

The Complete DAM Buying Checklist for Galleries, Libraries, Archives & Museums

Your Strategic Guide to Selecting the
Right Digital Asset Management Platform



Introduction

Why GLAM Institutions Need Purpose-Built DAM

Galleries, libraries, archives, and museums operate differently than other verticals. Your digital asset management platform needs to handle:

- **Exhibition and collection cycles** with tight, non-negotiable opening and publication deadlines
- **Institution-wide teams** coordinating across collections, curatorial, education, conservation, and public programs
- **Massive visual libraries** with thousands of assets spanning collections, exhibitions, events, and educational content
- **Complex rights management** for artist agreements, reproduction licenses, donor restrictions, and public domain determinations
- **Multi-channel distribution** from institutional websites and online collections to media, academic, and lending partner environments
- **Real-time collaboration** between curatorial staff, registrars, conservators, educators, and board and trustee stakeholders

This checklist will help you evaluate DAM platforms based on what actually matters for GLAM operations – not generic enterprise features that don't address your specific challenges.

How to Use This Checklist

As you evaluate DAM vendors:

- **Check each requirement** that applies to your institution
- **Star critical must-haves** that are non-negotiable
- **Take notes** on how each vendor addresses your specific needs
- **Compare responses** across platforms using this standardized framework

Scoring Guide:

- **Essential (Must-Have):** Platform cannot be considered without this
- **Important (Should-Have):** Strong preference, willing to compromise if other areas excel
- **Nice-to-Have:** Differentiator between otherwise equal platforms

Section 1

GLAM-Specific Asset Management

Campaign Organization

- ☐ **Organize assets by exhibition cycle and fiscal year** (Fall Exhibition 2025, Spring Collection Launch 2026, etc.)
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have
- ☐ **Hierarchical categorization** (Institution → Collection → Sub-Collection → Object/Item)
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have
- ☐ **Link multiple assets to a single object or exhibition** (installation photography, conservation documentation, catalog images, videos, interpretive content)
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have
- ☐ **Messaging and branding variant management** across exhibitions, collections, and special programs
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have
- ☐ **Archive past exhibitions and deaccessioned items** while maintaining full searchability
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have
- ☐ **Support** for conservation documentation, condition reporting, and behind-the-scenes installation imagery
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

GLAM-Specific Metadata

- ☐ **Custom metadata fields** for collection-specific attributes:
 - Collection and sub-collection name
 - Artist, creator, or maker name and rights status
 - Object accession number and catalog ID
 - Exhibition name and date range
 - Medium, material, and technique
 - Date of creation and acquisition date
 - Donor, lender, or rights holder information
 - Copyright status, license type, and usage restrictions*Priority:* ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

- ☐ **Controlled vocabularies** for consistent naming aligned with industry standards (AAT, TGN, ULAN, LCSH)

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

- ☐ **Rights and reproduction tracking** (artist estate agreements, donor restrictions, public domain determinations, Creative Commons licensing)

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

- ☐ **Photographer and imaging credit management**

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

- ☐ **Catalog essay, interpretive text, and educational content tagging** for public-facing and scholarly assets

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

Visual Search & Discovery

- ☐ **Visual similarity search** (find similar objects, compositions, periods, or styles)

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

- ☐ **Color-based search** and filtering (dominant colors, pigment analysis, period palette)

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

- ☐ **Advanced filtering** by multiple attributes simultaneously (collection + medium + period + rights status)

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

- ☐ **Saved searches** for frequently used queries (e.g., "19th Century Oil Painting Rights Cleared")

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

Section 2

Workflow & Collaboration

Multi-Department Coordination

- ☐ **Role-based access control** for different teams:
 - Digital and imaging (upload/edit capabilities)
 - Curatorial and registrar (view/approve/annotate)
 - Conservation (condition and treatment documentation)
 - Education and public programs (approved assets only)
 - Lending and touring partners (object-specific assets)

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have
- ☐ **Collection-level permissions** (give curatorial staff access to relevant collection areas)

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have
- ☐ **Asset approval workflows** with multi-level review (imaging → curatorial → rights and reproduction)

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have
- ☐ **Comments and annotation tools** directly on assets

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have
- ☐ **Version control** to track asset iterations (conservation photography, catalog updates, exhibition variants)

