Case Study

The Scottish Government

Cost Optimization in the Public Sector

About the Scottish Government

The Scottish Government is responsible for most of the issues of day-to-day concern to the people of Scotland, including health, education, justice, rural affairs and transport. The Government was known as the Scottish Executive when it was established in 1999 following the first elections to the Scottish Parliament. The current administration was formed after elections in May, 2007, and manages an annual budget of more than £30 billion. In 2008, the Scottish Government selected Exalead technology to open up online access to 25 years worth of official documents on its public Web portal. The Scottish Government subsequently replaced their legacy internal enterprise search system with Exalead. In 2009, the Scottish Government's website, www.scotland.gov.uk, won the Outstanding Website Web Award from the Web Marketing Association.

About Scottish Govt p1
The Challenge p2
Selection Criteria p3
The Exalead Choice p3
Deployment p4
The Response p4
The Future p4

At-a-Glance

The Scottish Government

Business Problem

- Large volume of in-house publications to index
- Desire to use the same search technology for the Intranet and public-facing websites
- Need to unify search across all repositories and all types of data
- Desire to improve the user experience
- Short deadline for installation

Solution Benefits

- Unified search across all formats, databases, company sites and the Web
- Reduced TCO: only 1 server required, fewer licenses, lower support costs and reduced workload
- Improved search functionality with easier and faster search options
- Rapid deployment without disruption of day-to-day operations

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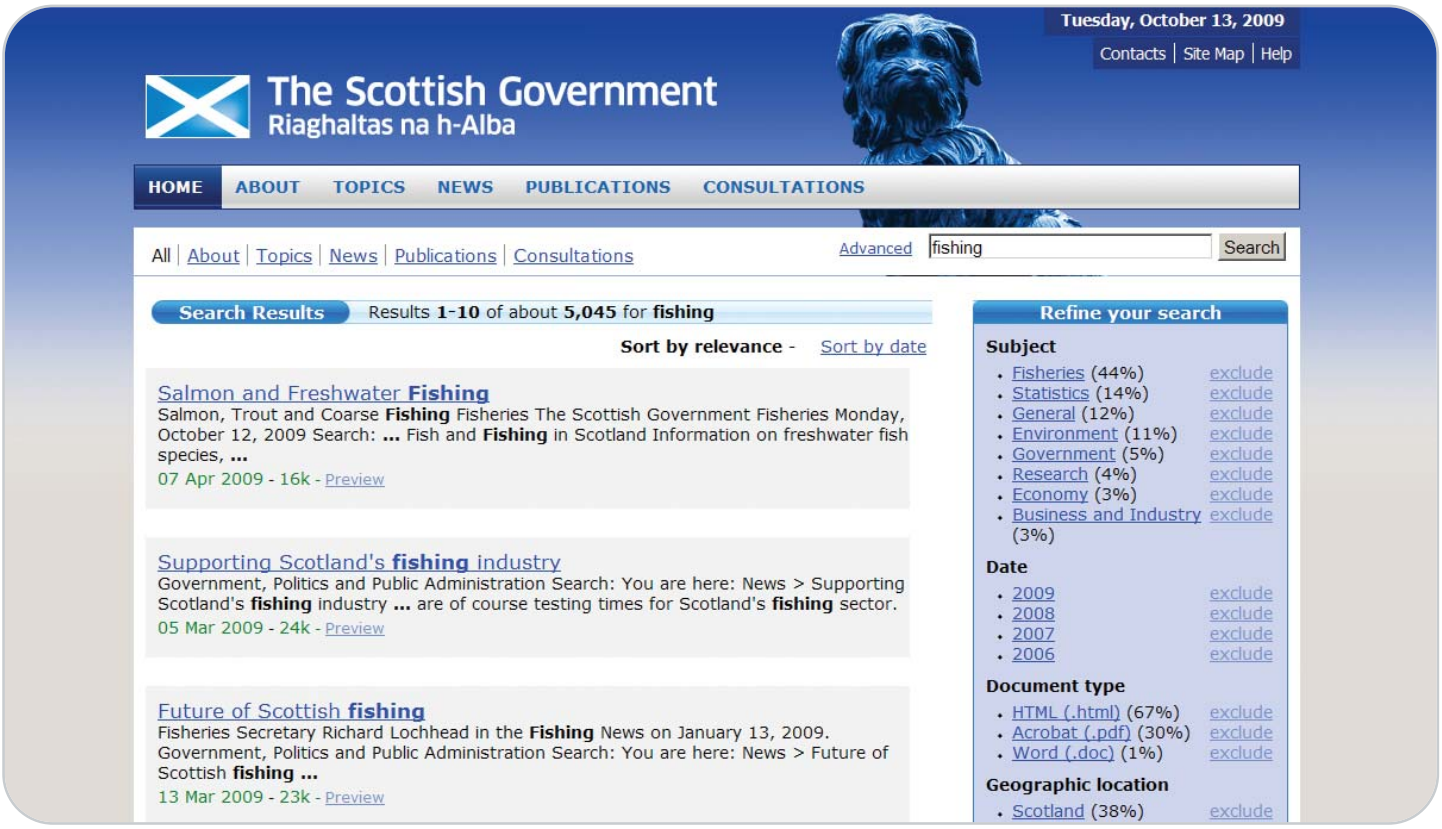

