White Paper

Dynamic Output Solutions For Oracle

DocOrigin vs. BI Publisher:

Different Approaches, Different Abilities

This paper will discuss and compare several of the most critical features that make up a Document Output Management (DOM) solution for business users. It is intended for the business or IT professional looking for a better understanding of the distinctions between Oracle's Business Intelligence Publisher ("BIP") middleware offering and Eclipse Corporation's DocOrigin Document Generation ("DocOrigin") suite of output management solutions.

Though having some similarities on the surface, these products differ in significant ways. When comparing their different approaches to managing your mission-critical Enterprise outputs, it is helpful to organize the discussion into logical groupings of features. This paper will follow that approach.

Specifics will be noted in the discussion, but it should be remembered that this is not an in-depth review – every company has unique needs and requirements that would warrant further discussion and analysis. Feel free to contact us as indicated on the final page for more details.

Eclipse

Corporation

Tel: +1.678.408.1245

Fax: +1.800.719-7790

E-Mail: Info@EclipseCorp.US

Similar Problems – Different Approaches

In order to effectively satisfy document output requirements, any solution employed to manage Enterprise output needs to deal with several core functionalities – a design tool to easily define output layout and formatting, a focus on documents as the design goal (easily managing overall page image layout and construction, including conditional formatting), a mechanism for data transformation and normalization, an engine for the creation of the desired output (in whatever format is required), facilities for managing the delivery of the output to its final destination, and the scope to encompass all of the types of output and destinations that organizations require.

At first blush, DocOrigin and BIP both tackle this set of requirements. However, they take very different approaches to solving these needs and, as a result, are actually quite distinct as to how solutions are implemented and which possibilities are practical.

DocOrigin is a highly integrated, powerful, and easy-to-use application that is separate from the originating application. As such, it provides an application-independent architecture and a comprehensive set of tools that allows organizations to define and manage all of their DOM needs from start to finish.

BIP is middleware designed by Oracle to standardize basic output management across their large portfolio of applications and suites. It also is the foundation for interactive BI query capabilities, giving experienced users (i.e. those knowledgeable in SQL, their specific application data, and report query techniques) access to query ERP data in an interactive fashion.

This different focus – comprehensive output management vs. standardization across application suites – leads to distinct differences in these products in terms of how they are used, how they are set up and configured, how they operate, and their suitability to specific tasks. These are what will be discussed in the following pages and include how the products deal with several critical functional areas, such as form design, flexibility, access to data, licensing, and others.

Enterprise Output Core Functionalities

Document Design Tool

Data Transformation Mechanism

Output Engine

Document Delivery Facility

Scope

DocOrigin

Comprehensive Output Management

VS.

ORACLE® BI Publisher

Standardized Basic Output Management

The Differences are in the Details

Contrasting DocOrigin with BIP requires that we examine the different ways that users must approach the creation and delivery of output to achieve their needs. We will focus here on just five of those areas – design tools, managing page layout and construction, available output formats, delivery options, and licensing. Each is intended to illustrate the impact of the differences between the two offerings.

Let's take a high-level look at each of these, contrasting the different approaches taken by each.

1. Design Tools

DocOrigin provides a full featured report layout design tool built, maintained, and enhanced based on user feedback. It is optimized for document-oriented design layout tasks and needs. On the other hand, BIP does not provide any design tool at all. Instead, users utilize common desktop productivity solutions (generally, Microsoft Word) to allow users to construct their report specification.

Microsoft Word is a powerful word processing tool. It is optimized for the selection and formatting of unstructured text and automatically flows data from page to page as needed without any user intervention. However, it is exactly that type of optimization that leads to several significant limitations when designing reports at a document level. It lacks a page-oriented design philosophy, making some important needs difficult to fulfill.

For example, it is difficult to ensure in Word that each page will have a 100% standardized layout that doesn't vary. Nor does Word allow form fields to be included in headers and footers, a common need in reporting output. Also it provides no job-level data manipulation features (e.g. it can't burst a single invoice run in multiple, different ways).

