35,000 Receipts Every Day

Why the German Bundesbank relies on the windream archive

Together with the European Central Bank (ECB), the German Bundesbank – just like the other central banks of the Euro currency region – is responsible for the fulfillment of monetary policies concerning the currency within the Euro system. Monetary policies and other decisions regarding the Euro system are not made by the European Central Bank, but by the European Central Bank Council, in which the presidents of the national central banks of the Euro region and the members of the ECB-board are present. The decisions of the ECB-council are worked out by the national central banks. Additionally, the Bundesbank attends all committees and workgroups of the Euro system. The tasks of the Bundesbank have been determined in the Bundesbank legal directives and in the contract of the European Community.

The following five business sectors are in the strategic focus of the Bundesbank:

- Currency stability in the Euro region and realisation of monetary policy procedures in Germany

- Supervision and further development of the international currency and finance systems

- Stability of payment and clearing systems

- Cash provision

- Tasks in the context of banking supervision

Naturally, the Bundesbank needs high organisational efforts to fulfill these tasks.

However, the efforts would be completely unsuccessful without the assistance of modern and high-performance information technology systems.

Highly available systems – secure and reliable

The service center IT – the central IT-sector – is an internally "closed" service center. With an internal organisation which bundles the required know-how at several branches of the bank under a common leadership, the IT division provides all information systems and services required by the business departments. According to the functional and quality requirements of a leading central bank, the division provides a whole variety of IT products with high degree in technical competence.

SAP-data and documents are archived via windream in the headquarter at Düsseldorf. At this location, the primary workgroup named IT53 is in charge of the "Storage Management" sector and – in this context – is responsible for administering data, which is saved in the long term archive of the Bundesbank IT-center under highest technical security precautions. Concerning document archiving in the context of the SAP-systems used, the Bundesbank relies on the windream archive.

Not only because of historical reasons

For the Bundesbank, the use of an archiving system supplied by windream GmbH, Bochum, has nearly become a historical tradition. Since 1997 already, the bank has been using an archive system of windream GmbH for secure data storage.

Decisive arguments for upgrading the currently used version of the windream archive was the attractive price/performance ratio, low introductory cost and high security standards. At the beginning of August, 2003, these arguments and the increasing requirements concerning the existing archive with its continuously growing data volume led to the decision to introduce the current version of the windream archive as an upgrade. Firstly, the new archive version was tested until January, 2004. At the same time, old data of the existing archive was migrated to the updated one, as – besides the software migration – there was also a change in the archive media. The current archive version has been in productive use now since the beginning of 2004.

windream ArcLink for SAP R/3 – Connection to the Archive

Because the Bundesbank uses SAP R/3, archived data is accessed via the "windream ArcLink for SAP R/3" software. It represents an interface which has especially been developed for SAP/R3 applications by windream GmbH. The software allows authorised users to archive documents from an SAP-environment directly and to access data which has been created with SAP/R3 and which has already been archived.

windream ArcLink has been certified by SAP as an interface software for SAP-versions 4.5 and 4.6. The software consists of two components, one being a so-called ContentServer which collects and processes all requests of the SAP-system. The other component is an administration program with which the ContentServer can be configured and administered very easily.

From Accounts to Photos

Data stored in the archive is very heterogeneous. Many types of documents are archived, from accounts, correspondence in payment traffic up to user-related data like e.g. photos of employees – simply everything which is relevant in the bank's everyday business.

The specific volume of the account statements to be archived is about 20,000 to 25,000 statements daily. However, in peak-periods, the volume can be up to 35,000 statements. Further on, the archive also supports the personnel department. Since January, 2004, about 15,000 photos of employees which are administered as a part of the personnel files have been captured and archived digitally. In addition to this, a number of 7,000 to 10,000 documents of the human relations sector must also be archived every year. About 1,500 users at the Bundesbank can access archived data.

Data Capturing via Scanner

Incoming data and documents which are not available as digital files yet are first digitised at central scanning workstations in the headquarters and will then be transferred as electronic documents to the SAP-applications and to the archive. At present, 15 workplaces in 9 divisions are equipped with a scanning station.

Redundant Data Storage – an Important Security Factor

Data security plays the most important role at the Bundesbank. In order to eliminate the risk of a loss, data to be archived is additionally replicated and – besides the primary productive system – is stored on a second windream archive server, which is located at another separate data processing center. From there, the documents are again copied to two jukeboxes operating at the archive server redundantly. Worm media (WORM = **w**rite **o**nce, **r**ead **m**any) are used as storage media, which are placed in highly performant jukeboxes supplied by Plasmon.

Flashback: System Change

In the past, the database servers and the windream ObjectStore still worked under the IBM AIX operating system. At the beginning of 2005 and due to several reasons, the Bundesbank decided to switch to Windows, which was regarded as a time-intensive change. This change could successfully be finished in the middle of 2005. The change was worth it, as the switch was followed by an enormous performance increase, which can be seen as the result of an ideal cooperation between Windows and the windream archive. According to reports of the Bundesbank, the archive servers, respectively the jukeboxes, and the Oracle databases used are very stable systems now operating under Windows 2000.

Key facts:

- Fulfillment of highest security standards

- Installation of a performant and high-capacity archive

- Smooth cooperation with SAP/R3 applications

- Quick and uncomplicated data replication

Conclusion

The decision of the German Bundesbank in favor of the windream archive was based on a whole variety of arguments. Besides the attractive price/performance ratio already quoted before and low introductory costs, the windream archive is also easy to handle, scalable, reliable and able to manage huge data volumes.

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Managing
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