AGENCOURT BIOSCIENCE

SUCCESS STORY

Overland's best-of-breed Neo Series™ tape library protects sensitive genetic sequencing data for a bioscience pioneer

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>
> *- Steve Shannon CTO, Agencourt Bioscience*

BACKGROUND

Sequencing DNA is a complicated process that reached national attention with the Human Genome Project, the effort to identify all of the DNA letters that make up the instructions for a human being. The tools developed to map the human genome have made possible the mapping and molecular identification of thousands of other genes, creating vast amounts of DNA sequencing data from the machines used in the process. This sequencing data presents a storage challenge to the life science researchers who generate the DNA sequences and those who develop the tools for the sequencing.

Agencourt Bioscience is a leading provider of genomic services, consumables and integrated automation systems for the life sciences industries. Several of Agencourt's founders were members of the Whitehead Institute Center for Genome Research and participants in the Human Genome Project. Agencourt's primary focus is to provide services, such as contract sequencing and genotyping to the biotech and pharmaceutical industry. Agencourt's substantial sequencing facility produces over 50 gigabytes of data each week.

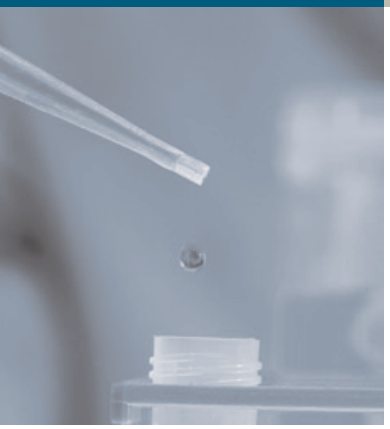
Two primary internal network systems serve Agencourt's employees and laboratory. A server room provides centralized management of a dozen servers running Windows 2000 and Linux. The employee network consists of 25 computers, and is backed up by a Benchmark DLT1 tape library using Retrospect software. The laboratory system consists of 50 computers in a separate, dedicated network that was brought online in 2001.

CHALLENGE

When Agencourt's laboratory became operational, the data generated from the sequencers rapidly reached critical proportions. The Benchmark DLT1 was unable to handle the extreme amounts of critical data from the sequencing facility that was stored on a network attached storage device (NAS) or support the computers in the dedicated laboratory network. The sensitivity and critical nature of the sequence data made a data protection and archive strategy essential. "We needed to get a highly robust and proven storage platform for our laboratory system to ensure that the data was not left unprotected," said Steve Shannon, CTO of Agencourt. "Our data integrity and scalability needs were, and continue to be, significant."

SOLUTION

Shannon researched the available tape libraries and consulted with Al Conte of Sourcetek Systems, a VAR integrator located in New Hampshire. Agencourt's needs included ultra reliability, a high transfer rate, high availability and the capability to manage the substantial amount of sequencing data generated by the



sequencing center. Sourcetek Systems recommended Overland's Neo Series tape library, since the built-in modularity, fast transfer rates, high availability and extreme reliability in the densest storage available was ideal for Agencourt's needs.

"The Overland Neo Series was big and fast enough for the job, but it wasn't quite ready yet," recalled Shannon. "Our need was so compelling that Overland gave us a loaner until the Neo shipped."

A short time later, the libraries began to ship and Agencourt's new Neo Series library was up and running in a short time with the assistance of Sourcetek and Overland's technical support services. Shannon chose to install Legato Systems backup software on its Pentium III 933 Mhz backup server to manage the Neo Series library, since Legato's backup software was compatible with Agencourt's complex heterogeneous infrastructure of Linux, Windows 2000, and the NAS appliance used to store the sequencing data.

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RESULTS

Agencourt's Neo Series library does double duty, backing up the data on the NAS appliance and handling offloads from the NAS. Shannon keeps Agencourt's sequencing data protected with differential backups performed every eight hours and a weekly full backup.

Shannon is planning for an increase in Agencourt's data storage needs in the near future when additional sequencers, sequence assembly capabilities, protein interaction mapping, a Linux BLAST Farm, and an Oracle ERP system come on line. The ability to handle this planned expansion was a key requisite in the acquisition of the Neo Series library. Additional Neo library modules can be easily added to accommodate the increased amounts of data generated by the new genomic services that Agencourt is adding to its facility.

"The Neo Series has enabled us to manage and protect the critical genomic sequencing data," said Shannon. "The combination of superior results, excellent service and support by Overland and its channel partner Sourcetek Systems will keep us looking forward to doing future business with them as our data needs continue to expand."

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