

1 EDDS Tax Management System for Canadian CCRA

1.1 Jay Lawrence <jay (at) lawrence.net> exclaimed:

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There are few things more sure in life than death and taxes. Ok, well I can think of one more - tax forms!

The Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (CCRA - our Federal tax collection agency - like the infamous IRS) has a collection of approximate 10,000 forms, guides and other publications that require management and control.

For the past 6 or 7 years these forms were managed using a proprietary database software that was costly to maintain and difficult to extend. As well the system was housed on aging SPARC processors. In order to meet on going and changing business requirements the system would need to be upgraded or replaced. It turns out that by using mod_perl, Linux and MySQL plus some contracting time the entire system was replaced for the cost of 1 years operation costs.

A customized document management system was created to meet the unique business requirements of the forms management group at CCRA. This includes document versioning and multiple document formats for each document name. The filing and classification methods are continuously evolving and so the addition and decommission of some metadata fields is necessary.

New documents are created by either starting a new version of an existing form or document or creating a new document header record. Then each document format, PDF, MS Word, Form Flow, etc., is uploaded using the file upload feature and the libapreq module to decode the uploaded files.

Since security is a concern - we cannot place access to this document collection on the internet. Instead we must report out files and then use rsync to move our data to a staging server. By using Perl we have been able to change from a weekly reporting cycle to a daily reporting cycle. As well, by using Perl we have been able to fix some really nasty decisions that were made 6 or 7 years ago when publishing to the web was an unknown process to most. Finally, by dumping the old software CCRA and its clients were able to chuck out all those modems and go via the web.

Perl is practical for extracting and reporting - the turnaround time and cost effectiveness of this project is a testimony to that claim!

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