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

Exhibition Launches & Institutional Deadlines

- ☐ **Project-based asset organization** (Exhibition Opening, Catalog Publication, Traveling Show, Annual Gala, Collection Reinstallation)

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have
- ☐ **Scheduled publishing** for embargo releases (press, lending partner, academic, and public-facing content)

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have
- ☐ **Deadline tracking** and reminders for asset deliverables

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have
- ☐ **Task assignment** for imaging, retouching, cataloging, and translation

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

Multi-Site & Lending Partner Support

- ☐ **Multi-language interface** for international collections, lending partners, and global audiences

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

- ☐ **Branch, satellite, or touring exhibition asset variations** (different presentation and context by venue or geography)

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

- ☐ **Institutional brand consistency tools** (approved logos, fonts, and color palettes accessible across departments and partner venues)

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

Section 3

Digital Channel Integration

Website & Collections Platform Integration

☐ **Integrations with collections management and GLAM platforms:**

- TMS (The Museum System) / Gallery Systems
- Argus / MuseumPlus
- ArchivesSpace
- Alma / Ex Libris
- Custom platforms via API

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

☐ **Multiple image variants per object** (thumbnail, detail, full resolution, print-quality, web-optimized)

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

☐ **Automated image resizing** and tiling for digital collection viewers (IIIF support)

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

☐ **Synchronization** with collection management and accession databases

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

Social Media & Content Marketing

☐ **Direct publishing** to social platforms or integration with social management tools

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

☐ **Docent, educator, and community partner content management**

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

CMS & Digital Humanities Integration

☐ **Content management system integration** (WordPress, Drupal, Contentful, etc.)

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

☐ **Digital humanities and research platform integration** (Omeka, CONTENTdm, etc.)

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

Section 4

Rights Management & Legal Compliance

Artist, Creator & Rights Holder Contracts

- ☐ **Contract attachment** to assets (artist agreements, reproduction licenses, donor deed restrictions, and loan agreements)

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

- ☐ **Usage rights tracking** (internal only, public-facing, scholarly reproduction, commercial licensing, time limits)

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

- ☐ **Expiration date alerts** for time-limited reproduction rights and loan agreements

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

- ☐ **Automatic watermarking** for non-approved, rights-restricted, or embargoed assets

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

Brand & Compliance Protection

- ☐ **Unauthorized use prevention** (secure access, download tracking)

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

- ☐ **Public domain and Creative Commons status tracking** at the asset level

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

- ☐ **Embargo management** for pre-opening content (exhibition previews, acquisition announcements, catalog releases)

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

- ☐ **Asset download auditing** (who downloaded what, when)

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

- ☐ **External portal** for controlled sharing with media, lending institutions, academic publishers, and touring partners

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

Section 5

Technical Requirements

File Format & Quality Support

- ☐ **RAW file support** (CR2, NEF, ARW, etc.) for original collection photography

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

- ☐ **High-resolution image handling** (100MB+ files including gigapixel imaging)

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

- ☐ **Video format support** (MP4, MOV, ProRes for documentary, exhibition, and educational footage)

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

- ☐ **Design file support** (PSD, AI, INDD for exhibition graphics, catalog, and print materials)

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

- ☐ **3D/AR file storage** (GLB, USDZ, OBJ for 3D object scans and virtual exhibition experiences)

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

- ☐ **IIIF (International Image Interoperability Framework) support** for digital collection publishing

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

Performance & Scale

- ☐ **Storage capacity** for your asset volume

- Current needs: _____TB

- 3-year projection: _____TB

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

- ☐ **Upload speed** for large batch imports (post-imaging campaign or digitization project)

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

- ☐ **Search performance** with thousands of collection assets

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

- ☐ **Concurrent user support** (how many team members can work simultaneously?)

