

Butler University

Delivering More Applications to Fewer Computers with Software Virtualization from Symantec



When Butler University's IT staff learned they were losing one-third of their computer lab space, they turned to Altiris Software Virtualization Solution Professional. The solution lets the college deliver the same number of applications to two-thirds the number of computers, and also eliminates conflicts among varied applications and versions. Butler's IT staff is now able to deploy applications to classrooms 50 percent to 99 percent faster. Butler is also confronting viruses and malware and avoiding spyware-related endpoint restores by using Symantec Endpoint Protection.

The Freedom of Application Virtualization

Ovid Butler, born in 1801, was an Indianapolis lawyer and fervent anti-slavery activist. He published a newspaper named Free Soil Banner, and in 1855 he established the North Western Christian University, which was later renamed Butler University in his honor.

Today, Butler University has just under 4,000 students and 1,200 faculty and staff. Its IT department was challenged in early 2008 when it learned it was losing computer labs at the College of Business Administration—about one-third of its total lab space.

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Brandon Quarles

Senior Information Specialist
Butler University

“We lost real estate, and we had to consolidate our labs,” recalls Brandon Quarles, senior information specialist at Butler. “We had to run more applications on two-thirds the number of computers. That really worried us from an application compatibility perspective. We knew we would be forced to use some kind of software virtualization solution.”

But which one? Quarles and his colleagues studied this question at some length, evaluating products from Citrix, VMware, and InstallFree, as well as Microsoft Soft-Grid. “Altiris Software Virtualization Solution™ Professional was the easiest solution to deploy,” he says. “It gave us what we were looking for—the ability to push out an application layer to users, rather than a full desktop.” In addition, Butler already owned a license for Altiris Wise Package Studio™, which packages applications and patches for deployment.

ORGANIZATION PROFILE

Butler University (www.butler.edu) was founded in 1855 by attorney and abolitionist Ovid Butler, and is located in the Butler-Tarkington neighborhood of Indianapolis. The university has 1,200 faculty and staff and just under 4,000 students, and focuses on liberal arts education. Job placement for graduates averaged 96 percent over the last five years.

INDUSTRY

Education and Research

SOLUTION

Endpoint Management

Endpoint Security

Altiris Software Virtualization Solution Professional is allowing Butler University to maintain its application portfolio while accommodating a one-third reduction in computer lab space.

Avoiding a World of Hurt

Altiris Software Virtualization Solution Professional allowed Butler's IT staff to smoothly accommodate the loss of space. "Without it, we would have been in a world of hurt," says Chad Miller, network engineer at Butler. "We would have had fat images that were 25 gigabytes, and that would have been very unwieldy if we needed to change an application."

The Altiris solution also solved the problem of incompatibility between different applications and different versions of the same application throughout the university. "We already had some problems with that, because we have faculty members who can specify their own software, and some of the packages are quite old," Miller says. "That could have been a recipe for disaster, but application virtualization eliminated that concern."

Symantec channel partner ITS Partners helped guide the initial setup and configuration. "We knew we were looking at a short time frame and didn't want to risk taking too long trying to do it ourselves," says Miller. "ITS did a good job getting us started and helped us develop a good baseline. They accomplished in a week what could have easily taken us a month."

Miller continued, "Working with the ITS engineer helped us train our internal staff and allowed us to realize the benefit of their best practices in the setup of new applications for SVS. They were also able to deliver services to us on short notice during the week we had our staff available."

Deploying Software in Minutes Instead of Days

With Altiris Software Virtualization Solution Professional, Butler's IT staff has been able to dramatically reduce the time it takes to deploy applications to classroom computers. Before application virtualization, staff had to install an image on one computer, test all the applications, and then push that image out to all the machines—a process that took around two business days, according to Quarles.

