by meemoo and underpinned by IBM Cloud®. The solution offers teachers throughout Flanders a way to incorporate authentic parts of Flemish heritage into their lesson plans, enriching the learning experience to give pupils a deeper understanding of their culture and place in the world.



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General Manager, meemoo

The platform serves  
more than

150,000

users in Flanders

meemoo gathers  
audiovisual materials  
from more than

160

organizations

# A valuable tool

Meemoo is a nonprofit organization funded by the Flemish government and focused on preserving Flemish history. Nico Verplancke, General Manager, explains: “We work together with about 160 media organizations in Flanders, including public broadcasters and regional broadcasters, as well as performing art centers and other heritage institutions, to digitize historical content. This can include everything from theatre performances to images of a strike to footage of a speech made in the 1940s. It’s a very diverse set of material.”

It’s also a very large set of material. The meemoo archive already contains about 19 PB of data, and that number grows by approximately 2 PB each year.



Meemoo makes the material available to the citizens of Flanders for a variety of uses, collaborating with cultural, heritage and media organizations to carry out projects designed to help preserve and celebrate the region’s rich history. One of meemoo’s flagship projects is The Archive for Education.

Mr. Verplancke explains: “The Archive for Education is one of the channels we use to make our content partners’ archive material come alive. We believe that audiovisual material is a really great way for teachers to connect with young people. It’s a much more natural way for today’s teachers

to explain things than just drawing something on a blackboard.”

“The platform has been really successful. We see an increase in the number of teachers and pupils using The Archive for Education while the available audiovisual material continues to grow,” he says. However, as is often the case, the platform’s success clearly indicated that its original, internal infrastructure would not be sufficient for long.

“We really needed a flexible, stable environment to run it on,” says Mr. Verplancke. “That’s why we decided to move the archive to the IBM Cloud platform.”

For Herwig Bogaert, Senior Systems Engineer at meemoo, moving The Archive for Education to a hosted IBM Cloud environment was a game-changer. “We don’t have a big IT team, so we cannot have all the knowledge that we need in house to run our applications. The IBM Cloud team has taken from our shoulders the burden of managing the underlying infrastructure.”

The solution also features [Red Hat® OpenShift®](#) technology, which allows Mr. Bogaert and his team to build automated deployment pipelines that make it easy to add new applications to the platform.

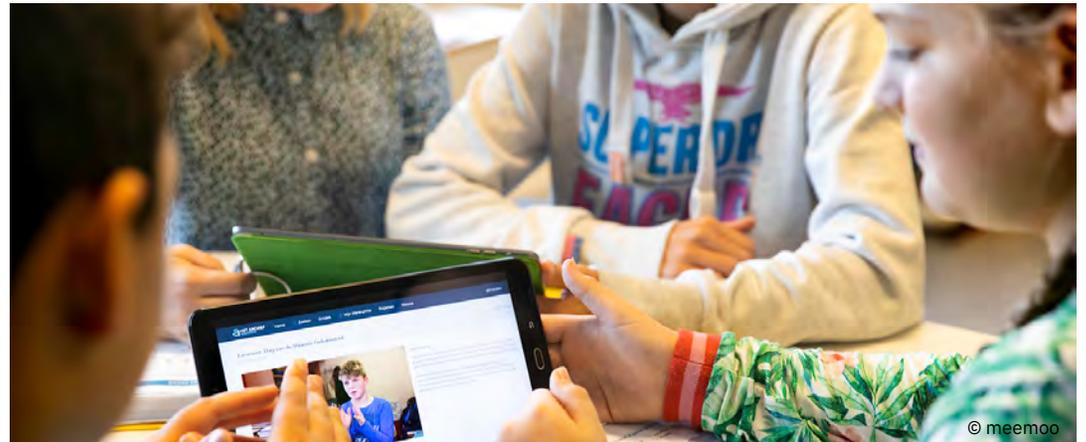
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managing the infrastructure, and we have more time to listen to business needs and develop new applications to accommodate them,” Mr. Bogaert explains.

Frederik De Ridder, a Flemish teacher outsourced to the meemoo team, is among the solution’s many end users. For him, it is a valuable teaching tool. “Clips from heritage foundations and cultural organizations can really surprise the pupils. They see things on the platform and say, ‘I had no idea things were like that in the past!’ It’s also a great way to show them different aspects of a single topic, which I think is very important to do in the classroom,” he says.

# An archive for the future

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated meemoo's plans to open up The Archive for Education directly to pupils. As a result, it has more than 150,000 users, and its popularity continues to grow. This is very much in line with Mr. Verplancke's vision for the platform. "We want to grow the number of users, of course, but we also want to increase the functionality of the system. We want the platform to support teachers as they teach young people how to interact with media, how to search in an intelligent way, how to interpret media. It's really important for them to learn how to handle that kind of information and develop their own opinions. That's the sort of thing we want to invest in together with the Flemish government."



Mr. De Ridder, too, has ideas for the future of the archive. "We want to make it possible for pupils to browse through the platform and build their own audiovisual collections to use, for example, when they do a speaking exercise or presentation. They are already asking for other ways to work with audiovisual materials, and we are

helping them with that by inspiring them with didactics, but also by developing new tools on the platform."

No matter what the future holds for meemoo and The Archive for Education, one thing is certain: for pupils in Flanders, the past is worth their attention.

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#### About meemoo

Established in 2020 upon the merger of three previously established Flemish institutions, [meemoo](#) (external link) is the Flemish Institute for Archives. The nonprofit organization has more than 40 permanent employees, and it regularly partners with teachers, heritage institutes and other cultural, media and government organizations to grow its collection. Headquartered in Ghent, Belgium, meemoo is funded by government grants.

#### Solution components

- IBM Cloud®
- Red Hat® OpenShift®