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

Security & Compliance

- ☐ **Encryption** (in transit and at rest)
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have
- ☐ **SOC 2 compliance**
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have
- ☐ **GDPR compliance** for international collections and audiences
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have
- ☐ **Two-factor authentication**
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have
- ☐ **Single sign-on (SSO) support** – including integration with institutional identity providers
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have
- ☐ **Regular security audits** and penetration testing
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

Backup & Disaster Recovery

- ☐ **Automated backup** schedule and retention
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have
- ☐ **Geographic redundancy** (multiple data center locations)
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have
- ☐ **Disaster recovery SLA** (recovery time objective/recovery point objective)
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have
- ☐ **Asset versioning** and recovery (restore previous versions)
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

Section 6

User Experience & Adoption

Interface & Usability

- ☐ **Intuitive interface** that non-technical curatorial and collections staff can navigate

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

- ☐ **Mobile access** (responsive web or native app)

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

- ☐ **Bulk operations** (upload, tag, download, approve multiple assets at once)

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

- ☐ **Drag-and-drop** functionality for uploads and organization

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

- ☐ **Customizable dashboards** by role/user

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

Asset Sharing & Distribution

- ☐ **Shareable links** with expiration dates

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

- ☐ **Password protection** for sensitive or embargoed shares

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

- ☐ **Branded portals** for external partners (media, academic publishers, lending institutions, touring venues)

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

- ☐ **Lightbox/collection creation** for assembling asset packages for loans, publications, or press

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

- ☐ **Download format options** (original, optimized, print-quality, web-specific dimensions)

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

Training & Support

- ☐ **Onboarding program** for implementation
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have
- ☐ **User training** (live sessions, recorded tutorials, documentation)
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have
- ☐ **Customer support hours** and response time SLA
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have
- ☐ **Dedicated account manager** or customer success contact
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have
- ☐ **Regular platform updates** and feature releases
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

Section 7

Analytics & Reporting

Statistics System

- ☐ **Asset download and reproduction request reports** by collection, exhibition, and time period
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have
- ☐ **User activity reports** (who's accessing what, when)
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have
- ☐ **Asset lifecycle tracking** (from digitization through publication and archive)
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

Section 8

Cost & Business Model

Pricing Structure

- ☐ **Transparent pricing** (no hidden fees)
 - Base platform cost: _____
 - Per-user fees: _____
 - Storage costs: _____
- ☐ **Scalability of pricing** as your collection and institution grow
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have
- ☐ **Contract flexibility** (annual vs. multi-year, exit terms)
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

Implementation & Migration

- ☐ **Implementation timeline** (how long to go live?)
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have
- ☐ **Migration support** from existing systems (including legacy collections management systems)
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have
- ☐ **Data migration tools** (automated vs. manual)
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have
- ☐ **Metadata preservation** during migration (including accession numbers and catalog data)
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

Total Cost of Ownership

- ☐ **Initial setup costs**
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have
- ☐ **Ongoing maintenance** requirements and costs
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have
- ☐ **Additional fees** (overage charges, add-on features)
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have
- ☐ **Internal resource requirements** (IT support needed?)
Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

Section 9

Vendor Evaluation

References & Case Studies

☐ **GLAM institution references** at similar collection size and operational scope

▪ Requested references: _____

☐ **Case studies** demonstrating GLAM sector success

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

☐ **Peer reviews** and industry recognition

Priority: ☐ Essential ☐ Important ☐ Nice-to-Have

Decision Matrix

Category	Weight (%)	Vendor A (1-10)	Vendor B (1-10)	Vendor C (1-10)
Collection-Specific Features	%			
Workflow & Collaboration	%			
Digital Channel Integration	%			
Rights Management	%			
Technical Requirements	%			
User Experience	%			
Analytics & Reporting	%			
Cost & Value	%			
Vendor Stability	%			
TOTAL WEIGHTED SCORE	100%			

Next Steps

After completing this checklist:

1. **Schedule demos** with your top 3 vendors
2. **Request live walkthroughs** of GLAM-specific features, including collections management integration
3. **Talk to reference customers** in the gallery, library, archive, and museum sector
4. **Negotiate a trial period** to test with your actual workflows
5. **Involve key stakeholders** from collections, curatorial, registrar, conservation, digital, and IT
6. **Calculate total cost of ownership** over 3–5 years
7. **Review contracts** carefully (exit terms, data ownership, SLAs)

About NetX

NetX provides enterprise digital asset management solutions trusted by leading galleries, libraries, archives, and museums worldwide. Our platform is built to handle the unique demands of GLAM operations: exhibition and collection cycles, multi-department teams, expansive visual libraries, complex rights and reproduction management, and seamless collections management system integration.

Ready to see NetX in action?

Schedule a personalized demo focused on your institution's specific collection workflows and challenges.

This checklist is provided as a strategic resource for GLAM institutions evaluating DAM platforms. For more information about how NetX addresses these requirements, contact our team.