

## Demonstration Case V ONB

As mentioned above (Partner Experiences / ONB / benefits), before getting involved in the REGNET project, ONB was already preparing the conversion of the picture archive's card catalogue into a digital image archive, accessible via the internet. As a public institution, ONB is bound legally to award contracts to suppliers according to the national federal law of awarding contracts. Following this procedure for discerning the best system as the ONB future image database and collection management system, twenty-three offers were received in this tendering process by potential suppliers, many of them specialised in the field of image databases. In the end, an American museum retrieval software sold by a German company was selected as the best offer.

During the next two years (2000-2002), together with the supplier, ONB adapted this software to the needs of the ONB picture archive. All database index and digital picture data was integrated in the museum's database, and after extensive project work and the elaboration of a storyboard for a web-presentation of the picture archive, a test version of an internet web-portal based on the conventional picture archive card catalogue and on-demand digitisation including an ordering facility was launched.

Although this project was successful both in terms of user response and media feedback, ultimately it became clear that the chosen software product was in the end not ideally suited to fulfil all the tasks it had to perform. Although the purchased product was a search and retrieval software, the search performance was sometimes critical, especially with mass data and multiple requests (stress tests). Another problem encountered was the complex structure of the card catalogue and its user-friendly representation in the internet. Even after extensive project work and new programming, the results were still not entirely satisfactory.

In parallel, the results achieved in the REGNET project and the experiences made by ONB within the REGNET database were very promising. The integration of the picture archive card catalogue into the REGNET system and its representation in DublinCore and in XML-structures was achieved in a very fast and efficient way.

We especially enjoyed the close collaboration with AIT, both from the technical as well as from the content management point of view. Although a technician by academic background, Prof. Koch has been involved in cultural heritage projects for a long time. His life-long experiences as a technician in the IT-branch and software development for cultural institutions was extremely beneficial. It did not take long to communicate the needs of the picture archive, as he would be aware of the basic problems at once. The risk of misunderstandings and long explanations was very little, and so it was no less than stunning for ONB, especially in comparison to the project difficulties we were just facing with our existing database, what little amount of time it took to realize a new version of a database prototype designed especially for the ONB picture archive catalogue.

The flexible representation of the database in different user interfaces (end user, ONB staff) was achieved by close collaboration of ONB and AIT. For the end-users view, ONB could suggest an elaborated storyboard. Where this encountered technical problems in the realization, ONB and AIT agreed on a common procedure. Throughout the whole process, we got the impression that AIT was overcoming problems by suggesting and realizing alternative ideas of their own, rather than taking refuge in technical problems as an excuse for not realizing requested functionalities.

This enjoyable project experience has contributed to the ONB decision not to invest any more time, money and effort in the purchased software. In mutual agreement, an arrangement was therefore made between ONB and the supplier to rest the still ongoing project work for an undetermined period of time.

This came not as an easy decision to ONB, as much time, money and effort were already spent on this product and its adaptation. Furthermore, this software was designed to be the future collection management system, supporting many different functionalities such as cataloguing, administration of loans, assignments, management of object storage etc., none

