

Couchio

VPRO – CouchDB and Simplicity of Use

Situation

VPRO is a public broadcasting company in The Netherlands, broadcasting on television, radio and hosting numerous websites. Being a broadcasting company means handling a lot of metadata for programs, series and schedules: channels, descriptions, start and stop times, persons, media URL's, etc. This data is delivered by various third parties in various formats.

The problem was that every couple of months a requirement popped up somewhere saying it should be possible to show certain data about certain media in a certain way. And every time a new solution was constructed. Maintaining all this infrastructure became a burden, so the VPRO developers decided they needed a centralized service for media metadata.

Solution

The team at VPRO built a backend application using Spring Framework <http://www.springsource.org/about> and Apache Camel <http://camel.apache.org/> which imports all the different data feeds they have access to (database dumps in XML, feeds, e-mail, etc.) and stores the data in a format they can work with and provides editors for the data. They use CouchDB to store metadata (text) as the actual media files (audio, video and images) are hosted on a dedicated infrastructure.

The metadata (program metadata, schedules, playlists, etc.) is then published as documents to CouchDB. Views make sure that frontend developers have a uniform interface for accessing media metadata via HTTP, which greatly empowers them. CouchDB views can easily be added as new requirements surface and are usually a matter of only a couple of lines of JavaScript. They could not find a simpler way to add views with any other technology.

Results

The new media metadata API is used throughout various websites in production. It is used on the VPRO homepage <http://www.vpro.nl/> to show current and upcoming broadcasts and it's also powering the audio/video archive on the documentary website Holland Doc <http://www.hollanddoc.nl/kijk-luister.html>. The VPRO team also built a guide widget for television and radio broadcasts and expect to use CouchDB in many more places in the future.

About VPRO

The VPRO operates in various media, producing radio and television programmes, filling digital theme channels, operating an innovative website, publishing a programme guide and organizing cultural activities for members. Every week the VPRO broadcasts an average of 19 hours of television and 57 hours of radio. The broadcasting corporation responds to specific interests with four non-stop theme channels. The website www.vpro.nl is progressive in terms of technology and more in depth in terms of content, and is updated daily.

<http://www.vpro.nl/>

Quote

Nils Breunese, Software Developer at VPRO, says, "We were looking for a way to create HTTP API's for our data. Instead of an API framework we chose to use CouchDB, since it can store data and comes with a RESTful API out of the box. Specifying an API is as simple as writing a handful of lines of JavaScript and your API is ready to go!"

Who we are



About CouchDB

Apache CouchDB bridges the cloud and the local network by making it simple to write web apps that can scale up to the datacenter and scale down for local use on a smartphone. The synchronization engine (inspired by Lotus Notes) allows sharing of data and applications across ad-hoc groups. Offline replication gives mobile devices better performance (lower latency) while saving battery life by avoiding radio usage. With offline replication solved in a simple way, application developers are free to focus on the code that matters

CouchDB is popular with developers because its document model is a closer fit for many domains, leading to less overall complexity. The JSON HTTP API allows developers to write dynamic database-backed applications without a middle tier: 2-tier CouchApps require only a web-browser and a CouchDB, and can be written by anyone with Ajax / jQuery experience. We firmly believe that empowering people to share data and custom applications at the edge of the network will lead to a more humane web.

Apache CouchDB is currently deployed by the BBC, Meebo, Assay Depot, Engine Yard, (among others) and is an integral part of the Ubuntu operating system.

Couchio

About Couchio

Couchio <http://couch.io> (founded by 3 CouchDB core committers) offers support, hosting, and professional training for CouchDB.

Contact CouchDB

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