

ITWorx Develops the Arabic e-Content Portal, Winner of the Early Microsoft Office 2007 Award



Country:

Egypt

Industry:

Government

Customer:

Egyptian Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (MCIT)

Executive Summary

The Arabic e-Content portal, www.fekr-rama.com, is another success story added to ITWorx portfolio of e-government projects. Built on MOSS 2007, the portal is a turning point for the Arabic-speaking population worldwide. The Arabic e-Content portal is part of MCIT vision of digitize content. It plays a pivotal role in preserving and continuously increasing the Arabic wealth of culture, literature, and heritage. Researchers, scholars, students, and interested readers can access and download a vast treasure trove of books and manuscripts at 60% of the regular hardcopy cost.

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ITWorx initiated the development of the Egyptian MCIT giant Arabic e-Content Portal, Fekr-Rama, using MOSS 2007 beta version. It was a challenging excavation that included heavy training, hand-on sessions along with close collaboration between ITWorx team, Microsoft Egypt Principal Consultants, and Redmond SharePoint team. ITWorx addressed the technical challenges of the new product and leveraged its capabilities; qualifying itself for the 2006 Early Adopters Award for MOSS 2007.

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Sherif El-Tony,
ISV DE,
Microsoft Egypt

The Customer

The Egyptian Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (MCIT) is pioneering initiatives that give Egyptians maximum benefit from information and communication technologies, fostering the transition into the information society. MCIT works to create the most suitable environment for healthy development of the ICT industry by promoting competition, encouraging multinational investment, and partnering with the private sector and civil society.

The Challenge

Until today, there is no central specialized Arabic content portal that targets Egyptians and Arabic speaking users worldwide; an issue threatening the preservation of the Arabic literary tradition. Although there are many individual efforts to present Arabic content on the Internet, these efforts were relatively small compared to the cultural history of Arabs. Accordingly, the need has arisen to complement the existing efforts and create a powerful representation for Arabic e-content on the Internet.

Egypt's MCIT adopted the project of creating a giant gateway that provides readers, researchers, and publishers with means to access and purchase Arabic digital books online. The project is a partnership between the MCIT, the Arab Publishers Union, and the E-Learning and Business Applications Union in addition to the Ministry of Culture and, eventually, countries across the Arab world. The objective is to assemble a unique repository of Arab written works than can be easily accessed with affordable user fees and subscriptions that would cover the portal operating cost.

Technologies and Software

- Microsoft Office SharePoint Server (MOSS) 2007
- Microsoft Commerce Server 2007
- Microsoft SQL Server 2005
- .NET Framework 2.0
- Lockizard Safeguard PDF Security

The Solution

MCIT commissioned ITWorx, Microsoft Gold Certified Partner, to develop the Arabic e-Content Portal. ITWorx used Microsoft Office SharePoint Server (MOSS) 2007 and Microsoft Commerce Server 2007 to enable users to browse, search, buy, print, and download digital books, as well as view animated books online via a centralized portal. Though the portal, users can listen to Arabic traditional multimedia and view cultural and historical photos.

Using MOSS 2007, ITWorx delivered a full-fledged e-content portal, allowing registered users to access and manage their profiles and shopping process. The solution integrates MOSS 2007 with Commerce Server 2007 to keep track of products, books, animated books, and other cultural items sold on the portal. Safeguards were built into the system to protect the user, the transaction's security, and the purchase integrity. With 24\7 availability, the portal has back-office content management and high security using digital rights management and user accounts. Other portal features include Online Help, User Feedback and Frequently Asked Questions, Voting, Youth Authors, Quiz Questionnaire, Best Sellers, and News.

ITWorx used MOSS 2007 search engine to enable users to search within books and sites using basic free-text search and advanced search. ITWorx created Web content templates, including news and online help, to facilitate portal administrators' form filling in an organized manner. Users can register on the site, search for an item, and pay for it online through a unique access code, which is altered after three transactions to prevent unauthorized downloads.

Payment is made by credit card through the Credit and Pointing System. To access the portal's books, users have two options; either pay the book's discounted price and download it as an encrypted PDF file on their computers, or -for a reduced fee- have access for a limited time to read the book online.

Furthermore, the portal uses most advanced user profiling and detecting methods to distinguish between users from most developed countries, least developed countries, and Egypt. Based on their origin, the portal shows its items prices in the corresponding currency, with different discounts for least developed countries. Payment is extended to support both Egyptian Pounds and US Dollars.

The portal generates operational reports for site hits and user trends and statistical analysis that track all transactions of every book or software accessed, user details, access type, and date and time of each transaction.

The project is developed, tested, and deployed in three phases. The first phase has assembled more than 7000 items in digital format on the portal. The second and third phases involve integrating all publishers of Arabic literature and other media formats, such as music.

Books are categorized by topic, such as literature, economics, history, arts and sciences; by author, publisher, date of publication and ISBN identification. In conjunction with the Arabs Publishers' Association, all books owned by the association and written in Arabic are being digitized before being offered online.

The Benefits

Preserving heritage

The Arabic e-Content Portal promotes Arabic culture study and research. The portal is a giant gateway that makes online digitized content available to the Arabic-speaking population worldwide. The portal is an innovative IT initiative that gives easy access to millions of people all over the globe to a rich outpouring of Arabic literature, science, and entertainment.

Scaling affordable content

The portal is designed to include a mass of content such as books, software programs, multimedia, and etc. The continuous access and purchase of online content not only enriches the cultural experience and reinforces knowledge sharing and propagation, but also increases volumes of content to be digitized and published at affordable prices, 60% of regular purchase price. Subscriptions are available for users to read materials for a specific period of time.

Prevailing educational resources

Researchers, teachers, and students have access to a rich library of material; categorized and searchable. The portal allows for easy interaction between all parties interested in Arabic research and literature. Researchers and students can post inquiries to locate source material, while publishers get in contact with those who need material that is hard to trace. Enriching the online content and user experience through the Arabic e-Content Portal increases the number of computer and Internet users in Egypt as well as the Arab world.

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