About XWiki SAS

XWiki SAS is the company that provides solutions and services on top of the **100% open-source XWiki project.**

With **20 years of experience** on the professional collaborative solutions market and more than 30000 downloads each month, XWiki SAS has developed **over 500 projects all over the world.**

A skilled team works with you on your project from start to finish, trains both your technical & business users and provides you with hosting & technical support services.

They trust us

"[...] We selected XWiki for its latest documentation features, its capacity to handle millions of pages, its capabilities to build custom modifications and its thriving developer community."
- Engineering manager, **Amazon**

"Thanks to XWiki, our clients benefit from an up-to-date documentation of our products, everywhere in the world."
- Philippe Franck - Product Director, **EasyVista**

"Said it before, XWiki is awesome & so is the support."
- Patrick Masson - General Manager, **Open Source Initiative**

"Thanks to XWiki we have moved from a complex and hard to follow process to manage the Guidelines documents to a controlled online environment allowing to reduce the time spent and increase the quality of the documents provided to each country."
- Marc Noujaim - Senior IT Project Manager, **SCOR**

XWIKI SAS

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Consulting

Data imports

Dev work

Hosting

Support

Training

XWIKI

The success story of the Historical Dictionary of Switzerland (HLS)

HISTORISCHES LEXIKON *der* SCHWEIZ HLS

B U S I N E S S   C A S E

Industry sector
Public sector

Requirements
Content management system with granular access controls
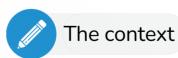
Solution type
Content Management System with JIRA integration, public website

The Historical Dictionary of Switzerland (HLS) is the only online encyclopedia dedicated exclusively to Swiss history. It provides synthesized historical research and multimedia sources in all four of Switzerland's official languages: German, French, Italian, and partly in Romansh. The articles, written by scientists and peer-reviewed by experts, are curated by an editorial team of about 20 staff members.

The dictionary serves as a reliable research infrastructure for the scientific community and a comprehensive and appealing information service for the public. HLS attracts approximately 1.74 million unique visitors per year, with daily visits ranging between 5,000 and 8,000. It is part of the Swiss Academy of Humanities and Social Sciences (SAGW) and is funded through national grants.

#1 The problem

The context

HLS launched its public website, built with PHP, in 1998. However, as the Internet evolved, the platform's outdated backend and frontend became a challenge. They needed a more modern solution with a user-friendly interface, multilingual support, and media integration for articles. Additionally, migrating their encyclopedia from a custom XML-based system, originally designed for print, to a scalable, flexible platform became essential.

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1

After evaluating several options for their content management system (CMS) and discovering key limitations — risky dependencies, poor collaboration tools, and failure to meet specific requirements — HLS concluded that a wiki would be a better solution. Wikis offer pre-existing quality management processes, are often used for encyclopedic work, allow flexibility of content, and make it easy for external authors to contribute. With this in mind, HLS selected XWiki in 2017 to deliver a proof of concept (POC).

XWiki stood out among other competing wikis by seamlessly integrating both CMS and wiki features, offering a well-structured data approach that included articles, text, media, and references, alongside the option for JIRA integration for workflow tracking. Additionally, it provided a user-friendly CKEditor, multilingual support, versioning, and commenting functionality, while its open-source nature, coupled with strong backing from XWiki SAS, guaranteed long-term sustainability of the platform. Lastly, it's powerful SOLR search engine, scalability, and customizable workflows made XWiki the clear choice for HLS's backend and public-facing platform, meeting their evolving needs for years to come.

✏️ Needs

The HLS team was looking for an advanced CMS that could provide granular access controls and custom workflows, as well as the capability to support the creation of a highly tailored new public website. The new solution had to be able to:

- support migration of content from the old platform;
- custom look & feel, with non-essential UI elements removed (e.g., panels, notifications);
- provide support for multilingual content management for German, French, and Italian;
- facilitate team collaboration & knowledge sharing, features that were missing in their previous system;
- support for granular user access & rights;
- enrich documents with metadata for each article;
- include powerful search capabilities, ensuring users can efficiently find language-specific results;
- easily scale & adapt over time, surpassing the limitations of their old custom-built platform.

#2 The solution

During this complex project, our team developed many essential features that enriched and optimized HLS's CMS and user experience:

#1 Complex workflows
Custom workflows integrated with JIRA allow direct article validation in the XWiki instance, with statuses stored in JIRA.

#2 Jira issues creation
HLS editors can create Jira issues from XWiki with prefilled article details, reducing errors & streamlining editor workflow.

#3 Hierarchical facets
Implemented for managing taxonomy, hierarchical facets ensure complete data retrieval and enhance navigation accuracy.

#4 Articles overview
The status line linking articles to related tracks, along with the display of open issues by issue type, provides a clear view of ongoing and future work.

#5 Image handling
The updated image plugin supports additional formats, including SVGs, and uses the srcset attribute for device-optimized display.

#6 Revamped search interface
The search UI now includes filtering by categories, dates, and other criteria, offering better user feedback & experience.

#7 Advanced versioning
HLS maintains historical articles in date-specific spaces, ensuring easy access to the latest content while optimizing SEO indexing.

#8 Feedback Form Application
Website users can give feedback directly in the wiki, automatically creating a Jira issue with all necessary ticket details.

#3 The results

HLS's transition to XWiki marked a major improvement in their content management and editorial processes. By choosing XWiki, HLS modernized their platform, benefiting from greater flexibility, scalability, sophisticated content management capabilities, and a great UX.

Seamless Migration
Successful migration of the entire collection of encyclopedia articles and metadata from an outdated XML-based system to XWiki.

Scalable & adaptable solution
The platform hosts over 36,500 articles in German, French, Italian, and Romansh, and handles over 1.7 million visits/year.

Enhanced user experience
SOLR-based search and custom media integration offer a high-performance, intuitive search experience, allowing visitors to easily find articles by category (Theme, Places, People, and Families) and multimedia elements by type, date, location, or alphabet, regardless of language-specific or general metadata.

Custom-built media features
The integration of images, galleries, videos, and interactive visualizations enhances the public interface for a more engaging user experience.

Tailored workflows with access controls
3 custom workflows fully optimized through integration with JIRA, enhancing article creation, media insertion, translation management, and content review, while access controls ensure secure collaboration across teams and languages.