

## **LOBSTER\_DATA GmbH, PUTTING BOOKS ON SHELVES**

### **Lobster software automating communications in the book trade**

**From Kafka via Follett to Tolkien... book wholesaler KNV has around 500,000 books in stock at any one time. It supplies 7,000 retail outlets in 2,200 different locations - every day. KNV uses Lobster\_data, the data integration software from Lobster, to ensure its books reach readers as quickly as possible.**

Immeasurable amounts of data flows between Koch, Neff and Volckmar GmbH (KNV), book shops and publishers every day. Book shops send in their orders and KNV sends out delivery confirmations. Furthermore, KNV exchanges its catalogue data with a variety of stakeholders so that prices and book information are always kept up-to-date. The majority of this communications process is automated, and trips to the fax machine or picking up the phone are generally a thing of the past. This is made possible thanks to Lobster\_data, a software produced by Starnberg-based Lobster\_DATA GmbH for electronic data interchange (EDI).

### **Smooth communications between different systems**

The software converts both incoming and outgoing data into a variety of formats. For example, it converts BWA formats used in the book trade into the internal format used at KNV, and vice versa. The same thing happens with data being sent to KNV in international XML ONIX format, one typically used by publishers. As such, KNV's IT systems, as well as those of its partner book shops and publishers, can all read what the others are sending and communicate seamlessly with each other.

"Lobster\_data makes higher conversion speeds possible, and we can exchange significantly more messages than before", explains Dietmar Uhlitzsch, Head of Application Development at KNV's Clearing Centre. As a result, the company can respond quickly to the changing needs of book retailers. When publishers bring out a new book, say the new Harry Potter, KNV has to make over a million books ready for dispatch and delivered in just a matter of days. With Lobster\_data, IT technology is no longer a barrier.

### **A uniform system environment**

In the past, KNV used an FTP server and an EDI system that operated separately. Lobster software, on the other hand, has integrated both functions, standardising their IT environment. "Now, we have a product made by a single developer. Interfaces between different systems have become superfluous", explains Dietmar. In 2009, KNV tested various IT providers. "Other programs were part of the conversation, but we chose Lobster because their service and value for money were unbeatable".

During the conversion process, all the peculiarities of the old system had to be converted to the Lobster way of doing things. “It was a difficult task that Lobster handled very well”, stresses Dietmar. Today, well over 10,000 message links have been set up between customers and partners and the entire communications process is handled by Lobster\_data.

### **Automatically exchanging catalogue data**

KNV also uses Lobster software to bundle individual catalogue items from various publishers and make them available to book sellers as a complete package. Book shops can then enter and query information in their own systems. This helps them find out about any pricing changes or discounts, and to call up current author profiles and related content. Even the biggest online mail order companies within the German-speaking market use KNV’s general catalogue!

“Our entire business is on the rise, with more and more partners linking up electronically. With Lobster\_data, we’re optimally prepared for the future”, concludes Dietmar.