



The Society of Authors

The Society of Authors Uses the APT Stratum Solution, Based on Rocket UniData, to Offer More and Better Services to Its Membership

The Society of Authors is a not-for-profit organisation that was founded in 1884 to protect the interests of professional authors, illustrators and translators. With more than 8,500 members, nine full-time staff and three part-time staff, the Society campaigns for authors' rights, negotiates with publishers and lobbies for changes to copyright and libel laws.

An Unstable Database Needed Replacing

The Society of Authors wanted to be able to offer more and better services to its growing membership – but its existing database was poorly supported, difficult to use and too inflexible to be integrated with Web services. The membership database is at the heart of many of the organisation's core processes, providing services such as events and merchandising management – so its stability and flexibility are vital for the Society's effective operation.

"The first database we installed was problematic in several ways," explains Emma Boniwell, Membership Secretary at the Society of Authors. "The initial data migration was faulty, which led to instability further down the line. We didn't receive the levels of support we required from our IT supplier, and we knew that it would be difficult to extend the platform and introduce new functionality. Moreover, the user interface was inconvenient – we had to type in queries manually in order to filter the data. It was time to find a new solution."

Apt Solutions to the Rescue

The Society chose to work with APT Solutions, an U2 Business Partner specialising in software and applications for the not-for-profit sector. APT's considerable experience of building solutions for trades unions, institutions, clubs, societies, charities and public bodies led to the development of Stratum – a membership and contact management solution that offers broad functionality out of the box, while retaining the flexibility to be customised to the unique needs of each client.

"APT Stratum seemed like an ideal solution, offering not only improved reliability and usability, but also the versatility to adapt to our changing needs in the future," says Emma Boniwell. "The APT Solutions team's combination of technical expertise and knowledge of the challenges facing not-for-profit organisations has been invaluable, helping us build a solution that is aligned with current best practices."

The Society of Authors London, UK

Working with APT Solutions the Society implemented the APT Stratum solution for membership, events and merchandising management. Stratum, based on the UniData platform, provides Web access for staff and can be extended to enable members to update their own records.



Delivering Performance and Cost Savings

Nick Osborn, Account Manager at APT Solutions comments: "Stratum is built on the UniData database platform from Rocket Software, using the U2 Web Development Environment and U2 SystemBuilder products. UniData is designed to offer very high levels of performance, even on comparatively low-end hardware – which makes it ideal for not-for-profit organisations operating with a tight IT budget".

"In addition, UniData is designed to be embedded into applications such as Stratum, reducing the need for database administration and making life easier for non-technical users. The platform is so stable and reliable that the Society of Authors does not need to employ its own IT staff."

Simple, Flexible User Interface

The new solution provides access via a simple client front-end that can be installed on any standard PC, enabling employees to access the system from a laptop or home office as and when necessary. APT Solutions has also enabled Web access to a read-only version of the database, and the Society plans to extend this to its members.

"Our aim is to give limited access to members via the Web, so that they can update their own addresses and contact details," explains Emma Boniwell. "This will reduce our workload considerably and give us more time to develop the services we offer to members."

Increasing Staff Efficiency

The Stratum front-end makes it much easier for staff to search and filter the database, eliminating the need to design and type out lengthy queries. "APT Stratum is a very user-friendly system," says Emma Boniwell. "You can find the information you need with a couple of mouse-clicks, and it is much easier to segment members and manage information." Automation of processes and integration of events and merchandising also reduce administrative workload.

In the future, the Society hopes to work with APT Solutions to integrate the new database with its SAGE accounting package and to introduce a new e-commerce solution for merchandising. "This solution from APT and Rocket gives us a stable, reliable and intuitive database platform that is more than capable of handling our day to day needs," concludes Emma Boniwell. "We are confident that our partnership with APT Solutions will help us deliver even better value to our members."

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