



CASE STUDY: NORTHERN STORAGE SUITE

HANDS-ON SCIENCE CENTRE HOLDS THE LINE ON STORAGE

At-Bristol is a hands-on science center and planetarium, offering over 120 interactive experiences and multi-media displays.

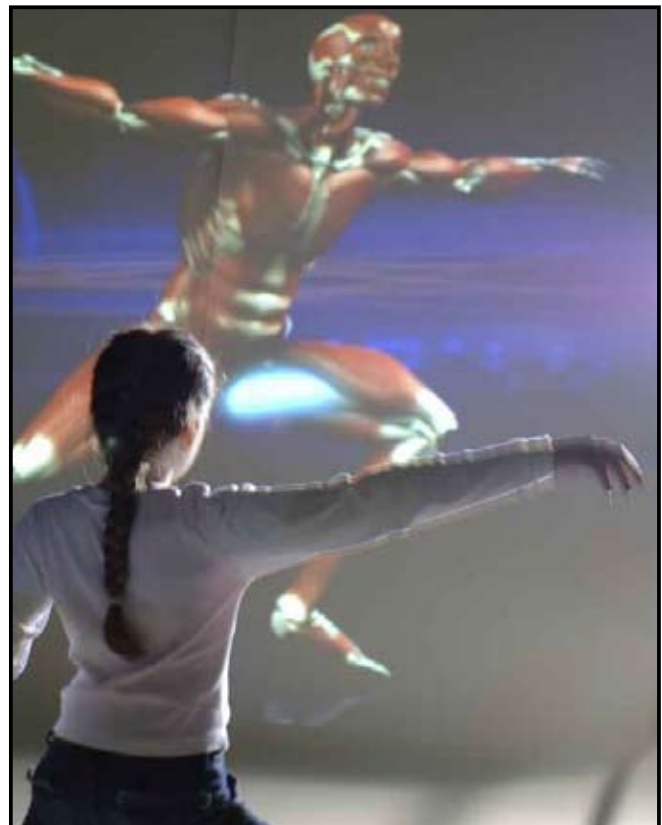
Since its opening in 2000, At-Bristol has also become known for its unique spaces for corporate events in the South West of England, hosting everything from classical concerts to product launches to private parties – even starlit weddings.

But behind every amazing interactive activity and eye-opening exhibit is the At-Bristol's staff, managing the relatively less “cosmic” day-to-day activities to keep the centre running smoothly - from preparing educational materials and supplemental documentation, managing donor outreach right down to handling daily correspondence between and among the organisation's many constituencies.

Its IT department plays a significant part in developing and providing the organisation with the infrastructure, tools and support in order to keep the various activities running optimally. One of the team's most pressing challenges was finding a way of managing the data generated and accumulated within the organisation.

“Storage requirements are constantly on the increase, as we design our own exhibition spaces and traveling exhibitions with interactive exhibits. The content generated in research and development therefore can be quite vast. We also have ticketing and mail systems, which have grown with the company over the last 7 years since opening. This doesn't include the archiving of the various projects pre-2000.” said Ed Williams, Senior Technical Engineer, At-Bristol. Williams together with colleague, Andrew Watkins, are instrumental in developing At-Bristol's IT system and infrastructure.

According to Williams, CAD, Photoshop and JPEG image files – mainly consisting of images taken with cameras – are the ‘worst culprits’. This is particularly because users tend not to put them through any shrinking or compression programs before storing them.



Williams reviewed a selection of known quota management products, which would allow him to place and enforce data thresholds on users and business units. The overarching criteria were cost and reliability.

"We ultimately selected Northern Storage Suite. It was priced right, was intelligently designed, offered comprehensible – and comprehensive – reporting and had the best overall look and feel. After having it installed we found it to be very stable and reliable. It had the added advantage of not requiring Java for the client/server communication.

We adopt the Microsoft OS Platform but the add-ons such as quotas typically lack the features and necessary level of security and reliability. However there are third party add-ons, which I swear by. Northern being one of these."

In addition to using Northern Storage Suite to implement usage quotas, he found it to be a particularly valuable tool in gaining a general knowledge of user needs and the overall data growth pattern; Williams also used it to ascertain what file types are in use and by whom, and to clear out old .bak and .tmp files – and other space-consuming clutter – on a scheduled basis.

"We have just finished development of an exhibition about the Human Genome. We received a lot of artwork from external designers and also generated a lot of artwork and CAD design files ourselves. At present, NSS's quota engine is giving us a heads up when space is at a premium, which, at present, is every day! We have to then move data around to give move space for the project."

At-Bristol will be moving to a SAN-based solution for future storage needs, with Northern running to monitor usage, impose quotas, eliminate file duplication, etc. They will also use it for reporting in the SAN environment.

"Northern has allowed us to identify our users' storage needs without requiring extensive manpower. It has given us further understanding of our environment and usage trends, allowing us to implement a storage system that holds the line on usage, while giving us the ability to accommodate future needs.

We are a charity, and therefore we do need to weigh and justify each expenditure. I haven't come across – any other software that delivers the same value as this product. It is an intuitive and powerful suite of applications." said Williams.



ABOUT NORTHERN

Northern is an international software company specializing in the development of reliable, flexible and easy to use solutions for storage management. Northern Storage Suite breaks Storage Resource Management down into four goals; to identify and reclaim wasted storage capacity, control user behavior, plan for future storage needs and make the end-users a part of the storage solution.

World-wide over 28,000 organizations and more than half of the companies on Fortune Global 100 use Northern software to bring control and order to their storage environments. The company serves a global market through its five bases of operations, Tampa [FL], Stockholm [Sweden], London [UK], Biarritz [France] and Munich [Germany].

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