CHAMP ULD milestone

CHAMP ULD ten years on...

Richard Hart, *Manager Cargo+ Services*

In August 2007, our first customer went live with CHAMP Cargosystems' new ULD system. CHAMP had already had over 20 years' experience of running a ULD Management system, the purpose of which is to allow an airline to keep track of its total ULD inventory around the world. Careful attention to the location and condition of all ULD types allows the customer to reduce costs and maximize efficiency of an expensive asset by ensuring that sufficient stock is always available at stations to meet operational needs, damaged ULDs are identified and repaired quickly, transfers to forwarders are tracked to ensure prompt return, and demurrage charges to other airlines are minimized by ensuring loaned ULDs are returned quickly.

CHAMP built on its long experience of managing a ULD system, designing a brand new product providing all the functions our airline customers required and presenting this in clear, easy to use screens running as a Web application on all standard browsers and with no requirement to install any additional software.

ULD is designed to be updated using standard messaging, receiving UCM messages confirming the units loaded and offloaded on flights, automating and managing the transfer of units to and from industry partners, and tracking the condition and serviceability of units managing efficient repairs and returning them to operational as quickly as possible. Manual updates are also supported.

If all information was received promptly and without error, ULD would just be a database of units, locations, and availability. In the real world this never happens, of course, therefore ULD's other focus is tracking and alerting when movement information is missing, allowing a ULD controller to quickly and easily correct errors in messages received, and highlighting when information is inconsistent so that the real location and condition can be easily established and updated. It also provides ways for a central ULD controller to monitor availability of ULDs at all stations, the system automatically alerting when stock of specific ULD types falls below or exceeds limits the station have defined for their day-to-day operation. It also provides a conduit for a station to plan for exceptional requirements and coordinate with the controller to ensure stock is always available at the right time and the right place.

Despite providing comprehensive features since day one, CHAMP ULD is constantly improved and enhanced for the community of customers. Developments have included, for example, managing stacked pallets - allowing a number of units to be moved and tracked at the same time, whilst only having to enter details of the base pallet; the export of all lists and reports to Excel for off-line data analysis; news and information from ULD Control displayed to all users on log-in; and, Status Lists which allows the ULD Controller to instantly view a station's inventory and the current ULD status by type or group.

Working in conjunction with CHAMP's Business Intelligence platform, standard reports are available to be scheduled and automatically e-mailed, as part of the core product. These reports provide such information as transaction history for the life of a ULD, all movements in and out of a specific station, lost ULDs and many others.

In the 10 years CHAMP has been running the system it has managed an inventory of up to 175,000 units for 30 airlines and has recorded tens of millions of individual movements.