

Acronis True Image Success Story – Institute of Southeast Asian Studies

Company

- Institute of Southeast Asian Studies

Industry

- Non-for-profit research

Key Challenges

- Complete server and desktop PC restore
- Support for RAID
- Minimum downtime
- No reconfiguration required during restoration
- Ability to backup data in open files

Environment

- More than 15 mission-critical servers running in a multi-operating system environment
- More than 150 workstations running in a multi-operating system environment

Solution

- Acronis True Image 8.0 Enterprise Server for Windows
- Acronis True Image 8.0

Business Benefits

- Restore systems in minutes, not hours or days
- No need to rebuild complex configurations from scratch to restore servers
- Easy to use, no training required to implement the system

Overview

Established in 1968, the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS) in Singapore is dedicated to the study of socio-political, economic and security trends and developments in the region and its wider geo-strategic and economic environment. The regional research centre aims to not only stimulate research and debate within academia, but also to enhance public awareness of Southeast Asia and facilitate the search for viable solutions to its various problems.

To achieve these aims, the Institute conducts research programs, organizes events and publishes journals and books. It also maintains a library containing more than half a million items which serves as the heart of the Institute's research facilities.

As can be imagined a lot of fresh data is generated by the approximately 100 full-time staff members and an equal number of visiting researchers who typically spend from several months to two years at the Institute and have the same access to resources as full-time staff. And, for obvious reasons, this and other data needs to be kept current and available at all times.

Key Challenges

Before it deployed Acronis solutions in March 2005, the Institute used a software solution to backup data and creates disk images of its various servers – typical hard disk size is 60 GB; operating systems in use include Linux. This, however, had one big shortfall: the software did not support RAID.

"So we had this situation where we couldn't create disk images of any of the RAID servers and ended up having to mirror each of the hard disks that make up one logical RAID unit one by one. It was tedious, to say the least," said N. Nagarajan, Head, Computer Unit, ISEAS.

In addition, the previous system could not backup open files. This meant that work being done at the time of the scheduled backups was not cloned, and stood the chance of being lost if the primary storage device or individual workstation failed. Also, the backup system required that the secondary hard disks be of the same capacities as the ones which data they was mirroring. This, of course, posed a logistical problem.

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Product evaluation

In early 2005, the Institute decided that its server backup and imaging needs would be better served by a new system that could provide broader and deeper functionality and yet be easier to operate in terms of man-hours and number of tasks. A review of the market indicated that Acronis had the most compelling solution, and this was confirmed by a 'live' demo at ISEAS.

"What really impressed us was the speed at which an exact disk image could be created of all the data in the disk – system software, applications, databases, etc. – without interrupting server operations and then used for a complete bare-metal restore without the need to reconfigure and so on," said Mr. Nagarajan.

"Some of our servers are identical so this functionality is especially useful to us. In the event that we have problems with a particular server, it's just a matter of creating a disk image using Acronis, taking down the server, moving the hard disk with the backup image to a twin server and powering that up while we troubleshoot the one with the glitches. Users become productive again in a very short time, without losing any data."

Another advantage the Acronis solutions had – there was no requirement for backup disks and working disks to match one-to-one capacity-wise, unlike previously. This has resulted in more efficient use and logistical management of the Institute's storage assets.

Complete Success

Having obtained such clear proof of concept from Acronis, ISEAS went for Acronis True Image 8.0 Enterprise Server for Windows solution in March 2005. Implementation was a breeze and the automated, wizard-driven operations make for easy day-to-day use; no retraining was required. Buy-in from end users was so strong to the extent that the Institute added Acronis True Image 8.0 licenses for workstations and staff members bought their own copies for use on their home PCs.

"Server downtime has been greatly reduced since the Institute started using the Acronis solutions", Mr. Nagarajan reported. "Incremental backups are performed every day and a full backup is done every week (all data is copied to tape and at the end of each week the tapes are sent to a secure offsite location). The volume of data protected by the Acronis solutions amounts to about 400 GB."

Last year, scheduled and unscheduled downtime added up to about 72 hours. The big event was when power failed one day, resulting in the Institute's main 32GB hard disk crashing. Restoration work took half a day with a sizeable IT team.

"If the same thing were to happen now, we're very confident that we would be up and running in less than half an hour with no missing bits of data. From an investment standpoint, our total Acronis investment costs us less in comparison to our previous backup system and we get much more value – and comfort – out of it," said Mr. Nagarajan.

From the IT perspective, we have two main objectives: store and backup data as fast as we can, and minimize server downtime. With the help of the Acronis solutions, we've had no problems meeting these objectives.

N. Nagarajan
Head, Computer Unit