



LEXIS-NEXIS Case Study

Background

LEXIS-NEXIS is a trusted name in providing decision-support services to professionals in the legal, business and government markets. Headquartered in Dayton, OH, the company helps a variety of professionals collect, manage and use information more productively. LEXIS-NEXIS makes its premium, branded information products available on its traditional online dial-up service, via CD-ROM, books and on the World Wide Web. Purchasing the LEXIS-NEXIS brand and those of its subsidiaries carries with it the guarantee of access to information from authoritative sources, enriched with valuable enhancements – such as indexing, linkages and segmentation -- from the company that invented electronic information research.

LEXIS-NEXIS continues to be the definitive source for information since its founding in 1966. Serving customers in more than 60 countries, the company's mission is to be the preferred provider of decision support information and services. The breadth and depth of information stored in the LEXIS-NEXIS 8,700 databases is astounding: 2 trillion characters online; 2 billion searchable documents, (compared to 320 million documents on the www); 24,871 sources, and 6.8 million documents added each week. The company has more than 1.6 million subscribers, who account for more than 400,000 searches per day.

LEXIS-NEXIS is a division of Reed Elsevier Inc., and a member of the Reed Elsevier plc group, one of the world's leading publishing and information businesses.

The Challenge

LEXIS-NEXIS strives to make its information easily accessible and flexible to accommodate users' specific information requirements. As more customers access its databases via the Web, LEXIS-NEXIS required powerful technology capable of supporting increased worldwide Internet-based access.

LEXIS-NEXIS had powered its vast database search and customer management solutions using a large installation of MVS mainframe hardware platform that houses all its data. To operate a more flexible, cost-effective and Web-friendly service, LEXIS-NEXIS needed to reduce its reliance on centralized legacy systems and replace it with a network of distributed servers and data warehouses with a single underlying database environment. Such a system would provide LEXIS-NEXIS with significant cost savings, improved ease-of-use for subscribers and scalability to add new information sources and customers in the future.

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In 1998, LEXIS-NEXIS began researching available technology solutions to power its Web-Search Server application. They had several criteria for their database product: it had to be able to scale to support thousands of concurrent users; be distributed across many servers and clients around the world; integrate with its legacy MVS systems; and support 24 X 7 availability. LEXIS-NEXIS prototyped and benchmarked two finalist object database products for one year, and selected Objectivity Inc.'s Objectivity/DB for its scalability, availability and transaction performance. In March 1999, the company deployed Objectivity as the underlying database technology to allow subscribers to perform customized searches of the LEXIS-NEXIS data warehouse via Web browsers and custom LEXIS-NEXIS session managers.

The Solution

Objectivity/DB is a leading distributed, scalable object database with support for mixed language development and mixed-hardware environments. LEXIS-NEXIS selected Objectivity/DB for its ability to increase developer productivity, shorten time to market, support for fault tolerance and data replication, and provide an ideal platform for mission-critical applications requiring continuous performance and adaptability to future technologies. LEXIS-NEXIS also chose Objectivity for its support of multiple programming interfaces, including Java, C++, Smalltalk and SQL (ODBC) to provide LEXIS-NEXIS with flexibility and options in deploying new applications.

“Objectivity’s distributed architecture allows us to support huge numbers of concurrent users and large volumes of data worldwide on a 24 x 7 basis. Additionally, Objectivity’s unique containerization scheme allows us to maximize performance,” said Richard Siple, development manager for LEXIS-NEXIS. “Objectivity has helped us gain true competitive advantage by enabling us to enhance our level of customer satisfaction. Our customers experience improved productivity with faster searches.”

Objectivity/DB is a key to the LEXIS-NEXIS research application that provides access to billions of documents, for thousands of concurrent users, performing hundreds of thousands of transactions per day. Objectivity/DB stores the information resulting from a search, retrieves information for customer browsing and stores information and statistics for market research and billing. Objectivity/DB runs on Sun Microsystems Solaris servers and the LEXIS-NEXIS product interfaces with legacy repository and billing systems running on IBM mainframes.

Objectivity/DB powers the LEXIS-NEXIS Web-Search Server Application. The application updates information requests from MVS mainframes, and the data is then passed through to the subscribers requesting specific information. Objectivity/DB’s Fault Tolerance and Data Replication capabilities allow LEXIS-NEXIS to make their services available worldwide on a 24 X 7 basis. Objectivity running on Sun Solaris is enabling LEXIS-NEXIS to move away from the MVS mainframe hardware platform, and in its

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place implementing “Super Search” Servers with Objectivity/DB. LEXIS-NEXIS anticipates that its Objectivity-based search solution will greatly reduce their cost-per-search, while increasing subscribers, market share and profits.

Summary

Implementing a browser-based interface to the LEXIS-NEXIS services was critical to extending the company’s franchise to the Internet to fortify their ongoing competitive position as well as to offer its worldwide customers with faster, easier access to information. To provide seamless information access and management on a worldwide scale, LEXIS-NEXIS was required to migrate from its legacy-based solutions to a client/server-based environment built to accommodate the rigorous demands of 24X7 access by tens of thousands of concurrent business and governmental users. By deploying Objectivity/DB, LEXIS-NEXIS is able to provide a Web-based solution that is powerful enough to support the company’s guarantee of access to information from authoritative sources, enriched with valuable enhancements – such as indexing, linkages and segmentation -- from the company that invented electronic information research.

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