



Taronga Zoo: Small Site Reaps Big Benefits.

Taronga Zoo in Sydney, along with Western Plains Zoo in Dubbo, are managed by the Zoological Parks Board of NSW. The objective of the Board is to be a world leader in the conservation, presentation and care of wildlife.

Until 1996, Taronga Zoo considered itself to be among the “technologically disadvantaged”. The Zoo ran a 10 year old legacy system which was down more than it was up, and although staff were doing their best, they were hamstrung by system inefficiencies.

According to Jenny Vasseleu, Taronga Zoo’s Manager, IT & Planning, the Zoo’s business processes are similar to many other businesses. “We manage complicated revenue and cost streams, creditors and debtors, formidable purchasing and logistics requirements, a tight bottom-line, and rigorous reporting requirements,” Ms Vasseleu said.

“Zoo staff were under a lot of stress, and to improve our program management, we knew that we had to do something about getting newer technology supporting a robust, and reliable accounting platform,” she said.

“The IBM and SAP combination results in a robust, manageable system. The AS/400 looks after itself, doing its own housekeeping.”

Stephen Rees,
General Manager Visitor and
Commercial Operations, Taronga Zoo

Business Challenges

Because of the nature of our legacy system, staff were making multiple entries of business financial data, and had to manually compile external reports. The reporting process alone consumed roughly eight days every month. The Zoo had to overcome significant resource strictures.

“In a typical catch-22, we couldn’t allocate staff full-time to implementing a new system,” Ms Vasseleu said. “We were spending so much time servicing the old system, and on our existing tasks, that we had limited personnel capacity to work on a solution,” she said.

“Another challenge was the fact that we couldn’t just go out and order the technology we needed. The Zoo relies on generous corporate sponsorship to operate effectively.”

In 1996, to satisfy Taronga Zoo’s requirement for an integrated financial reporting system, SAP donated R/3 licences, training and consulting, IBM donated an

Industry	Public
Application	SAP R/3 modules FI, CO, AM, MM
Software	OS/400
Hardware	AS/400



AS/400 Advanced Server Model 50S, and Andersen Consulting provided initial implementation support.

The Solution

In the first few weeks of planning, staff from all sections were taken through extensive process mapping. During this time, everyone had their say about what they needed on their computer screen. The Zoo instituted a small committee, and empowered them to make decisions on the fly. "It was a terrific process, and very useful for getting our configuration right," Ms Vasseleu said.

The team worked on the principle that information would only be entered once, and it should then be available for output and analysis wherever the business needed it. SAP and IBM leveraged global experience to advise on best practice implementation. "Because we weren't out to reinvent the wheel, but to simply streamline our practice, we saved ourselves a lot of pain," Ms Vasseleu said.

The Taronga Zoo system went live in March 1996 with the SAP R/3 Finance, Controlling, Asset Management, and Materials Management modules. Western Plains Zoo went live via an ISDN connection to Taronga Zoo in April of the same year. In August 1996 Human Resources went live.

The overall system supports just 15 concurrent users, making Taronga Zoo the smallest R/3 site in Australia. It was also the first Australian business to implement R/3 on an AS/400. "From the start of process mapping, including retrieving data from our old system, getting it ready for the new system, to actual implementation took about three months," Ms Vasseleu said.

Benefits

Some benefits arrived even before the system went live. "We were able to cull a lot of obsolete data from our old system, and also to familiarise our staff with working in a PC environment," Ms Vasseleu said. "Then, as soon as it was turned on, there were time management efficiencies," she said. "For the first time, people could sit at their desk, put the data in once, drill down, and find all the information they required to complete a process."

"The new system is a critical part of improving our financial operations, offering a range of benefits including: greater reliability, reduced paper use and real-time reporting. These benefits enable strict and effective financial control. In practical terms, this means we can dedicate less time to budgeting and more time to our environmental and other programs."

According to Stephen Rees, the Zoo's General Manager Visitor and Commercial Operations, reduced administrative and other costs accrue from:

- squeezing a seven or eight day reporting process down to within two days
- returning control to line managers and supervisors
- automation of nearly all asset accounting
- more efficient information processing for the Zoo's substantial capital works program
- elimination of manual balancing of ledgers and sub-ledgers
- reduced processing delays between Western Plains and Taronga Zoos
- using SAP's procurement contract facility to improve forecasting and reduce stock levels
- automated ordering and agreed delivery arrangements.

"From a financial point of view, the IBM SAP combination results in a robust, manageable system," Mr Rees said. "The AS/400 looks after itself, doing its own housekeeping. And what little SAP service and support we've needed, has always been immediate," he said.

Other benefits now flow directly to the Zoo's environmental, conservation and breeding programs. "SAP is the world leader in business process systems, and IBM is the leader in business technology infrastructure. Putting the two together is the best and most logical thing to do."

Next Steps

In the future Taronga Zoo hopes to expand the role of the system to include:

- the adaptation of the Human Resources module to be used for species tracking
- a database for monitoring genetic backgrounds for use in international breeding programs
- incorporation of Payroll, Work Flow, Plant Maintenance, Retail and Project Management modules.

The Zoo also aims to further expand facilities for purchasing Zoo products over the Internet.



© Copyright IBM Corporation 2001

IBM Germany GmbH
70548 Stuttgart
ibm.com/de

IBM Australia Limited
ACN 00 024 733
10-99
All Rights Reserved
www-7ibm.com/au

The IBM home page can be found on the Internet at:
ibm.com

IBM and the IBM logo is a registered trademark of International Business Machines Corporation.

SAP and R/3 are registered trademarks of SAP AG.

Other company, product, and service names may be trademarks or service marks of others.