

INDUSTRY

Government / Transportation

SOLUTION

Manage the output from the mainframe payroll system for 42,000 employees

ORGANIZATION

MTA - New York City Transit



The New York City Transit (NYCT) Controller's Division (Payroll Section) is conducting a pilot of the COLD technology. Recently, emerging technology staff members identified a new software package that captures the print files generated by a mainframe and automatically distributes them over a local area network, Intranet or on CD-ROM. A key feature of the new software is its ability to re-index and cross-reference by employee name, eliminating the need for a manual task that previously required a dedicated resource. "We anticipated that the time, paper and storage savings produced by this program will pay for its entire cost," said Kevin F. McKenna, Controller for the NYCT, Brooklyn, New York.

The NYCT operates one of the most extensive and complex public transportation systems in the world. Public transit ridership declined due to the car and highway boom of the '50s and '60s and New York City's fiscal crisis in the '70s. However, ridership figures for the subway and bus are rising steadily again. Each day, close to six million people use New York City Transit - more than 1.8 billion customers annually. Buses travel about 102 million miles annually - the equivalent of going to Mars and back.

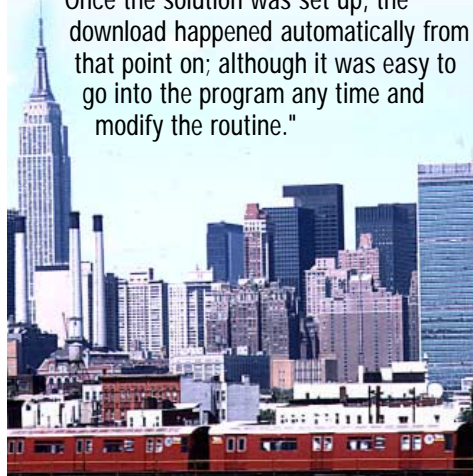
With a 42,000-person staff, payroll is obviously a big job. The biweekly payroll report for the organization currently runs between 4,000 and 5,000 pages. Previously, an operator printed three or more copies of this report every two weeks. Some of these reports were separated into sections that applied to particular departments because most users required only a portion of the document. One copy was stored for archival purposes. The documents were stored for about seven years and historical copies occupied 400 square foot of valuable space in the NYCT's headquarters. While producing the report, the mainframe would also generate a tape that was sent to a service bureau to produce microfiche that was distributed to external users. With numerous people doing these jobs, the total time required for printing, distribution and storage was excessive.

Automating the Process

A program was then found that captures and indexes the print stream generated by the mainframe. MetaViewer™ from Metafile Information Systems Inc., Rochester, Minn., reads this print stream and stores it in a flexible database where it can be indexed, searched, reorganized and distributed over the Web or on CD-ROM.

"The program proved to be relatively easy to install and set up," McKenna said. "No host code changes were necessary. We just specified which print files needed to be downloaded, how often the downloads should occur and what needed to be done to the spool file once it was downloaded.

Once the solution was set up, the download happened automatically from that point on; although it was easy to go into the program any time and modify the routine."



"The next step was defining a field for the employee name so we could create reports that were indexed by employee over whatever period we wanted," McKenna continued. "All we had to do was call up a report and highlight the person's name. Another important advantage is an Intranet-like full-text search that frees users from relying on the right fields being indexed. By using a master index, the program provides very fast searches. We were able to accomplish the entire implementation without any direct assistance from the vendor, although we did make a number of calls to their excellent technical support staff. The primary glitch was that, in the beginning, the time to download the information from the mainframe to the PC

was excessive. The support staff pointed out that some of our networking hardware was outdated and by replacing it we were able to accomplish the download in about 60 minutes."

Once the program was up and running, the first advantage that the payroll office noted was the elimination of the time required to print and distribute the reports. The reports are automatically downloaded from the print file soon after that file is generated and are immediately available for viewing on the NYCT's LAN. Local Viewers can use the MetaViewer client program that provides enhanced search capabilities.

The ability of the new software to archive the data on an inexpensive PC hard disk drive has provided additional savings. The elimination of the need to archive paper copies has made it possible to reduce storage requirements. Rather than sending the tapes out to have them converted to microfiche, NYCT operators can easily use the software to generate self-running CDs with specific subsets of the reports. The software also makes it possible to provide secured access to the data over an Internet browser, although NYCT has not yet decided to use this option.

"The pilot is a success with great promise," McKenna said, "and demonstrates the savings that can be achieved by converting print files to a PC database. The fact that this single application will pay back the cost of the software has really gotten our attention. There are many other applications for this technique within our accounting and disbursement departments and we plan to begin taking advantage of them soon. The next one will probably be to archive our disbursement records. This application should help to further reduce the considerable amount of time that we now spend handling paper reports."

