

IPR ownership, the test suite is publicly available, but the Open Source License does not apply. In CORVAL2, the test suite has been applied for the different CORBA ORB products, which are available among the project partners. Some failures have been identified during this test campaign, eg, incorrect extraction/insertion of CORBA: Any types or wrong GIOP codings.

The big volume of the test suite and the level of details of the tests give reasons to trust the quality of the System under Test (SUT) which have passed the conformance tests. But this technical

argumentation might be sufficient for the technical engineers only and not to the end user of CORBA middleware. Therefore a Brand program has been started in October 2001 to give vendors the opportunity to prove the application of the tests to their CORBA ORB product. Branded ORB products will get a certification document and logo for promotional usage. If any deficit has been discovered within the SUT (due to the application of the conformance tests) the granularity of the test suite allows identifying and correcting the failure.

The partners of the project are: The Open Group, Reading, UK; Fraunhofer FOKUS, Berlin; IONA - Object Oriented Concepts, Karlsruhe, Germany; Fujitsu - ICL, Dublin; Eric Leach Marketing Ltd., London; Object Management Group, Inc., Needham, MA, USA.

Links:

www.opengroup.org/corval2
www.fokus.fhg.de/tip/corval2/CorbaTests

Please contact:

Ina Schieferdecker, FhG FOKUS
 Tel: +49 30 3463 7236
 E-mail: schieferdecker@fokus.fhg.de

COVAX: an Internet Access to Libraries, Archives and Museums

by Luciana Bordonni

COVAX is testing the use of XML to combine document descriptions with digitised surrogates of cultural documents. The aim is to build a global system for search and retrieval, increasing accessibility via the Internet to the digital collections of memory institutions regardless of their location.

The objectives of the EU-funded COVAX project are:

- to build a web service for search and retrieval of contemporary European cultural documents from memory institutions
- to make existing library, archive and museum document descriptions accessible over the Internet
- to assist memory institutions to provide access to their collections, regardless of document type or collection size
- to implement standards and achieve interoperability between retrieval systems operating in the cultural heritage area.

Partners in the project include technology developers and providers (public research organisations and private companies) and content owners (memory institutions). The content owners have collections of varying type and size, catalogued using a variety of library, museum and archiving systems. The project is assessing ways to improve access to these collections by converting samples of existing data into a limited set

of common structured formats, each of which can be expressed using XML (eXtensible Markup Language).

According to the philosophy adopted by the project, future catalogs for libraries, museums and archives will be stored in a variety of XML formats instead of proprietary formats, or formats such as MARC which have not gained wide acceptance outside of their development context. Since much material is already described in machine-readable form, the project worked on developing tools to convert such descriptions to XML and to integrate them with native XML data in order to build user-friendly websites and data archives.

COVAX is converting existing files into homogeneously-encoded document descriptions of bibliographic records, archive finding aids, museum records and catalogs, and electronic texts using XML and adapting the different document type descriptions (DTDs) currently used for library cataloguing (MARC), archive finding aids (EAD), museum data (AMICO DTD) and cultural texts

(TEIlite). COVAX is designed to form a network of XML repositories structured in a distributed database and will act as a meta-search engine, offering access to all types of cultural data.

The COVAX system has implemented a multilingual user interface to access different data (catalog records, finding aids...) and documents (manuscripts, electronic texts, images, etc). The project is not creating new standards but will adopt existing standards and concepts (XML, existing DTDs, http...). The Z39.50 protocol provides a conceptual basis for communication between the multilingual user interface and meta-search engine and Dublin Core Metadata Element Set elements as cross-domain access points.

