

Parliamentary Library: infocus

infocus - what is it?

- It is a current information service for members of Parliament and their staff;
- Provides clients with tailored and filtered electronic access to news and articles relevant to their areas of interest;
- Provides 24/7 electronic access to news and articles; it can be accessed anywhere, any time with intranet access.

infocus is made up of fifteen electronic bulletins, ranging from Arts and Culture, Politics and Government through to Social Issues and Transport that are produced each week. The bulletins contain news and articles relevant to a particular area. The bulletins are designed for easy reading. Each bulletin is divided into intuitive subject headings. For example, the Communications bulletin includes Telecommunications, Information Technology and E-Government. Parliamentary Library subject specialists write succinct summaries of the week's news at the top of each bulletin. These are so clients can quickly get up to date with the main events for that week.

infocus can be used both electronically and on paper. Using it electronically allows clients to instantly access articles of particular areas of interest from their desktop. Alternatively, clients can print off a copy of a bulletin and browse through it at their leisure.

Because issues can have several related articles and press releases, the system includes "Related Links". A 'lead' article will appear in the main part of the bulletin, while similar stories, press releases and commentary will appear in the related links so clients can drill down into issues if they want.

Intergen developed the **infocus** system using a Microsoft solution:

- Browser based - no need to deploy applications on desktops
- The Microsoft .NET Framework - scalable and flexible solution
- Microsoft Data Transformation Services (DTS), parses, validates and categorises item records
- Microsoft SQL Server 2000 - data storage, archive and searching functionality

infocus is automatically populated by three different information sources:

- Newztext <http://www.knowledge-basket.co.nz/newztext/welcome.html>
- NewsRoom Intranet <http://www.newsroom.co.nz>
- Index New Zealand (INNZ) <http://www.natlib.govt.nz/en/services/6innz.html>

Newztext and NewsRoom Intranet 'push' items into the system. Librarians initially set up searches on these two databases to ensure relevant results are received. Newsfeeds are pushed by either an XML document or flat file sent to an email account. A data transformation service (DTS) package (part of the SQL server) is written for each source document and translates the data into the database's standard format; i.e. each newsfeed is parsed into the correct fields, such as abstract, title and url, and is then categorised into the relevant bulletin and correct bulletin heading.

Librarians have set up 'canned searches' in **infocus** that search INNZ daily. Intergen developed an emulation of INNZ search interface to ensure librarians can design accurate searches that draw results to match each bulletin and bulletin heading. This also means that each search

string sent to INNZ uses the correct search criteria. infocus pulls data from an FTP server to retrieve files from INNZ. Each time the search runs it picks up any new INNZ items added since the previous search ran.

infocus indexers regularly check a wide range of print publications and electronic sources for inclusion in the infocus bulletins. They manually include these into infocus by entering the relevant meta data and writing succinct summaries. Indexers also ensure that automatically entered items are accurate and readable.

Beginning in April 2005, infocus has appeared on The Public Sector Intranet (psi.govt.nz). It is a single point, accessible by all public servants, where they can share information and resources with their colleagues across the State Services.

Each time the infocus bulletins are published, a copy of the infocus database is moved across to psi.govt.nz - and the latest fifteen subject bulletins automatically available.

The psi.govt.nz copy of infocus has a permanent address structure so that agencies can have their own intranet links that go straight to the latest bulletins. They can also search across the database back to the beginning of infocus.

Shared Workspace and Interagen provide the technical expertise, Parliamentary Library provides the updated database, source code and indexing expertise, National Library provides copies of paper-only articles in response to user requests, and Knowledge Basket supplies online full text to its source articles.

We have recently visited clients to seek feedback on the progress of infocus two years on. Some recent comments have included:

"It is absolutely wonderful. Couldn't manage without it."- MP

"infocus is good for getting up to speed on issues I know little about" - Executive Secretary

"It is a useful barometer on particular issues and for finding obscure issues" - Ministerial Advisor

Knowledge Basket, the suppliers of Newztext, see their relationship with infocus as demonstrating to other agencies the potential uses of Newztext E-clips. Knowledge Basket now has some government departments as E-clip users.

The Parliamentary Library negotiated control for the infocus system so that it can be shared with other libraries and information services. Since the launch infocus has been demonstrated to many libraries and Government agencies; most of them can see value in implementing it in their own organisations. infocus is a perfect fit with aims of the psi.govt.nz because it is now possible for many more state servants to make use of this high quality Crown funded resource.