



A Search Engine for IIRD

As eGovernment becomes a way of life, the hard drive is displacing the filing cabinet as our number one storage device. The more information you store digitally, however, the less manageable it becomes — unless you have a simple and reliable way to search it.

The challenge

The Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development (IIRD) needed a search engine that would give staff quick and hassle-free access to its intranet.

The intranet is a vast repository of procedural, management, corporate and customer service information — but people weren't making full use of it because it wasn't always easy to find things. Created in 1997, it had grown exponentially since. There was no consistent navigation, document layout, visual branding; no dynamic document or content management (all content was hard-coded in HTML). The department decided to rebuild the intranet from scratch. It soon became obvious, however, that the native Lotus Notes search tools would not do.

The solution

IIRD looked at search products such as AltaVista and Google, but

they were prohibitively expensive, unavailable for live trials, and not really what the department wanted — a search engine that was Lotus Notes-compatible, security-savvy, and cross-platform.

While the international market could not match IIRD's specifications, Victoria's own Wombat Technology could — at a fraction of the price.

Its solution is a product called Wombat View. Wombat View can crawl through an intranet or local area network and create an index of it that allows users to do a full-text search of every document on the system — or rather every document the searcher is authorised to read, since Wombat View can be configured to capture document security information as it scans the network and ensure that each user only sees what they are supposed to see (which has the added benefits of speeding up searches and lightening network load).

Wombat View is especially good at integrating information from legacy databases and content management systems — which is how Victoria's Wangaratta City Council is using it. Wombat Technology had no trouble tweaking Wombat View to work with IIRD's Lotus Notes system and its unique document structure, taking the different views of data offered by Lotus Notes into account as it indexed.

Benefits

IIRD's new intranet search capability reduces the time required to locate information and enables staff to work more efficiently — including providing faster and more complete responses to enquiries from citizens.

The department has embarked on a twelve-month partnership with Wombat Technology to make Wombat View work even better with Lotus Notes. IIRD has free use of the product during this R&D phase and its technical staff will be able to draw on Wombat's know-how and experience.

Wombat Technology benefits from the opportunity to extend Wombat View's capabilities in the Lotus Notes environment. Wombat has been building its Lotus Notes expertise for some time. The IIRD project will increase its mastery of the platform and its ability to win government and private sector business in Australia and overseas. The Wombat search engine's built-in support for Chinese and other two-byte languages makes it ideal for Asian market. The company has already made important sales in the Philippines and contributed to sites such as www.hongkong.com.



Wombat View also met IIRD's requirement that users should be able to search the intranet both from within Lotus Notes and through a standard web browser — and get the same results either way.

Wombat View consists of an IBM server running the Linux operating system and Wombat's software. Essentially a plug-and-play appliance, it can be installed in a couple of hours. The department simply had to connect Wombat View to its network, give it administration rights, and stand back as it went to work.

If support is required, it can be provided remotely from Wombat's Melbourne offices over the Internet (a Wombat technician logs into the client's system, makes the necessary adjustments, and logs out) — minimising cost and inconvenience to the customer.

The future

With Wombat View working on the intranet, the next step is to give users the same search functionality via the Internet. Then the aim will be to index and make searchable the department's five online libraries — repositories of policy and project information, including confidential, historic and background information, containing 75,000-plus documents a piece.

"Today, an organisation with around 500 staff will have as much information stored on its network as the whole of Australia did in the mid-1990s. The big problem is retrieving it!"



eGovernment

The Victorian Government's eGovernment strategy — *Putting People at the Centre* — is harnessing the information revolution to improve services, opportunities for democratic participation and the operations of government.

Wombat Technology

Wombat Technology created Australia's premier Internet search engine, Web Wombat (www.webwombat.com.au). Building on the unique technologies it developed for Web Wombat, the company now offers a full range of web and enterprise search solutions.

To find out more

eGovernment

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