



UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW: DEPARTMENT OF COMPUTING SCIENCE

SUCCESS STORY

Neo Series™ tape library stores huge volumes of research data for thousands of students and staff

BACKGROUND

The University of Glasgow, one of the oldest universities in Scotland, has a long tradition of academic excellence.

The University has one of the largest research bases in the UK, with annual research grants and contracts totaling £48 million. It has 1,100 staff members and 3,000 research students working on research projects.

Computing Science at the University of Glasgow is a strong and dynamic department with around 70 academic staff, 140 researchers and 14 support staff. Each year, more than 600 undergraduate students take computing as part of their degree program and about 80 students graduate with an honors degree in computing science.

servers running on a variety of operating systems. The Computing Science department network features both Ethernet and Fibre to provide adequate bandwidth for these intensive applications.

Data recovery is a key factor for the department, both in the event of a major disaster or the more routine occurrence of a user accidentally deleting key data.

"We have backup servers and RAID drives but accidents always happen, some of the data will take many years of research to generate and it needs to be kept secure." said Naveed Khan, Computing Science department IT manager. As a state funded institution, reliability and cost are key criteria when deciding upon an IT vendor.

> *"Overland has been a good supplier and the equipment did what the company claimed it could. We would definitely consider them again when the inevitable upgrade is needed."*

- Naveed Khan
IT Manager
University of Glasgow

CHALLENGE

The Computing Science department has a long history and with different groups operating under one roof to carry out a mix of short term and ongoing projects in the area's of 3D Graphics, DNA research and chemical modelling, each using and subsequently generating huge volumes of data.

Over 1500 users rely on the 400 PC and workstations connected to 25

SOLUTION

The department has always used tape based data backup solutions and the constant upgrade process has followed due to increases in data capacity.

"When I first came to the University in 1984 we were using spool tape and the capacity was sufficient, but within two years we needed to upgrade" said Khan.

"We moved from spool tape to Sun Cartridge, then QIC tapes, moving on



to DAT and then DLT, but we still need greater capacity to store all the data and have a sensible backup window. This time around we looked at a solution that avoids us having to upgrade completely, but instead build upon an existing architecture."

Khan looked at the vendors in the market including Qualstar but based on price, performance and reputation, he decided upon Overland Storage as his first choice.

With advice from the Avante Digital, The University's trusted IT supplier, the department installed a Neo 4200 as the backbone of its backup solution. The university chose 4 LTO tape format drives with the unit able to support 120 tapes up to a maximum capacity of 24 TB.

RESULTS

The system went in smoothly and the Department immediately switched over to the new system, managing to reduce the backup time frame by 60 percent. The Neo system uses the Veritas Backup Exec software across Windows, Mac and various Unix platforms with minimal user intervention.

"Performance is good but for us an important consideration is after sales

support. On the only occasion in five years when a drive failed we contacted the Overland support line and a unit was available the next day. Even though we had the second drive still working, they reacted promptly and we appreciate this level of service."

The modular design of the Neo Series provides the flexibility to grow the departments' storage capacity as and when we needed. The department is now considering an upgrade to a Neo 4300, effectively scaling three 4100 units together.

Over the last five years, the department has been fortunate to avoid any major disaster, although a fire damaged a building next to the primary computing site. In each instance where data has needed to be recovered, the Overland Storage Neo 4200 has proved reliable and fault tolerant, providing a backup facility since it was installed in September 2002, during which the drives and robotics have been busy for over 2,500 hours.

"Overland have been a good supplier and the equipment did what the company claimed it could. We would definitely consider them again when the inevitable upgrade is needed," Khan concluded.

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