



Back to the Future – The Company Archive of the Volkswagen AG Wolfsburg



In December 1999, after a two-year planning and construction period, the Volkswagen Communications Department opened a company archive with the task of systematically taking over, making accessible and using the historically relevant documents on the history of Volkswagen. Therefore this facility is facing enormous quantities of analogue and also digital material that will have to be viewed, recorded and preserved on a long-term basis for future generations. The set-up of a »Digital Archive« for the recording and administration of documents that are significant for the history of the Volkswagen AG could be realised within a few months by combining a document management system of the American company DOCUMENTUM and a software solution especially developed for this project by fme.

OBJECTIVE

It is the task of the company archive team to meet the requirements of modern archive science for the administration and use of historically relevant documents at the head office of the Volkswagen Group in Wolfsburg. Through the set-up of a »Digital Archive« and the continuous expansion and recording of the document stock, the preservation of the historical archive content can be guaranteed. The digitalisation allows direct and gentle access to old, possibly already damaged, or frequently required files, plans or publications.

»In addition, a useful contribution to the internal and external communication is intended through the presentation and research possibility by means of a browser interface,« explained Dr. Dirk Schlinkert, employee of the company archive. On-line borrowing and the printing out of borrowing slips is made possible by the system.

Furthermore, the »Digital Archive« is to support and help the scientific research for the VW publications »Historische Notate«, and to facilitate the quick and efficient responses to press enquiries about the history of VW. On a long-term basis, the »Digital Archive« is designed as a platform for a VW Group integration.

VOLKSWAGEN AG

The team »company archive« of the Volkswagen corporation in Wolfsburg is one of seven teams of the Volkswagen corporate communication. The main task of the team is first of all the set-up of the archive. It attends to research as well as to miscellaneous prospects who aim at a industrial, historic, and socio-historical science center. Head of the team is Bernd Graef. He is supported by Dr. Manfred Grieger and Dr. Dirk Schlinkert.

REQUIREMENTS

When planning the »Digital Archive«, Volkswagen paid special attention to the protection of the archive content from unauthorized access. With a clear system structure, the highest security standards were to be created that would guarantee at any time that only registered and authorized users could access the data released according to legally appointed times. The archivist must be able to assign the rights for the individual document at the time of recording, and it must be transparent at all times which user is accessing which data.

For the daily recording, it is important that each document type can be described by a large number of attributes. A videocassette will be archived differently than a picture, a file or a construction drawing. Furthermore, the new software plan was to be designed for the demands and habits of the users and to be easy to learn for the users, such as the employees.

For the use and communication of the recorded historical documents, a comprehensive and precise research function is necessary. For both the efficient administration by the archivist, as well as for the individual search for different topics, the search function is decisive. Document and publication data, as well as individual words in the title or the text of the document can be searched for.

Homepage of the company archive of the Volkswagen AG



SOLUTION

Dr Matthias Kaack, system consultant of the company archive, was part of the entire solution finding process, and his experience was of great help, especially with regard to the system integration.

»Since the market did not offer a suitable standard software solution that satisfied the demands on operational security and access protection, and which could be integrated into the VW Group internal system environment, the decision was made for an individual programming with a link to a document management system of DOCUMENTUM based on the platform 4i«, summarised Dr Kaack. The advantage was obvious. A majority of the data already existed in the form of analogue and digital documents. Here, the transfer of existing access applications was possible without problems. In this way, real floods of documents, as for example innumerable files of vehicle and order documents, could be automatically managed.

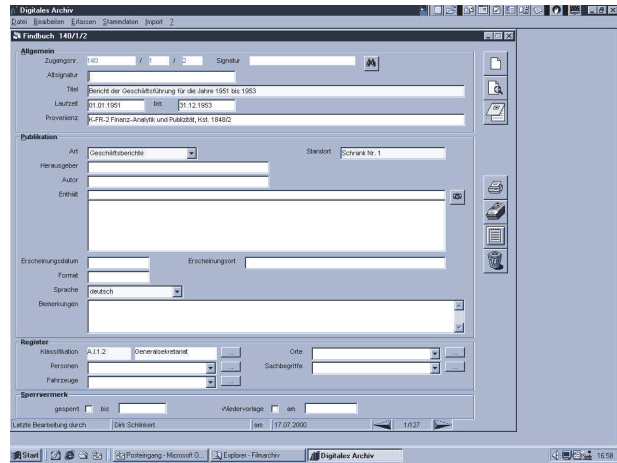
»We had the unique opportunity to redesign in parallel the way of software development and the creation of a workflow process for the procedure of archiving«, Dr Schlinkert stated. »In close cooperation with the fme project team and in only six weeks, specifications were drawn up that depicted the multi-layered path from the arrival of a box with different documents up to the final entry into the »Digital Archive«. This phase was a fruitful process during which we realised which comprehensive demands we had on our »Digital Archive«. The technical consulting and support of the fme was a great help to us.«

The DOCUMENTUM Docbase is centrally stored in the VW group computing centre on a DocPage server. Windows NT, an Oracle data base, HTTP servers and DOCUMENTUM's RightSite provide a connection to the corresponding Volkswagen network structure. There, the archivists work with a client-server interface and record the individual documents. Through a browser, authorised users can do research in the company archive.

The intensive concept phase was followed by the implementation of the system at fme. Here, the client-server, as well as the intranet interface were programmed.

OUTLOOK

Since the successful system start at the beginning of the year, the company archive of the Volkswagen AG has been in the build-up phase. A next step is the publication of a presentation on the company archive in the VW Group Intranet. The goal is to make a certain section of the archive also available to the public on the Internet homepage of the Volkswagen AG. In addition, the system will shortly be optimised so that it can be used, with the necessary adaptations, by the subsidiary Audi, in order to build up an independent archive there as well that, with the most modern technology, will keep the past alive.



With this recording mask, the archivist processes a publication

TECHNOLOGY

DOCUMENTUM Software

- DocPage Server 4i - 4.0
- RightSite 4i - 4.0
- SmartSpace EDMS98 - 1.0.5 Ger

DMS-Server

- Windows NT 4.0 Sp 4
- Oracle DB (V 7.3.4)
- HTTP-Server (MS-IIS 4.0)

Clients

- Windows NT 4.0 SP4
- Microsoft Internet Explorer 4.01 SP1
- SmartSpace

fme group

Braunschweig | Düsseldorf | Frankfurt | Munich (DE)
Cluj-Napoca (ROM) | Danbury, CT (USA)
Tel. +49 531 238 54 0 | info@fme.de
Tel. +01 203 894 8299 | info@fme-us.com