DocOrigin utilizes its own dedicated designer that allows the page-oriented design approach typical of most output needs. In addition, it has the built-in ability to allow for addition of highly complex and customized requirements when needed and has also been optimized for other important needs, such as performance, scalability, integration, and general user experience. It was also specifically designed to easily make use of additional integration tools, such as Eclipse's E1 Rapid Forms, that can automatically accept EnterpriseOne PDF output and normalize it into usable data for the design environment.
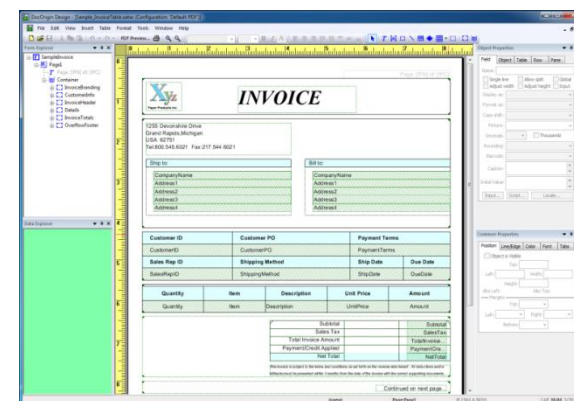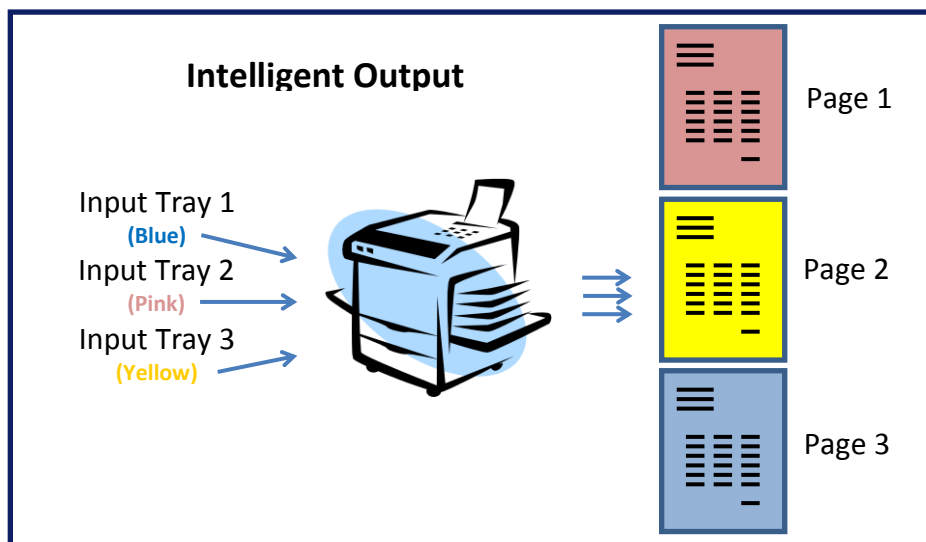

DocOrigin   vs.   BIP
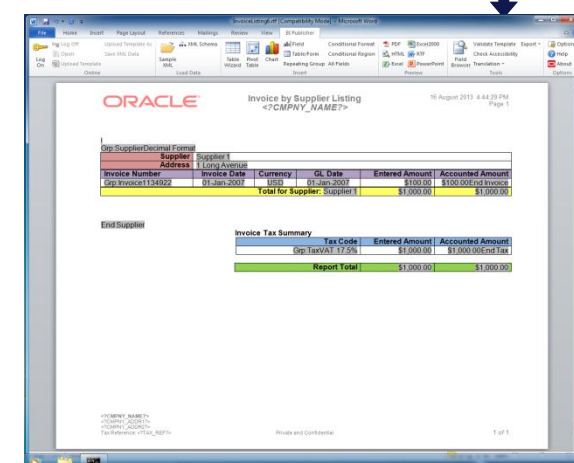
2. Page Construction & Layout

There are many types of everyday needs that a dedicated form designer, such as DocOrigin, can handle with aplomb that are far beyond the built-in or easily-accessible capabilities of a word processor approach. There are many examples of this, but some of the more obvious ones relate to the need to customize output to particular 'local' device needs, either on a document-by-document or page-by-page basis.

