THE SIM PROJECT - MULTIMEDIA INFORMATION SYSTEM FOR MUSEUMS

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The aim of this paper is to describe the SIM project that implements a complex collections and resource management system for museums. The solution provided in the SIM project is an extended link between information technology and cultural heritage.

The primary objective of the project has been to develop a multimedia database system as a complete professional system from concept to its first implementation at the National Art Museum of Romania, the greatest museum from our country.

The increasing capability of information systems and global communications offers many opportunities to museums and galleries and the impact of Information Technology on them is huge. That is why we have developed a museum information system offering comprehensive collection management support, based on the team's dedication to museum systems since 1986.

The focus in the project was on the following:

- Integration of museum standards, like Spectrum and LASSI, and domestic standardization bodies results and experience, like those of the Information Center for Culture and Heritage (CIMEC).

  Having in view the compliance with museum standards the developed database system is easy to customize to various museums.

- The use of powerful tools and techniques, like database CASE tools, in order to build a robust, consistent and easy to re-generate multimedia database system.

  We have chosen powerful and complex tools to assist and support the business interviewing, the system analysis and design and to generate first-cut applications.

- The integration of networking facilities supported by means of Intranet, Internet and Web applications.

  The concept is to use a HTTP server to deliver the content of the database to a World-Wide-Web. The Web applications query and retrieve the database for local users on the Intranet and for remote users on the Internet, as well.

  The purpose of the database published on Internet is not only for worldwide public interested in the museum's collections but also for the museum's remote

collaborators. In the last case the database access is wider and password protected and the communication and database data exchange is provided through secured links.

New technologies, architectures and access methods, like the three layers architecture, network-centric applications with the support of powerful servers for database connectivity were implemented in order to promote interactivity and information dissemination.

- The close work with end-users from the Romanian National Art Museum, exploring and developing their requirements, using a fast prototype for first step system analysis and sharing with them the latest software and hardware advances as their technological needs change.

  Future system implementations concern other Romanian museums like the Peasant's Museum, the National History Museum or smaller museums like the Literature Museum.

- Future developments concern the search and retrieval of very large text from the database system. Museum and art techniques description (restoration, preservation, etc.) are required to be stored, searched and retrieved by the museum specialists. Art technical dictionary and thesaurus will be also built related to the database system.

  Another future facility is to store and manage video and sound within the multimedia database system as, for example, filmed restoration procedures and techniques.

References

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