CloudView-Powered Search Interface for the Scottish Government's Portal

The Challenge: A High Volume of Data, A Wide User Base

The Scottish Government's online portal was fast becoming the top reference site for local communities in Scotland, and with over 700,000 pages available, it was essential to present search results in a logical manner to help users navigate resources. These users include the general public, local authorities and the media.

Quick and easy access to the Scottish Government's internal intranet by its 8,500 core SCOTS network users was also essential for day-to-day operations. There are currently 30,000 items on the intranet, and an additional 10,000 documents stored on network drives, therefore a powerful search service was required for the intranet and three restricted document stores.

The core requirements for the website and intranet search facilities were to provide fast, effective and reliable search, and to support simple search, advanced search, recommended links, automatic spelling suggestions, synonym matching, and section-specific searches.

Additionally, the Intranet's search engine needed to be able to search other types of stored information (file systems and databases), to apply appropriate security restrictions to content without the need for a separate login (i.e., taken from initial logins), to support search across designated external websites (for example, the Scottish Government portal and the parliament website), as well as to extend access to core external users, outside agencies, and Scots Lite customers who have Intranet access.

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Selection Criteria

The Scottish Government classified portal users into two groups: internal users (civil servants) and public users. To meet the needs of these users, the solution had to offer:

- Indexing of the Scottish Government's Intranet and website
- Rapid implementation of the new system without downtime, plus complete staff training
- Search functionalities such as preferred links, synonym search, spelling suggestions and taxonomy categories
- Support for Internet Explorer and Firefox browsers on the Intranet, plus Opera, Netscape and Safari on the public websites
- Capability to limit/restrict access based on user profile and security
- Ability to process a catalogue of mandatory data formats such as HTML, XHTML, all MS-Office files, Adobe PDF, RTF and also "new" formats such as MP3, WMA, JPG, GIF and PST
- Indexing of other internal and external websites via the access sources mentioned and indexing of MS Exchange
- An extensive range of analysis functions

The Exalead Choice: First Impressions Count

With the contracts for the existing Intranet and website search solutions expiring soon, the Scottish Government embarked on its eSearch Replacement Project. An invitation to tender was issued to companies included in the Office of Government Commerce (OGC) IT Goods and Services, Specialist Solutions, and a panel then reviewed the responses to this invitation to tender.

"We had previously been using the Verity search product, supplied by Autonomy, for the Intranet search and Open Objects for the Internet sites. As required by our government procurement rules, we retendered the offer for these solutions, and Exalead's CloudView product scored highly on a number of factors," explained Douglas Campbell, eSearch Project Manager, Scottish Government.

> "A specialist in large-scale enterprise search, Exalead had the required expertise in evaluating and managing extremely large data pools."
>
> **Douglas Campbell**
> **eSearch Project Manager**
> **Scottish Government**

The panel appreciated CloudView's 'out-of-the-box' functionality. It required no bespoke (customized) elements to enable users to locate information held in a range of formats and stored in various repositories across the Government's intranet, Internet and other document stores. Its ability to provide general search for the entire site, while simultaneously supporting search limited to specific site sections, also impressed reviewers as did its ability to amend the ranking of results.

