

University of Patras monitors the research and academic process with ABBYY FlexiCapture



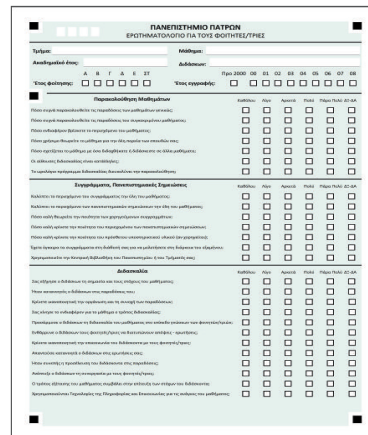
Background

The University of Patras was established primarily with the intention to concentrate on science, technology, economics, business administration and social sciences. The role of the University of Patras was to set an example of a highly qualified Institution of higher learning and to serve as a stimulus for the modernization of the entire Greek higher education system. Today, the University of Patras remains one of the best known Universities in Greece with a great reputation among the international and European scientific communities that reinforces the vision and mission of its establishment.

Challenge

The Academic Departments of the University of Patras systematically evaluate the internal processes and the education scope throughout the Campus using questionnaires. Students and teachers participate by filling out questionnaires which evaluate a range of aspects of the academic processes.

The University of Patras needed a data capture solution in order to efficiently automate its business processes. The challenge was to minimize the manual operations associated with questionnaire processing and to leverage data capture in order to increase overall productivity. The solution had to capture the desired data from the questionnaires and export them into usable digital information.



The main concern of the University of Patras was not only to find a short-term, quick and easy solution to serve its current needs, but to further invest in a solution with the potential to meet future needs as well. Investing time and money in a solution should give the possibility to reuse the infrastructure for other data recognition projects and allow future in-house development, according to any project's needs, utilizing the acquired know-how.

During the software evaluation process, the University compared several different products. It tried to avoid proprietary systems that need specific hardware and software components and require constant vendor intervention for even minor changes. A critical factor was that the solution should be able to deliver a standard set of data capture features.

Solution

When the evaluation process was completed, the University of Patras finally chose ABBYY FlexiCapture as its data capture solution. FlexiCapture is provided by an established, well known channel partner, namely Infobank Interlease Dsa. This partner not only has proven know-how in Data Capture but also uses the software in production and therefore can demonstrate several successful cases.

Investing in any kind of equipment or software is a crucial decision for the University as it is interrelated with its establishment and need to maintain a high level of education. Therefore, the University required a solution that could be used in more than one process. A widely used Data Capture and OCR technology like ABBYY FlexiCapture for form processing will efficiently fulfill the University's requirements. Moreover, FlexiCapture allows development and customization according to any project needs, contrary to other solutions that are designed for specific tasks.



INFOBANK INTERLEASE DSA

About INFOBANK INTERLEASE DSA

DSA Hellas S.A. was founded in early 1996, grew rapidly and is now recognized as one of the largest companies in the area of Digital Archiving. In 2004, DSA Hellas merged with Infobank Interlease and today operates as Infobank Interlease DSA (IID). The DSA sector provides mainly Integrated Electronic Archiving solutions, outsourcing scanning services and paper archive storage services. DSA works with companies and organizations that want to convert their conventional files into digital formats. DSA is familiar with new technologies and international standards and has the capacity, knowledge and experience to provide customized solutions, according to the customer's needs and demands, reporting a record of over 250000000 pages work experience.

For more information, please visit www.dsahellas.gr

FlexiCapture met all the functional requirements. During the development phase, the GUI provided all the needed functions for designing form, determining field properties, developing logical rules, and exporting data. The extended capabilities and functions provided by the user friendly GUI allow for a smooth learning curve. As a result, initial project development may instantly start without any special training.

Moreover, the ability to program in JScript or VBScript allows for further development, customization, and integration of additional functionality, tailoring the solution to any project's specific needs.

The University required a turnkey solution to kick-start the process and at the same time being able to fine-tune, adjust, develop, and operate any project with its own resources. With ABBYY FlexiCapture, the IT Department is able to operate the whole infrastructure internally and to deal with the needs of 23 different Academic Departments.

Pilot project implementation

The first phase of the development was followed by a demo (pilot) project that lasted one month. Within this period 2,000 questionnaires from 5 University Departments were printed, handed out to students, collected back and recognized. Development and testing was done on the FlexiCapture administrator station. The FlexiCapture operator station is used for scanning, recognition, and verification of the captured data. After verification, the captured data from the questionnaires are stored in a database system. The pilot project was successfully completed, and the infrastructure can be efficiently used for the needs of the new academic year.

Results

The University of Patras has been using ABBYY FlexiCapture since December 2008, mainly doing development work, integrating and testing the entire infrastructure and procedures. Users of ABBYY FlexiCapture are either IT Department employees involved in administration and development work or University administrative personnel operating the infrastructure with IT Department's assistance. During the previous years, the research and academic evaluation process was based on a third-party solution; the University of Patras processed approximately 15,000 questionnaires per year. Using the new infrastructure, the University is able to process the same amount of questionnaires much faster. Use of logical rules, error messages and flags notify the user whenever certain conditions are not met. As a result, the user can separately check and correct each error. These rules may incur extra processing delays but guarantee more accurate results and rule out the need of post processing. The rules may as well be optional, or just trigger notifications. Thus, the user may not interact with the system at all during recognition and export.

The results are now more accurate compared with the previous system. This is mainly due to rules that allow and guide the user's interaction. In order to compare the two systems, the rules for error messages or flag handling, which incur time delay waiting for the user to decide, should be excluded. Under these circumstances, the new system is much faster.

Even when applying all the possible rules and thus introducing delays as the system waits for the user's decision, in the case of carefully completed questionnaires the process of scanning, recognition, verification, and export is completed within few minutes. The software's capabilities combined with the current know-how, allow for the development and implementation of any kind of demo (pilot) project in a couple of days. The benefits of reinvesting in the new infrastructure are compelling. It is now possible to easily modify, reconfigure and restructure a whole process, to use a reliable support channel, to train new administrative personnel, and to adjust to new legislation. Besides cost savings through the streamlining of internal processes, ABBYY FlexiCapture significantly increased the processes flexibility of the University, which can now explore new possibilities and ideas. Right now, the project is implemented in the production phase for each department of the University. More precisely, the results of 8,000 questionnaires have been compiled, related to the first semester of the educational year 2009 – 2010. Apart from questionnaire handling, the University is considering expanding its present infrastructure to other processes as well (e.g. recognition of data in invoices), as the solution ensures (a) ease of development, (b) rapid implementation, (c) reliable and fast processing.

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