



# CREATIVE AND EFFICIENT CATALOG DESIGN: THOMAS COOK SHOWS HOW IT'S DONE

When it comes to catalog production, Thomas Cook AG counts on cmi24, a dynamic publishing solution based on QuarkXPress Server, to significantly reduce external agency services.

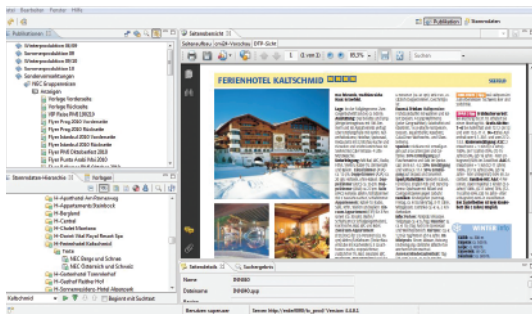
Thomas Cook AG is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Thomas Cook Group plc. The company brings together the activities of groups in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, and covers the entire spectrum of tourism services for a variety of target groups. In Germany, Thomas Cook AG is the second-largest provider of tourism services and products, with approximately 4,200 employees. Thomas Cook has used state-of-the-art software for automated catalog production since 2009 through cmi24, a dynamic publishing solution based on QuarkXPress® Server. This solution makes it possible to maintain and update images, text, and product information in one central database, and to combine them into high-quality, print-ready final layouts for a variety of catalogs and brochures in just a few — mostly automated — work steps. A uniform brand presence is assured at all times.



One of the greatest day-to-day challenges that Thomas Cook faces is the requirement to continuously publish new vacation offerings in a manner that is appealing on both visual and content levels, in different languages, for different promoter brands that target groups all over the world, and through a variety of output channels — without compromising its corporate identity. Leading company brands — such as Neckermann Reisen, with its broad range of value-for-money trips, and Thomas Cook Reisen, with its vacation offers for demanding individuals — offer customized products for each customer group. Behind each individual catalog, flyer, and folder produced for the various customer groups, there is a huge amount of images, text, and product information that must be managed, updated, and provided - ready to use - for a number of advertising media.

To establish an efficient and economical publishing process, Thomas Cook searched for a publishing solution that both made it possible to store and edit text and visual content on a standardized basis and enabled on-demand access to the most current version of this data when new catalogs and brochures needed to be produced. The majority of work steps — which previously had been carried out manually — had to be automated to make production processes leaner and save time and costs. At the same time, as a tourism company, Thomas Cook places great emphasis on ensuring that the company's product portfolio is published in a visually appealing and high-quality design, because visual presentation plays a key role in a customer's decision on a vacation offer. As a result, Thomas Cook sought software that not only provided automated and standardized work methods, but also offered excellent creative options.





In cmi24 a PDF file or an online QuarkXPress document can be created at any time.

### THOMAS COOK AG

Oberursel near Frankfurt, Germany  
<http://www.thomascook.info>

### EGGHEADS CMS GMBH

Bochum, Germany  
<http://eggheads.de>

### CHALLENGES:

- Provide information, images, and text from a geographically organized product database, with different description options per object for use in different catalogs and brochures, with a click of a button
- Reduce production time for catalogs and brochures, improve design process
- Maintain brand consistency of promoter brands

### QUARK SOLUTIONS:

- QuarkXPress Server as the basic technology for the eggheads cmi24 platform
- QuarkXPress design power in connection with server-based performance

### RESULTS:

- Partially automated catalog production, with a high degree of design leeway for creatives developing the templates
- Minimized finishing requirements
- Reduced requirements for external agencies by more than 50 percent
- Realized enormous time and cost savings

### Comprehensive Solution for the Entire Process Chain

Due to an upcoming expiration of maintenance agreements for the system that Thomas Cook had been using for catalog production to date, the company decided to equip the departments involved in the publishing process with completely new software. A careful market analysis resulted in the decision to use the cmi24 publishing solution from eggheads CMS GmbH.

cmi24 is based on QuarkXPress Server. This core dynamic publishing technology from Quark combines the high-quality typography and graphics support of QuarkXPress with scalable server-based compositing and rendering in one engine to drive complex and automated publishing applications and solutions. System integrators, developers, and customers use QuarkXPress Server for Web-to-print publishing, variable data publishing, ad automation, creation of PDF documents on demand, publishing of personalized information, and one-to-one marketing.