Intelligent Output

Input Tray 1
(Blue)
Input Tray 2
(Pink)
Input Tray 3
(Yellow)

Page 1

Page 2

Page 3

- Selectively turn duplexing on and off (e.g. only duplex desired pages such as placing Terms and Conditions on the back of page 1) if the printer has a duplexer.

- Print headers and footers in a local language based on destination (e.g. print headings in French at the printer in Quebec).

- Use input and output trays selectively (e.g. switch between letter and A4 for different pages, use different color paper, or use different paper stock) dynamically based on the document's content.

- After formatting the document based on the particular data submitted, examine the page for available 'white space' and intelligently choose content to insert based on how much space is available (e.g. promotional messages, instructional materials, personalized messages, even advertising).

Word processors simply don't have the tools to address these issues easily (or at all). Also, there are other processes that can only be addressed externally when using a word processor. For example, if you need to create two outputs sequenced differently, or burst differently on each run, then an external process must perform this work outside of the word processor, especially in high-volume, enterprise-class output situations.

3. Creating Output in the Desired Formats

Once the final document has been formatted based on the user's definition, the actual output must be available in a format relevant to the user's distribution requirements. The ease-of-use of the tools for managing this is critical to success, as is the ability to ensure consistent formatting across output formats. Managing this in BIP requires multiple touch points at different stages in the process. In some cases, the originating application will need to be customized. In others, a post process may be needed. DocOrigin, in contrast, supplies all the tools needed to manage this. In addition, many types of output runs require multiple outputs (e.g. it must both print and email the output). DocOrigin can handle this without requiring that the application output be submitted multiple times – making processing dramatically more efficient and allowing for much higher volumes on a given installation.

4. Delivering Output to the Desired Destinations

When sending the final output to its destination, you need the solution to be flexible. Depending upon the output choice, you may want to create different kinds of output (e.g. a PDF as an email attachment or an HTML page for use on a website with notification via SMS.) or even multiple types of output simultaneously.

If output routing needs to be dynamic, BIP requires that you alter the output from the application to include destination information. This cumbersome approach requires that the application be altered to track and communicate that information. This has several drawbacks. Two of the biggest: the originating application needs to be customized (incurring costs and causing potential maintenance issues related to upgradability) and licensing implications (see next point).

DocOrigin provides a wealth of features to dynamically manage where output is sent. It also has been designed specifically to allow multiple destinations without having to process multiple copies of the application output – in other words, DocOrigin takes one output and lets users send that output to multiple destinations in one or more presentation formats without having to process it multiple times. This makes routing of output much easier and dramatically more efficient than under BIP.

Different Output Formats & Destinations

ONE solution

HTML · PRINT · EMAIL · DocOrigin · MAIL · SMS · PDF
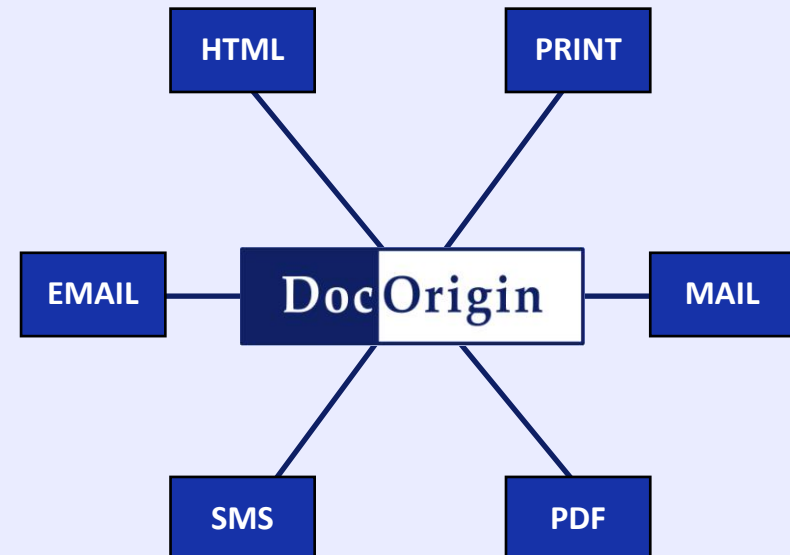
5. Licensing

