

e-business An "Art" At Main-Echo And Kunstanstalten May AG

Main-Echo (a newspaper publisher) and Kunstanstalten May AG (a publisher of fine art reproductions) are both based in Aschaffenburg, Germany. Together, they share an IT environment that is built on an IBM Multiprise 2000 server running VSE/ESA. To provide more efficient use of system resources and better service, their IT team recently started providing an intranet front-end for accessing VSE/VSAM data on the mainframe. This e-commerce solution has been so successful that it soon will be available to the public on the Internet.



Vision, challenge, solution

Kunstanstalten May AG offers a wide range of high-quality art reproductions, including traditional oil paintings, water colors, and collages. Last year, the company decided that it wanted to provide its sales personnel with intranet access to its mainframe ordering applications. If that proved to be possible and beneficial, the ultimate goal was Internet access and full e-business support for external customers.

Kunstanstalten May AG's key requirement was that the new solution should combine existing transaction processing capabilities and mainframe strengths with modern, "open" technologies.



Franz Marc,
"Two Horses in Red and Blue"

Thus the IT team – headed by Norbert Plängsken – was challenged to implement a cost-efficient, secure solution that fits seamlessly into the existing data processing environment. The main question was: *How easy – or difficult – is it to access mainframe data from workstations with a Web browser?*

To everyone's surprise, the answer and the solution were ready in just two weeks. That's all it took for Plängsken and his team to develop an intranet application that could exploit an existing, complex VSE/VSAM database on their VSE/ESA system. The tool which made rapid deployment possible was the programming language, **Communication Program Generator (CPG)**, from Lattwein GmbH of Düren, Germany.

Main-Echo's intranet solutions allow it to leverage the company's considerable investment in S/390 technology. Today, company employees can use CPG mainframe programs to display host data at a workstation via a Web browser. Behind the scenes, NetPage (a component of CPG Level 5) creates the HTML files shown on their screens.



Initial Selection Menu –
Article, Customer, Sales

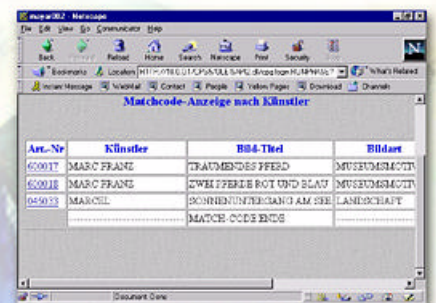
Solution overview

Access to the VSE/VSAM database with its information is easy from a user's perspective. After entering the intranet application, users only have to make a few simple decisions in order to find what they need.

At the start, a menu titled *Artikel, Kunden, Umsatz* (Article, Customer, Sales, shown below in the middle) supports queries for a number of different topics:

- ✓ Individual customers
- ✓ Artists
- ✓ Articles
- ✓ Types of pictures
- ✓ Sales

One asks, for example, about reproductions that are available for a specific artist (like Franz Marc, a German expressionist who lived from 1880 to 1916). A further HTML page then is displayed, as seen here.



Available Selections for a Specific Artist



Franz Marc,
"Dreaming Horse"



e-business value!

With a hyperlink on the menu, users can connect to an item's master record to get more information, such as the technique used for the reproduction and the number of copies in stock. Users even can display individual pictures (like "Two Horses in Red and Blue" or "Dreaming Horse"). Many more queries also are possible.

Three-tiered configuration

The figure below illustrates the communication setup used for the intranet solution. Communication within the network is done using TCP/IP. Communication between the Web server – an IBM Netfinity® 3000 – and CICS/VSE™ is over APPC.

On the Netfinity server, an HTML page is filled dynamically at run-time with the variables provided by the host.

From a browser, a button or hyperlink calls a new HTML page or a program on the host. Data on the host is stored within VSE/VSAM as key-sequenced files that have alternate indices.

Within an extremely short period of time, the IT team met its goals of integrating existing mainframe resources with new technologies. By doing so, Kunstanstalten May AG now enjoys a number of major benefits, including:

- Increased end-user satisfaction because applications are more transparent,
- Cost reduction through improved order processing,
- Online, interactive sales and decision support for sales personal, and
- A reusable, efficient methodology for Web-enabling additional mainframe applications.

By this Autumn, the solution will be on the Internet and open to external customers. At that time, they also will be able to use the functions briefly described here and to place orders directly online.

Additional information

Lattwein GmbH provides comprehensive solutions for VSE/ESA and OS/390. One of its main products is Communication Program Generator. Level 5 of this programming language is a tool that allows developers with mainframe skills to implement Web browser applications. Such applications can be used as an intranet solution in a private network or on the Web.



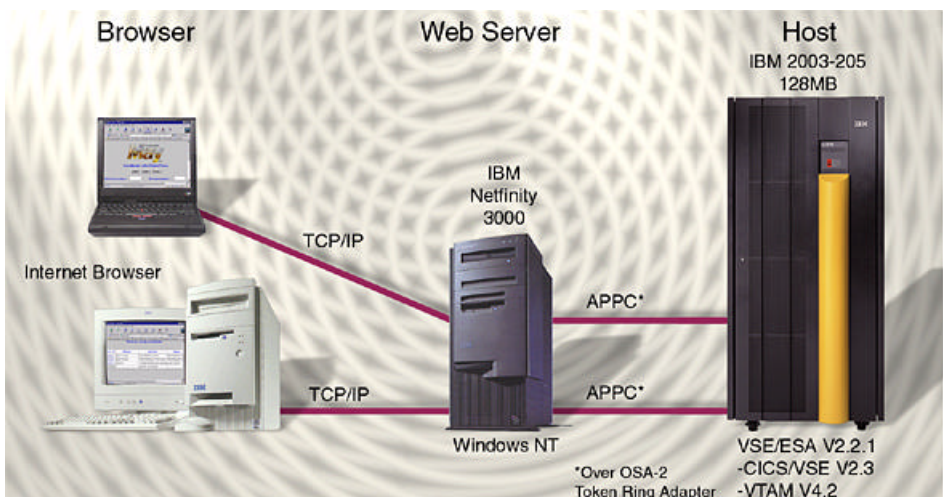
CPG is supported for both VSE/ESA and OS/390, is Year 2000 compliant, and exploits ESA architecture. To learn more, go to:

<http://www.lattwein.de/>

For more information about the solution described in this article, you may contact:

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Basic Communication Setup

Editor's Note: The next issue of the *S/390 Bulletin* (December 1999) will have additional articles describing how IBM customers are using combinations of Netfinity and S/390 servers to drive their business across the enterprise.