BBC

Information Policy & Compliance
bbc.co.uk/foi

17 December 2010

Freedom of Information Act 2000 – reference number RFI20101613

Thank you for your request under the Freedom of Information Act ('the Act') of 8 December 2010 seeking:

> *"..information about what programming languages are used on your main website. This includes Javascript, Flash and HTML"*

The BBC uses a number of programming languages both on its public-facing website, bbc.co.uk, and for internal business purposes, for example:

Python
Visual Basic
Visual Basic.Net
Various shell scripting languages such as bsh, csh
Microsoft batch files
WSDL (web services discovery language)
OWL/SPARQL
C
C++
C#
Objective C
SQL
Apache webserver modules
VCL (varnish configuration language)
TrafficScript
Perl
PHP
Ruby
Java
Javascript
XML
HTML/CSS

INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

WML
Wikimarkup

The languages are used for a variety of purposes, for example, controlling broadcast systems (so that the right programmes are broadcast at the right time) and for purposes that are visible to users of the BBC's website.

The only programming languages that end users of bbc.co.uk can see are HTML, CSS, Javascript and WML. These are delivered to the end user's browser and are 'run' there. The HTML/CSS/Javascript/WML items are produced by computer programs on the BBC's servers. Most of these server programs are written in various combinations of Java, PHP, Perl, Apache, and C. These programs access databases via SQL (which is a language specifically for querying databases). Between these programs and users, we also have caching and traffic management servers that use languages like VCL and TrafficScript to manage overall load and performance.

In addition, mobile applications are written in Java, Objective C, HTML/CSS/Javascript. The other languages mentioned above are sometimes used for specific parts on the BBC website but, more often, are used for the BBC's internal business purposes.

You may be interested to know that you can find a basic description of some programming languages on the BBC's Webwise website at this link: http://www.bbc.co.uk/webwise/a-z/a, and information about BBC Future Media standards and guidelines, including technical standards, can be found at this link: http://www.bbc.co.uk/guidelines/futuremedia/

Please note that, in accordance with section 1(1) of the Act, the BBC confirms that it holds information on all of the programming languages used on bbc.co.uk. However, we estimate that to locate all of this information would take more than two and a half days because we would have to examine every individual page on the BBC's website (of which there hundreds of thousands) in order to ascertain what system generated the page and then investigate that system and discover what programming languages were used. Under section 12 of the Act, we are allowed to refuse to handle the request if it would exceed the appropriate limit. The appropriate limit has been set by the Regulations (SI 2004/3244) as being £450 (equivalent to two and a half days work, at an hourly rate of £25).

We hope you find this information useful.

Appeal Rights
If you are not satisfied with this response you have the right to an internal review by a BBC senior manager or legal adviser. Please contact us at the address above, explaining what you would like us to review and including your reference number. If you are not satisfied with the internal review, you can appeal to the Information Commissioner. The contact details are: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF, telephone 01625 545 700 or see http://www.ico.gov.uk/

Yours sincerely

L. Stiller
Legal and Business Affairs Manager
Future Media & Technology