"Flexibility and customisation are important to any organisation, and CloudView's ability to edit search page elements, with clear separation of content and layout, and the facility to display them in the Scottish Government's branded format, were all conclusive factors," said Campbell. "As well as being able to meet the majority of our requirements, Exalead's CloudView tender came in 7% cheaper than the nearest competitor over three years, and 10% cheaper over five years."

> "Exalead CloudView guaranteed comprehensive fulfillment of all the tender conditions and proved to be highly cost-efficient and feature-rich within only a short time of its installation."
>
> **Douglas Campbell**

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Deployment
Seamless Installation

The Exalead solution was initially rolled out to the 8,500 users of the Scottish Government's Intranet ('Saltire') and then extended to the 10,000 users who access Saltire from external Scottish Government agencies such as the Boundary Commission for Scotland, the Criminal Injuries Compensation Agency and the Scottish Prison Service.

"The Intranet search implementation went very quickly, with the product delivering quality search results with little configuration," said Campbell. "The bulk of the implementation effort went into analysing the content, determining what data needed to be indexed and how, and designing the search results display."

The initial analysis of the data to be indexed enabled the team to identify and exclude more than 34,000 old Intranet pages. Additional analysis led the team to eliminate 28,000 documents from the Further & Adult Education archive, and 300,000 items in the Ministerial Correspondence System (MCS) documentation, rarely accessed and available on the searchable MCS database. Removing this significant quantity of redundant and obsolete material from the index improved the quality of search results and eliminated the need for additional licenses.

"We received a high standard of service on the Intranet installation, both in terms of maintenance and development work. There was a seamless transition from old to new solutions on the internal and external sites, with no helpdesk calls or user complaints logged during changeover or in the weeks afterwards," stated Campbell. "This is, in itself, remarkable, as the Exalead search interface is notably more complex than that which it replaced. This suggests that users have found it intuitive and easy to adapt to."

CloudView is now implemented on an internal Scottish Government server, managed by Scottish Government staff and maintained by Exalead, whereas search for its websites is hosted, managed and maintained by Exalead.

"Exalead delivers a full-featured search service that is the equal to that of major commercial websites. This is what users expect search to look like in the twenty-first century," commented Campbell. "We average about a search a minute overall on the intranet, with peaks of 300-400 searches an hour mid-morning and mid-afternoon on weekdays. Performance has to be exemplary."

> "This is what users expect search to look like in the 21st century"
>
> **Douglas Campbell**
> **eSearch Project Manager**
> **Scottish Government**

The Response
Intelligent Search Results

With the new search system in place, end users can now benefit from a number of key CloudView features. Users can refine their searches, rapidly drilling down by subject area to locate the information they are seeking. The 'Preview' feature allows users to scan highlighted instances of search terms within documents in a variety of formats: for example, in a couple of clicks, a user can pinpoint occurrences of an individual name within a lengthy public enquiry report. As for the Government's internal users, they are now benefiting from 'Recommended' search results that are highlighted and promoted at the top of the results for key search terms; a separate, dedicated search for electronic forms, used in internal administration; and also a 'Top Searches' feature, which provides a dynamically updated summary of the most popular intranet searches.

"The intranet search system is robust and requires little maintenance. The 'Recommended Results' feature has received a positive response from staff administrating particular areas of the Intranet," enthused Campbell. "With 30,000+ Saltire search pages indexed, and a large number of users adding data to the Intranet daily, it is possible for key pages to get lost in the 'noise'. This feature has allowed us to address this issue quickly and effectively."

The Future
Foundations in Place

CloudView is a highly flexible and scalable platform that will enable the Scottish Government to continually develop solutions for managing its vast array of data while providing intuitive search, not only for its internal users, but for Internet visitors.

"Exalead has been proactive in devising solutions to meet our needs. Together, we specified and completed a redesign of all search results pages as part of a general redesign of both the Scottish Government Intranet and Web portal," concluded Campbell. "This successful exercise is seen as only the first step in a process of continual improvement to be carried out in partnership with Exalead over the years to come."