“QuarkXPress Server’s big advantage is that the development environments are based on industry standards such as Java, JSP, ASP/.NET, PHP, Visual Basic, and protocols such as HTTP and SOAP,” says Wolfgang Wichert, CEO of eggheads CMS GmbH. “This means that connecting the system to existing IT architectures can be done quickly and easily.”

cmi24 provides the software for managing production information, and the solution — which supports the entire process chain, from input and management of multimedia data to the design, editing, and publication of catalogs and other advertising media — is powered by QuarkXPress Server. Changes made by users in one medium will automatically appear in every other project to which they were assigned, including catalogs or other print publications, on the Web site, in BMEcat format, or in other formats.

Investing in the cmi24 dynamic publishing system has paid off. Since Thomas Cook has been using the new software for producing catalogs and brochures, internal staff are now able to independently carry out activities which were previously provided by external reprographic agencies — even during the “briefing” process, in which the visual design of the offering is defined. This includes, for example, the work steps that create previews, adjust text, and cut out image sections. Some of the tasks are completed by the system on a fully automated basis. As a result, it is possible to significantly reduce reliance on reprographic agencies. The bottom line is considerable cost and time savings for Thomas Cook.

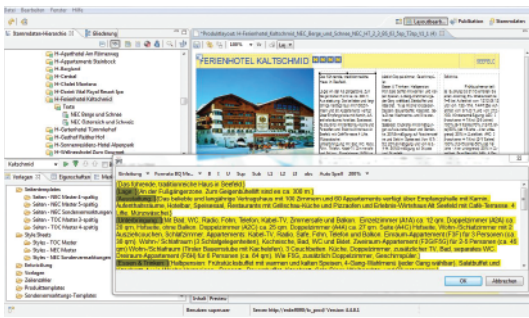
Thanks to the central CMS/PIM component of the cmi24 system, all content is automatically available to all publications — so duplication of work steps involved in maintaining and updating information, images, and text has become a thing of the past.

In addition to XML interfaces to various systems (such as ERP and materials-management systems), the cmi24 dynamic publishing solution also offers the entire individualized layout and design functionality of QuarkXPress in combination with the server-based performance and automation options of QuarkXPress Server. Kai Remy, who is responsible for production processes and Crossmedia-DB at Thomas Cook, is satisfied: “By using cmi24, our product managers are now in a position to quickly and effectively edit the catalog pages for which they are responsible on their own, and they can check the layout in proof quality at any time with one mouse click. This saves time, money, and nerves.”

### Intelligent Templates Ensure Uniform Brand Presence and Provide Self-adjusting Layout Geometry

Whether it concerns a catalog or brochure, each layout at Thomas Cook is based on a template. Templates contain the design specifications for producing layouts, and therefore perform a very important function with respect to maintaining the corporate design of each promoter’s brand.

In addition, templates contribute a certain level of intelligence, in order to automate adjustments that were previously carried out by reprographic agencies. “For example, if a user needs exactly one more line than is specified, bordering images will be cut by five millimeters. This ensures that font formats can be maintained while maintaining sufficient flexibility,” says Kai Remy. “Other rules define, for example, that text generally takes precedence over images, or that journey tables can displace everything else on the page. This ensures that key information for a vacation product can be placed in the layout, and other less important components may be left out.”



Designers create templates using cmi24 in a graphics layout editor where all creative functions of QuarkXPress can be used.

Thomas Cook has its own template designers who design templates using cmi24 in a graphics layout editor with a dynamic set of rules for rendering complex illustrations. All creative functions of QuarkXPress are used in this regard. Catalog pages can be produced automatically using a generator, or by the user on an interactive basis. A PDF file or an online QuarkXPress document can be created at any time. Depending on their rights profiles, designers are able to draft both page and section templates.

