The Digital India Initiative

Project DigiLocker, provided by the Government of India, grants every Indian citizen 1GB of cloud storage space for their own, personal documents, with ownCloud serving as the basis for technical implementation.

Home to approximately 1.3 billion people, India is the second most populated country in the world. Of this, one billion people already use mobile telephony, with about one quarter (250 million) using smart phones (source: www.indienheute.de). The Indian government recognised the potential of digital media early on and decided to launch the Digital India Initiative to bring all government digital projects under one banner. As far back as 2009, the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) was called into existence in order to assign every citizen a unique, twelve-digit identification number called „Aadhaar“. This represents the largest national ID number project in the world. Today, “Aadhaar” is set to become the backbone of government projects in India by providing realtime online authentication and KYC (Know Your Customer) services based on biometric and mobile identity.

Access to Official Documents Anywhere, At Any Time

As one of the central projects under the Digital India aegis, project DigiLocker was first launched in 2015 as a means to give every Indian citizen the opportunity to receive and store their own personal official documents in a central repository. Currently in India, nearly every official document is issued in paper form alone. Every time a citizen needs to submit a document to a government agency, a certified paper or digitally scanned copy is required. Paper copies require a huge effort when it comes to verification, filing, archiving etc.; they also cause high costs and are simply aggravating. On top of this, many authorities have difficulties proving the authenticity of these documents. Frequent attempts are made to exploit this vulnerability by using counterfeit documents, credentials and certificates. Since it is often difficult to associate these documents with a single identity, virtually any other person with the same name is capable of abusing this system by using documents that belong to someone else. Project DigiLocker is going a long way in making these problems history.

„DigiLocker allows every Indian, regardless of education and status, to receive and store their most important personal documents securely and centrally. By combining Project DigiLocker with our Aadhaar system, we have created a platform for the delivery of paperless government Services,“ states Additional Director, Debabrata Nayak, of the National eGovernance Division, the organisation to which the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology has assigned the task of building DigiLocker and of operating the platform.

To Each Indian, His ownCloud

From the beginning, DigiLocker was planned as a voluntary service, both for users and issuing authorities. Since its launch in July 2015, many have changed their minds through persuasion was used internally, as well as externally, in order to promote the service to the outside world. Suffice it to say, all these efforts have resulted in great success. Around four million Indians are now registered for the service and 20 issuing agencies are

already connected. Currently, the most frequently accessed documents, by far, are vehicle registrations and driver's licenses. In DigiLocker, the document is published electronically in the user's personal section, which is protected by an Aadhaar ID. If the user needs to submit his driver's license to another agency, he simply needs to provide a unique code (URI) for each relevant document. The document can also be downloaded as an electronically signed PDF and can then forwarded by email. Documents can also be accessed from virtually any web-enabled device and there is even an app for Android devices available in the Google Play store.

Primarily, DigiLocker allows for the secure and authorised access to linked repositories, such as the repository at the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways for driving licenses and vehicle registrations. Secondly, each citizen can scan in their already existing hard copy documents and sign them electronically. All of this makes DigiLocker a fully developed online storage space for all official documents.

"We have extensively used open source technologies in order to retain control over the code and to remain independent of individual vendors," comments Debabrata Nayak. „While seeking to add an individual cloud storage solution to DigiLocker, we made a choice in favour of ownCloud. We did so, not so much because the platform is open source, but because it has already demonstrated its performance and scalability in multiple projects. ownCloud represents an important component because it allows existing documents to be added in hard copy form. This capability is imperative for transforming DigiLocker into a standalone, fully fledged repository for personal documents."

ownCloud also adds an option for scanning in, signing and integrating older documents into DigiLocker, thus transforming it into a full-scale storage location for all documents. Thanks to its open source architecture, ownCloud works seamlessly with other components within DigiLocker and gives those responsible full control over the infrastructure. The benefits include:

- Flexible, open source-based cloud storage
- High scalability for millions of users
- Accessibility from any device
- The open platform can be easily combined with other applications, such as eSign for digitally signing documents
- Maximum transparency instead of dependency on proprietary technology

Outlook: From Zero to 50 million in Three Years

The growth envisioned for DigiLocker also means a whole new dimension for ownCloud. The project team has set a target of 50 million users within three years of the launch. The plan is to give each user one gigabyte of online storage space for their personal documents. Thus far, an installation of this size is unique worldwide. As of November 2016 (current statistics for the project available from: https://digilocker.gov.in/public/dashboard), more than four million users have registered for the service and 548 million documents are now available. Over five million documents have already been scanned in and manually uploaded onto the ownCloud infrastructure. The user also has the option to sign each document with their Aadhaar ID using the eSign digital service efficiently and securely, and, therefore, confirming the authenticity of the document. With more than 340,000 documents, this type of electronic signature is already frequently being used. For DigiLocker, the platform has certainly passed the scalability test, and with, currently, four million registered users, the story has a long way to go before it finally reaches its end.

About ownCloud

ownCloud is the largest Open Source Filesharing solution in the world with 200.000 installations and more than 25 million users. ownCloud combines consumer-grade usability with enterprise-grade security (GDPR compliant). It enables users to access data no matter where it is stored or which device is used. By giving organizations the visibility and control required to manage sensitive data while offering users the modern collaboration experience they demand, productivity and security are increased at the same time. For more information, visit: https://owncloud.com

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