

Case study: Gazettes – reuse of information



The London, Edinburgh and Belfast Gazettes are the official newspapers of government, used for publishing official notices and regulatory information. 'Gazetting' as it is known is normally mandated by legislation to ensure that information is recorded and made publicly available.

Although still produced as printed newspapers, the Gazettes have developed to become primarily electronic databases of re-usable official information.

The challenge

The government response to the Power of Information Report highlighted the need to make official information more accessible to the general public, with recommendations around the publication of notices on the internet and the implementation of solutions that make information much easier to re-use and re-publish.

- Recommendation 11. Public bodies are often required to publish notices and other information in newspapers, by physical notices or by other means. The same information should now also be published directly to the internet. This will increase the opportunity for those people and businesses affected to see the information, either directly (for example, by search) or by others 'mashing' the information In doing so, public bodies should follow the Office of Public Sector Information (OPSI) guidance and many may find it cost-effective to use the London Gazette service rather than developing their own systems.'

The Gazettes are key tools for the implementation of these recommendations. TSO, as publisher of the Gazettes, has partnered with OPSI, who superintend the Gazettes on behalf of the Government and developed innovations that ensure official information is accessible and versatile.

The solution

This project has made the information in the London Gazette both human and machine readable. Information aimed directly at end users is presented in a format meaningful to the typical user's eye, for example, the presentation of a notice in PDF format or on a webpage. The same information is available in machine readable language with RDF (Resource Description Framework) applied to enable reuse. RDF is a rapidly growing international standard format that allows statements about resources to be made and enables existing websites to be adapted for reuse. The RDF in the London Gazette identifies the different types of data

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contained within the notices and tells a computer how it relates to information available elsewhere, for example recognising that a company whose name appears in the London Gazette is the same company whose information is seen on the Companies House website. It can also include links to additional information if it is formatted in the right way. This will enable computers to access a network of information originating from different sources without having to hold the information in a single database and data from the London Gazette to be ‘mashed up’ with other data to create new, even more useful applications that we can’t even imagine at present.

Service mix

As part of this solution TSO has provided OPSI with the following services:

- Publishing strategy
- Web development.

Results

- London Gazette data is now available in a range of different formats: in print; PDF, XHTML, XML and RDF and many of the elements within it can be identified with a high degree of precision by computers
- Gazettes data is versatile enough to reuse in combination with other data. You can view a mash-up demonstration which was created using Environmental Protection notices at www.london-gazette.co.uk/demo
- London Gazette data has been combined with data on UK Administrative Geography, showing the hierarchy of areas relating to national and local government, by the Open Public Sector Information project, a partnership between the University of Southampton and The National Archives.

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