SOLUTION AT A GLANCE

Key Challenges

- Accommodate loss in computer lab space while providing the same applications
- Eliminate conflicts among varied applications and versions
- Deploy applications faster
- Reduce licensing costs
- Increase patch management efficiency
- Improve security on student computers

Solution

Optimized usage of workstations with application virtualization; rapid provisioning and patch management

Symantec Products

- Altiris® Client Management Suite™
- Altiris Software Virtualization Solution™ Professional
- Altiris Wise Package Studio™
- Symantec™ Endpoint Protection

Symantec Partner

ITS Partners (<http://www.itsdelivers.com>)

Technology Environment

- Applications: Microsoft Exchange 2007
- Databases: Multiple versions of Oracle and Microsoft SQL Server
- Servers: Dell servers running Microsoft Windows Server 2003 and Sun servers running Solaris 9 and 10
- Storage: EMC CLARiiON CX3-40 SAN; Sun StorageTek tape library

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Butler University

BUSINESS VALUE AND TECHNICAL BENEFITS

Operational Efficiency/Cost Savings

- Maintaining software portfolio despite one-third reduction in computer lab space
- Avoiding conflicts between applications and versions
- Twofold faster deployment of new software (1 day vs. 2 days)
- 99% faster deployment of existing software (3-4 minutes vs. 2 days)
- Projected savings of more than \$10,000 in annual license costs
- 50% less IT staff time spent on patch management
- 500 hours IT staff time saved upgrading antivirus software on 1,500 endpoints

Improved Security

- No major damage from viruses or malware in many years
- Projected avoidance of 50 spyware-related endpoint restores per year

Deploying software now takes much less time. “If they gave us something brand new, and we had to package it for deployment, that would probably take about half the time,” says Quarles. “If it was something we already had, we could deploy it in three or four minutes.” That speed has allowed IT staff to get software out into a classroom even when it was requested at the last minute, he adds.

Butler also plans to use package tracking in the future. “Tracking the applications we’re managing with Altiris Software Virtualization Solution Professional has the potential to significantly reduce our software license costs,” Miller explains. “In the past, there’s often been a push to purchase a campus-wide license for many of our applications, because it was impossible to figure out how many licenses we actually needed, much less enforce it.”

Package tracking can help IT staff gather historical usage information that will let them buy fewer unneeded licenses in the future, he says. “The savings in licensing could easily be over \$10,000 a year.”

Cutting Patch Management Time in Half

In addition to Altiris Software Virtualization Solution Professional, Butler also uses Altiris Client Management Suite™ to deploy patches to endpoints. Before Altiris Client Management Suite, the university used Microsoft Windows Server Update Services for patch management. The Altiris solution saves a lot of time, Quarles reports. “Altiris Client Management Suite takes away some of the menial labor we had to deal with,” he says. “We probably reduced the time it takes to deal with patches by half, just from quicker management and fewer approvals. We also get a lot more reporting out of it.”

Upgrading to Symantec Endpoint Protection 11.0

The college is also preparing to upgrade the students to the latest version of Symantec™ Endpoint Protection, which is already running on lab and faculty computers. “We’ve used Symantec endpoint security software for years, and we haven’t had any serious virus outbreaks in a very long time,” Miller says. “In fact, we used Altiris Client Management Suite to roll out our last major upgrade to the software, which

easily saved us 20 minutes per workstation. Multiplied by 1,500 endpoints, that’s 500 hours of staff time saved.”

Symantec Endpoint Protection is allowing the IT team to confront the ever-growing problem of spyware. Quarles says blocking spyware should take some pressure off the university’s help desk staff, since they will no longer have to re-image or rebuild spyware-laden computers, something they previously did about 50 times a year.

Best of all, Quarles notes, Altiris solutions have changed the attitudes of some of Butler’s management and staff. “When we started this project, we were pushing Altiris Software Virtualization Solution because we knew it would solve our problem with reduced lab space,” he says. “It worked so well that now we’re getting a push from management to deploy the solution in more places. They see the value it has added and how quickly it allows us to deploy applications. So now they’re saying, ‘We need more and more.’”