

DataMirror Supports Scholastic Canada's On-line Ordering System

Commentary by Todd North, Manager,
Application Development, Scholastic Canada

INDUSTRY

PUBLISHING & DISTRIBUTION

BUSINESS APPLICATION

E-BUSINESS RESILIENCY



For over three-quarters of a century, Scholastic Inc. has been introducing the joys of reading to children. In 1957, Scholastic Canada Ltd. was incorporated and became the founding member of what is now an international group of companies. Spanning Canada coast-to-coast with over 400 employees, Scholastic Canada serves children, parents and teachers through book clubs, book fairs, educational materials and publications, as well as an extensive on-line presence at www.scholastic.ca.

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The Problem

As a leading publisher and distributor of children's books and educational materials, Scholastic Canada implemented on-line ordering services to teachers across Canada in 1999. To do this, the company needed to find a solution that would support its e-Business initiative to integrate and consolidate its existing iSeries (AS/400) based order-entry data with Internet order-entry data on an iSeries web server. The challenge was how to keep its web server running 24/7 and allow nightly tape backups to be performed without impacting the server.

"We realized that offering our customers Internet ordering options was a much needed addition to our existing phone and fax order system," says Todd North, Manager, Application Development for Scholastic Canada. "Basically, we wanted a real-time data integration solution that would allow our customers to order our products over the Internet at any time of the day or night. We needed a solution to integrate and backup our data in a reliable and efficient manner."

Essentially, Scholastic Canada needed to find an integration product that would enable it to maximize operational efficiencies and minimize planned downtime. Historically, businesses have carefully planned tape backups and other scheduled maintenance activities around windows of low systems activity such as evening hours when the physical retail store is closed. This is because DB2 UDB databases on the iSeries must be locked during the backup procedure. But Scholastic's new on-line ordering system needed to be available for business 24/7, leaving no window to lock the database and backup valuable web-based data.

The Solution

The decision to implement DataMirror Transformation Server for the Company's e-Business application was a simple one for Scholastic Canada.

"Transformation Server was the only product we considered," says North. "It was a sound solution that required very low maintenance. We were also impressed with the software's real-time data integration capabilities and its ability to select relevant

data for integration and maximize efficiency by ensuring only changed data is captured and mirrored from our web server to our production server. We were able to eliminate redundant data transfer and improve our overall operational effectiveness."

Transformation Server's unique capture, transform and flow (CTF) technology and its ability to integrate selected data in real-time enabled Scholastic Canada to allocate one iSeries as a dedicated 24/7 web server. Web orders could be integrated and consolidated with the Company's production iSeries which processes traditional non-Internet orders and other data, thereby allowing for scheduled tape backups and order process during non-business hours.

"In effect, without Transformation Server, we would not be able to offer our clients the full flexibility and convenience of Internet ordering without having to write programs that would batch transfer files in an unreliable fashion," adds North. "The DataMirror Solution enables us to have our web server running all the time to meet our customers needs."

The Benefits

For more than a year, teachers from across Canada have been able to easily order from Scholastic Canada's web site. Transformation Server's ability to integrate operational and e-Business data in real-time across the business ensures Scholastic employees have highly resilient distributed data access to all web-based orders.

Continuous data synchronization helps provide protection against unplanned or planned outages such as nightly processing and backups. It also makes Transformation

Server an ideal solution for distributing data and system workload throughout the enterprise.

"Essentially, the real-time data integration provided by Transformation Server has allowed us to expand our market onto the Internet and offer our customers the convenience and speed of on-line ordering," said North. "Overall, our response for on-line ordering has been very positive. Teachers are very busy people and they have been pleased with the convenience and ease of ordering Scholastic Canada products on-line. Moreover, we've achieved our initial web-ordering objectives and are happy with the results."

Scholastic Canada was also impressed with the sales support they received from DataMirror representatives. "We were pleased by how knowledgeable DataMirror sales staff were about the product and their ability to help us make the right decisions about the best software to implement," added North. "They responded effectively to our requests and made sure we had the tools and support we needed to get Transformation Server up and running quickly."

The Road Ahead

The future of web-based ordering looks bright for Scholastic Canada. It is supplying a much needed solution to its customers and has firmly established its presence on the Internet as a leading Canadian publisher and distributor of books and other educational tools.

Transformation Server has provided Scholastic Canada with an effective high data availability solution and allowed it to ensure its customers 24/7 access to on-line ordering.

Scholastic Canada is looking forward to expanding its market on the web to other sales channels. "Our on-line ordering option has been a success and we have achieved our projected percentages of sales through on-line orders," said North. "We hope to build on this success and increase our sales channels using our web site as a sales tool to maximize the on-line options we offer our customers. Considering Transformation Server's highly scalable data integration and resiliency capabilities, from a data management standpoint this is entirely feasible."



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