

UBS archives Web Pages in PDF/A Format



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UBS AG is implementing a ground-breaking project together with PDF Tools AG for archiving business-critical web pages in a manner compliant with auditing requirements. The result: enhanced security for documentation and review of communications contents. And the corporate archivist is very happy.

UBS is a leading global financial institution, the market leader in Switzerland in the private and corporate client sector, with offices in all of the major financial centers around the world and more than 60,000 employees in over 50 countries.

Electronic archiving of business-relevant documentation according to compliance directives has long been standard procedure at UBS. The company secretariat at the UBS Corporate Center is responsible for archiving management process documentation. There, all management process documents generated are saved in PDF/A, TIFF or JPG format and placed in long-term archives that

meet auditing requirements – reports from executive management and the board of directors, policy documents, company founding documentation and all governance-relevant information.

Risk and reputation issues

Until recently, only the company's web pages were excluded from this archiving process. "As part of our regular archive review, we noted to our surprise that the UBS website was not included in the archiving," said IT project manager Daniel Spichty. There is a detailed disclaimer on UBS.com and on all country-specific pages



Daniel Spichty, IT project manager, UBS.

that excludes legal claims by third parties based on statements made on the websites. However, different national laws also apply in this case. Thus it was decided that prevention is better than cure. Primarily for reasons of risk management and reputation rather than legally binding issues, the company decided to archive particular pages of the website as PDF/A in accordance with auditing requirements. Then there is the historical aspect as well. The corporate archivist, a historian by profession, is pleased to be able to add the web activities to his company history.

The content to be archived and what is technically possible were precisely defined in advance as part of a focused pre-selection process. Then the question of a suitable format arose. "We wanted to enable our employees to retrieve identified content in the archived pages via the URL or the date," explained Daniel Spichty – requirements that only the PDF/A format fulfills. With regard to long-term archiving, only TIFF, PDF/A and JPG make the shortlist of possible formats. Storing plain HTML files creates problems with displaying the files later, as particular browsers or operating systems are required for this. JPG or TIFF image files were not suitable due to their un-coded formats. In contrast, UBS can store the indexing



UBS AG headquarter in Zurich.

information such as URLs in the web pages when they are saved as PDF/A.

“Web page archiving is becoming a standard function!”

With PDF/A archiving, UBS can now definitively document which information was published on the web at a certain point in time, even 20 years from now. Furthermore, cases in which third parties take legal action against UBS based on information which was allegedly published on www.ubs.com and which UBS is not able to prove the opposite will now be impossible. For Daniel Spichty, it's only a matter of time until this becomes the standard. In the United States and the European Union, there are already pioneering judicial decisions according to which web pages must be treated just like other content with regard to legal obligations and archiving requirements.

With regard to web content, all pages relevant to corporate governance will be filed in the long-term archives, including information about organizational structures, management staff, important corporate bodies and distribution of responsibilities as well as all information relat-



“Hammering Man” by Jonathan Borofsky.

ing to investor relations such as share capital data, prices and the company in general. This also includes all link functions.

Software searches updated pages and automatically archives them as PDF/A

The solution has been in use since mid-2009; 150 documents were archived in the first six months. This takes place fully automatically and independently of the client. The document converter and an additional component which prepares content for archiving were installed as a preliminary process; these process the list of URLs to be archived on a daily basis on all ubs.com pages, including the country-specific pages worldwide. With each change from the archived version, the system automatically recognizes whether a new archive version needs to be generated or not. The sizes of the web pages to be archived are maintained one-to-one in PDF/A format. This creates a scrolling page in PDF/A, where the page numbering can be managed individually at a later point in time. The page is automatically saved in the UBS archive system, with full-text search functionality added.

Based on the experience of the web pages project, UBS has now introduced additional products from PDF Tools AG. Thus UBS also converts existing PDF documents to PDF/A format using technology from PDF Tools. “During the Web project we saw that PDF Tools can do a lot more than we originally asked for and decided to expand our collaboration,” remarked Daniel Spichty.