New Media / Publishing
BBC Monitoring

The BBC's Research and Information Unit (RIU) at their monitoring site near Reading has been collating information since 1939. BBC Monitoring operates 24 hours a day to monitor information and reports from over 150 countries, in over 100 languages. The reports are gathered from all aspects of the mass media, radio, TV, press, Internet and news agency sources.

This unique service provides a respected and dependable up-to-date exposure of political and economic news. The information collated by the BBC relates to:
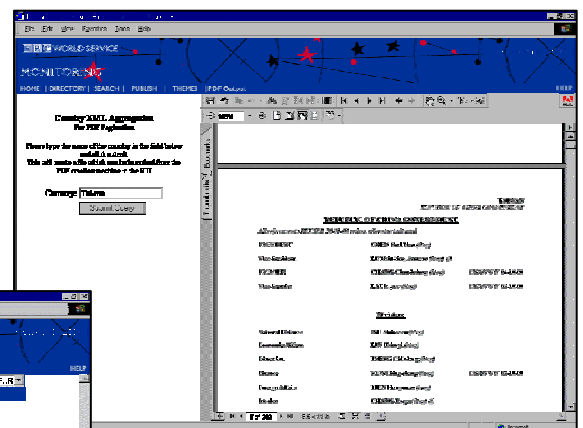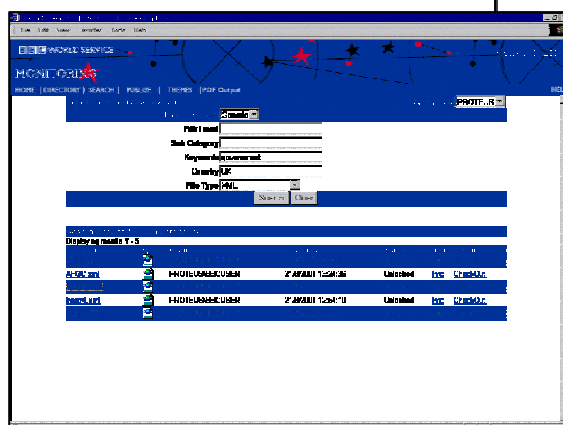
- Cabinet members
- Central and regional administrations
- Diplomats
- Biographical information on key personalities users

This information must be made readily available for use internally within the BBC and by external political parties and organisations throughout the world.

The Challenge

CSW's challenge was to provide a unique solution to the BBC's ongoing problem of managing and maintaining the information and reports collected by the RIU on a daily basis. This information was usually gathered in the form of unstructured Word documents, which were difficult to control.

BBC staff needed a document and information management system where they could have complete autonomy on content management and version control, whilst providing their customers with a flexible, single entry point to a web service for easy navigation and search. This service was required both internally and externally to the BBC.

The Technology

To meet the requirements of the BBC, CSW developed a complete end-to-end, web-based document editing and management solution. The web-based interface provides the platform for external users to search and view information and for internal RIU staff to edit, collate and disseminate new information efficiently and effectively. CSW developed the new system using the eXtensible Markup Language (XML). XML provides the foundation for managing not only documents, but also the information elements of which the documents are composed.

The Solution

Thousands of Word documents containing the information required by the BBC were converted to XML so that all information can be held in a centrally controlled environment using a SQL Server-based content repository.

Using XSLT stylesheets, the information held in the XML documents is presented both to staff within the BBC and to external customers via the Internet. In each case, the information is the same, but the view seen is customised depending on the user's requirements and permissions.

In order for BBC staff to change or add information, CSW developed an XML editing environment, using Softquad's XMetaL editor. This ensures a fully controlled authoring workspace for the staff so that they are guided in creating information to a predefined logical structure. This new XML-based editing environment means that all users now follow an agreed document structure, ensuring a complete and consistent information set.

CSW's innovative solution also allows the automatic collation of documents for an entire country and the production of PDF documents from the XML source using Arbortext's Epic Print Composer. The collation and print production process that previously took up to a week for each country can now be completed at the touch of a button.

Benefits

By holding all information and reports as XML documents using the new XML document editing and management system, the BBC has met their objectives and gained complete control of previously unstructured information. The benefits include:

- Efficient and streamlined management and maintenance of the information set.
- On-demand search & retrieval from the XML source for both internal & external users.
- Control over document access, tracking, and versioning.
- Automated collation of documents and production of paginated PDF documents from the XML source.
- Automated publishing to the Internet at the touch of a button.

Future Development

Since successfully completing the BBC's XML-based information management solution, CSW have won subsequent projects to provide a full portal covering all other products offered by BBC Monitoring.