Chapter 4.31
Global Information Systems in the Publishing Domain:
An Experience Report

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ABSTRACT

This chapter discusses how globalization in the publishing domain is achieved through global information and communication systems. Global information systems (GIS) enable not only integration of applications within an organization (leading to what is known as EAI), but also enable extensive connectivity between applications across varied platforms and software domains both within and outside the organization. This timely connectivity has created tremendous opportunities for the publishing industry—increasingly dependent on split-second timings to report news—to integrate its business processes as well as devise new and innovative ways of collecting, assimilating, and disbursing information. This chapter is based on the experience of the lead author in one of Australia's largest publishing groups, John Fairfax Holdings Ltd.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with the application of the concepts of GIS to a news, advertising and information publishing business. GIS encompasses a gamut of technologies and business facilities that are based around the concept of information creation and management and, more importantly, information sharing through excellent communication mechanisms. This, together with the innovative business process thinking, creates an ideal environment for globalization of various types and sizes of businesses. GIS includes understanding, discussion, and application of business alliances, analysis and segmentation of the e-customer, application of the concept of Customer Relationship Management (CRM), Supply Chain Management (SCM), Digital Nervous System (DNS), and global project management. Technologies like XML, encompassed by Web services as well as

mobile applications, all come together under the umbrella of GIS and facilitate the globalization of enterprises (Unhelkar, 2003b).

This report is based on the experience of application of systems and technologies of GIS to John Fairfax Holdings Ltd., a globally well-known publishing business established in Sydney, Australia. Fairfax is known for its publications of the Sydney Morning Herald, the Melbourne Age, and the Australian Financial Review together with a group of regional newspapers, magazines, and a comprehensive set of dominant Web sites containing both editorial and classified advertising content.

Application of the concepts of GIS in Fairfax happened simultaneously with the significant contribution made by communication technologies in the news, news advertising, and publishing domain. This is so because of the need in the publishing domain for split-second timings in reporting, acute need for independence from time and location, and the need and ability to correlate events and reports that may have happened far back in time and perhaps in unrelated places. Given the availability of technologies as well as constant pressure from competitors, this particular publishing organization decided to apply GIS to reach a wider audience and clientele not only within the greater regional areas of Australia but also across the world. This chapter describes in detail the concepts of GIS and how they are applied by an organization like Fairfax to achieve competitive advantage in the publishing domain.

UNDERSTANDING E-PUBLISHING

What is E-Publishing?

E-publishing results from the application of GIS to a publishing organization. It is therefore appropriate to start this discussion with an understanding of what can be considered as e-publishing. Ciolek (1997) defines e-publishing as: "Electronic pub-

lishing activities are aimed at systematic harvesting, processing and delivery of substantial chunks of information (scholarly/factual materials, news, software, entertainment, games, etc.) in electronic format to the public (users, purchasers)."

The resultant electronic information can be distributed either:

*   via a network (LAN, WAN, Internet, intranet) or
*   on physical media such as computer diskettes, tapes, CD-ROM disks.

They can be made available either free-of-charge or at some cost to the user.

The above definition makes it obvious that e-publishing is heavily dependent on information and communication technologies. Thus, e-publishing cannot exist without the World Wide Web and its associated infrastructure. However e-publishing has also come into being and proliferated because of the available connectivity in large number of modern households as well as institutions such as schools and universities. In this communication age huge amounts of information are made easily available electronically at the fingertips of most individuals and organizations that are able to access and consume this information. Thus e-publishing is emerging as a robust reality with implications for businesses as well as society. E-publishing is facilitating a new way of collating, distributing, and presenting information that is unique to the communication age. It is a new reality that is set to become a part of the everyday routine of individuals as well as organizations.

Current State of E-Publishing in Australia and Fairfax

Having mentioned what e-publishing comprises and its tremendous importance to modern businesses and individuals, we will now consider the state of publishing within Australia and, in

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