A comprehensive set of documents for the implementation of the prototype was selected. It contains a wide variety of documents, descriptions, formats and databases: standard and non-standard bibliographic records (including five different MARC formats), four different structures for archive and museum

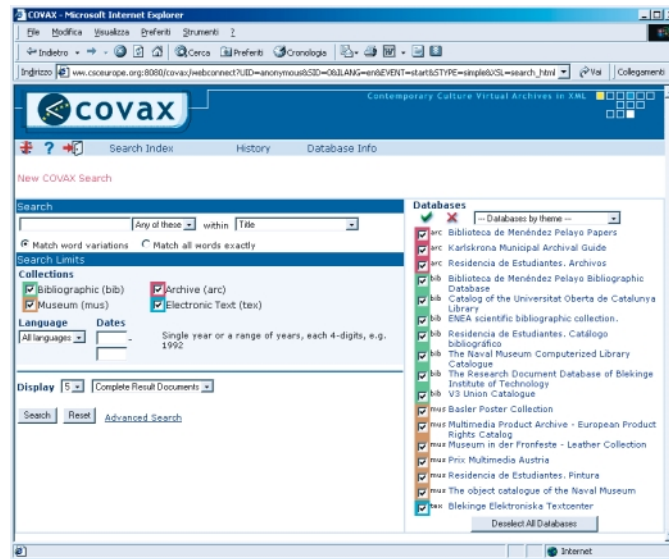
finding aids and information in six different languages (Catalan, Italian, English, German, Spanish, Swedish).

COVAX is intended to satisfy the needs of the general public as well as professional users. User requirements are basically structured around these criteria:

- the user must be able to select any or all of the COVAX databases for his/her search
- the user must be able to select any or all document types for his/her search
- the user interface must permit simple searches, suitable for the general public, or more complex searches, for specialised users.

COVAX partners have implemented two different database models: ad hoc XML databases, or existing non-XML repositories. In the latter case, information is retrieved from the original database and transformed into XML format before presenting it to users. To summarise, COVAX is not only incorporating XML as a basic standard but also integrating other standards, and adapting them to XML.

COVAX partners have implemented XML repositories using two software



Search in the COVAX Prototype.

packages, Tamino from Software AG, a COVAX technical partner and TeXtML from IXIASoft. Sites have been established in London, Rome, Salzburg, Graz and Madrid.

COVAX will test the benefits of XML to encode and process cultural heritage information, explore the feasibility of converting existing cultural heritage descriptions into XML encoded information, adapt cultural information systems to user requirements and contribute to the

extension of standards for presentation and dissemination of cultural heritage.

Ultimately, it will enhance access to cultural heritage (one of Europe's most important competitive advantages) for all citizens.

Link:
<http://www.covax.org/>

Please contact:
 Luciana Bordoni, ENEA/UDA, Italy
 Tel: +39 06 3048 3503
 E-mail: bordoni@casaccia.enea.it

A Cluster of European Projects on Agents and Middleware Technologies

by Massimo Busuoli and Emanuela Rasconi

European Take-Up of Essential Information Society Technologies – Agents and Middleware (EUTIST-AMI) is a cluster of 13 different application-oriented projects that aims at demonstrating the potential of agent-based systems and middleware technologies when applied to real industrial environments.

EUTIST-AMI started in July 2001, and is intended to create a replication effect in order to push the use of these technologies within European industry. EUTIST-AMI, coordinated by ENEA UDA (Italy) in collaboration with LogOn (Germany), CSIC (Spain), SZTAKI (Hungary) and DFKI (Germany), will last for three years and its purpose is to improve the efficiency of the management and the dissemina-

tion of the results deriving from the 13 projects within the cluster. It also helps emphasising the European dimension of the projects. A key benefit of the cluster is the ability to coordinate dissemination activities. As the results of the individual projects become available, the coordinators will organize European wide dissemination campaigns. These will focus on success stories of the projects, in order to show other potential users the

benefits that these two types of technology can offer.

The effectiveness of the message is also reinforced by the fact that the 13 projects are realized by partners coming from nine different European countries: Italy, France, Hungary, Switzerland, Austria, Germany, United Kingdom, Sweden and Spain.