The Implementation of a Distributed Hypermedia Archive for Architectural Design Precedents

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In this paper we present the current state of an ESPRIT IV project the authors are involved in (VHF- A Virtual Hypermedia Factory, grant nr. 22251). The aim of the project is to develop methodologies and technologies for distributed hypermedia production and dissemination. The application scenario of the Austrian partners is the realisation of electronic documentation on Austrian architecture of the 20th century.
The partners in the project are the Albertina, a collection of graphic arts that houses a special section for architectural drawings both contemporary and historic, and the Austrian Architectural Foundation, the umbrella organisation of the architectural centres which are established in nine different locations in Austria. The collection of information will be done in a distributed environment and made accessible to the different user groups through specially tailored interfaces.
Objectives

Within this overall framework, Albertina and AAF have different objectives:

The Albertina is a well established institution, specialised in collecting graphic arts. Besides making objects of art directly accessible to researchers, one of the services of the Albertina is the provision of photographs of its originals to publishers. The main reasons to digitise its originals, to store them in a database, and to make them accessible via the net are:

- to save originals from unnecessary manipulation
- to make selection easier for publishers
- to simplify provision of images to publishers
- to present the Albertina to the public

The AAF is a very young joint platform of individual, geographically distributed member organisations (Austrian Architectural Centres - AACs). Its main goal is to act as an information co-ordination, integration and distribution centre concerning contemporary Austrian architecture. The AAF will promote interaction between the distributed AACs, will provide a common front-end to all the services of the AACs, and will co-ordinate the efforts to document contemporary Austrian architecture. In the latter point AAF and Albertina share common interests, as the Albertina houses a great number of drawings and models concerning the Architecture of the 20th century.
The main goals for the AAF to use the possibilities of the Internet are:

- to speed up the communication among individual AACs and between AACs and the AAF
- to create a common front-end to services and activities of the individual centres (table of services, calendar of events)
- to create a database on contemporary Austrian architecture (covering objects, projects, discourse and actors)
- to achieve a corporate identity that clearly states the nature of the AAF as a "virtual

institution" overcoming the drawback of geographical distribution

The VHF project will provide a distributed database to satisfy the above-mentioned objectives. This database will be used for electronic publishing in two ways, i.e. for conventional EP-products and for dynamic creation of documents responding to individual user needs. The project takes into account issues such as copyright, security and accounting, that are crucial for real-world applications in the field.
In the paper we will discuss the methodology, architecture and the implementation of the distributed archive. For the conference we expect to present a working prototype.

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