### The Catalog's Structure: Automated Design

The basic work for catalog production consists of route and catalog planning — essentially the entire conceptualization of the catalog. When planning the content structure (route planning), page planners define a division grid for each page using cmi24. They do this by selecting templates and assigning them to the catalog pages. The division grid specifies, for example, the number of pages that will be in a route to a certain vacation country, how many objects are displayed on the page, and how much room there will be for each object on the page. An object may be a country, a destination area, a town, a hotel, a tour, or a special service. The objective is to represent the entire content structure of a catalog.

To ensure that tasks are clearly divided in downstream processes, the working group defines staff for individual tasks during the catalog planning stage, and also defines who will process and finalize the data. Rights are assigned accordingly, so that product managers and designers registered in the system can change only those areas which they are authorized to edit. This guarantees transparency and helps to avoid errors due to unclear responsibilities.

The result of catalog and route planning is a complete structure of the new catalog, which contains not just chapters and pages, but also the position of objects and the users responsible for editing certain sections.

### From Briefing to Final Layout in Just Minutes

The goal of the briefing is to define visual representations for individual offers (for example, for individual hotels), and to combine all associated elements — such as text, images, logos, pictograms, and tables — into a harmonious overall image of the offer. Thanks to the automated process using cmi24 and QuarkXPress Server, the briefing process at Thomas Cook is essentially the layout process itself. As soon as decisions are made regarding the visual representation of individual products in the catalog, the QuarkXPress pages are automatically populated with data, text, and images from the product database. Since the product database already contains information for each object (for example, for each hotel) as to which images or other information take priority and which may be left out if there is insufficient space, only those components which can be accommodated in the layout are imported. The result of the briefing process is production-ready QuarkXPress pages that include all of the images to be used. Users can directly modify the data using the Web-to-print function, or check layout pages in and out. The system also supports the classic PDF workflow for editing pages.

### Changes in Seconds

Rendering takes place only after a product manager has approved a page or section. This guarantees high processing speed during the creative process. "With the performance offered by QuarkXPress Server, we continue to create excitement among our clients," says Wichert. "Users can display a print proof preview or different alternatives of a page arrangement right away. This way, decisions on design details can be made and implemented very quickly." This means even last minute changes no longer need to be time-consuming processes.

### One Data Source for Many Publications

The core piece of any catalog is the text and visual information regarding a country, destination area, town, hotel, tour, or special service. All of these pieces of information must be brought into relationship with one other. Data within a current inventory may be filed in cmi24 dependently or independently of a project. Even if data is assigned to multiple pub-

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lications — for example, a catalog and several brochures with special offers — it needs to be maintained and updated in one location, and automatically updated in all publications to which it is assigned. Data may be maintained before page planning for a catalog takes place, or even during the work on the visual design, as the bidirectional communication of the briefing module and the product database makes it possible to maintain information in two ways: using an editor displayed in the briefing module, or with the editor that is available in the product database. Therefore the object to be maintained exists as a dataset only once — always in its most current version.

**Double Data Maintenance is a Thing of the Past**

“The eggheads solution makes it possible to collect the relevant information about an object that will be used in a brochure and store that information — independently of its visual representation — in the cmi24 product database. It is also possible to gather and store meta-information for easier allocation or classification.

The unique eggheads Content Task Force process lets users build a product and media database from existing DTP pages. In this process, pattern recognition technologies are used to automatically transfer structured catalog data from such DTP pages into a database without typing or scanning. This makes it possible to create a product database starting with existing layout pages — a huge advantage for companies that have never used a product database.

“It is nice to see how well the long-time partnership with eggheads has developed. There are only a few of these complex but refined and easy-to-operate solutions such as cmi24 on today’s market,” says Matthias Gilke, Marketing Manager Quark Central Europe. “This dynamic publishing solution — with its multilingual interface, modular structure, and high-level scalability — can be used in many ways, as it allows for industry- and project-based adjustments. Using an XML interface, it can also be connected to third party systems — for example, in the office, Web, media, or translation areas. In this way, eggheads and Quark jointly provide our clients with the creative options of QuarkXPress in combination with highly automated publishing processes and the XML’s future-oriented flexibility. And that is exactly how we are able to make publishing more economical and efficient than ever before.”

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