BIP is touted as free to Oracle customers. However, sometimes "free" isn't really "free".   As a DOM solution, DocOrigin is licensed independently of the ERP or other application whose output is being processed. The solution can be used with any compatible application under the terms of its license. BIP, on the other hand, is only offered with a "free" license when used with default, unaltered tables/schemas in the associated base application. If there is a need to access custom or altered tables/schemas, or even to use it with a different application, then significant additional licensing will be required. Since BIP specifically recommends creating a separate database for managing complex output routing (see previous item), this is not an unlikely scenario.
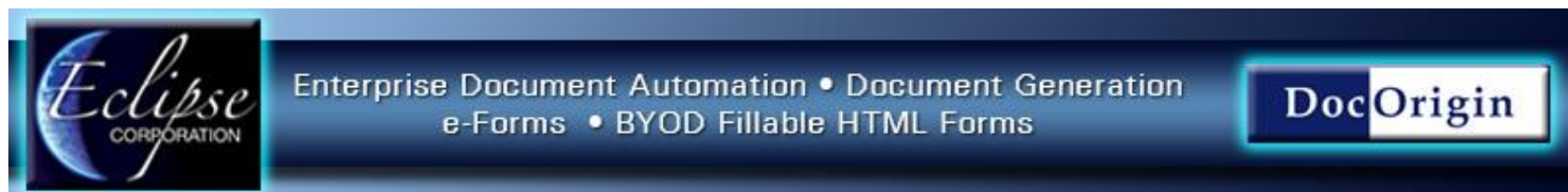
Summary

Both DocOrigin and BIP are targeted to address the output needs of organizations. But, as can be seen from the earlier analysis, BIP is only a partial solution for Enterprise-level needs. Though it provides mechanisms to design, generate, and output reports from Oracle application suites, it has several gaps in functional areas when viewed from a larger DOM perspective.

BIP does not offer a dedicated report layout designer, requiring users to utilize other off-the-shelf tools that are not optimized for the purpose. Worse, it supports several different such tools, which means that the available capabilities vary based on which tool is being used (e.g. Word versus Adobe). BIP does not offer a comprehensive scope of features, such as a useful strategy to store and archive generated documents. BIP does allow interactive queries, but offers no controls to ensure consistent, standardized data usage. And BIP's licensing is highly restrictive, allowing access only to out-of-the-box Oracle application suite data structures. An organization that needs to create output using other data sources or customized data structures within Oracle's application suites (and what company doesn't?) incurs a requirement for additional, and expensive, licensing.

DocOrigin has none of these gaps. It has a powerful, industry-leading design tool that offers incredibly easy initial document creation independent of the actual application output. But it also offers the ability to add layers of complexity and conditional processing (such as intelligent white-space utilization) to that base design as needed. It is a comprehensive solution allowing organizations to easily create the output they need regardless of source (even combining sources if needed). Its architecture inherently allows organizations to enforce output standards and show necessary compliance with standard output requirements. And DocOrigin is optimized for Enterprise implementations, easily scalable to whatever high volume transactional throughput is needed. DocOrigin uses Windows to power template design, and enhances the power and flexibility of documents with the use of Java Script. The merging of templates with data in production is supported on AIX, IBM i Series, LINUX, UNIX, and Windows. Performance and presentation fidelity are priorities in everything Eclipse builds. With speeds of 15,000+ PDF surfaces per minute and vector graphics for charts, forms and documents look great on smart phones, tablets, and PCs.

About Us

With more than 20 years of experience, Eclipse Corporation is a leader in correspondence communications and cross-promotion messaging for transactional business documents. Eclipse was the original creator of the technology that shaped the enterprise e-forms and document generation industry. DocOrigin software is designed to integrate with legacy business software used in all major industries. Eclipse products make documents and forms look professional, improve branding, and automate the collection and delivery of information. Contact Eclipse to find out why Coca-Cola, GE, Konica Minolta and the world's top companies rely on Eclipse. www.EclipseCorp.US • +1.678.408.1245.

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