

South Gloucestershire & Stroud College Case Study

South Gloucestershire and Stroud College (SGS) is the new college formed by the merger between Stroud College and Filton College. These two successful colleges merged in February 2012, to give students more choice, greater opportunities and a wider range of facilities from a single, larger college.

SGS have four main campuses – Stroud, Filton, WISE and Berkeley Green – as well as many local community venues, and welcomes around 15,500 full-time and part-time students of all ages every year. They also have centres in Bristol City, at the West of England Academy of Art and at the Bristol Zoo & Gardens.

The Challenge

The merger with Filton College brought about many technical challenges for Director of IT, Tim Hanks. One of the highest priorities was to centralise systems between the two Colleges and leverage the physical distance between the 2 main datacentres for DR purposes. This centralisation would involve the combination of business systems, consolidation & standardisation of storage systems, organisation wide virtualisation and simplification of networking between sites.

The Solution

Cristie were asked to meet with Tim and his team to help design a storage, virtualisation and data protection solution capable of spanning the two main campuses and providing a stable platform for the College's future growth ambitions. Considerations were given to SGS's existing VMware, Infortrend and Veeam implementations, with decisions being made early on to make use of the existing investment as much as possible.

"The Nimble has plenty in reserve, and is independently scalable for performance and capacity, so the design is future proof" Tim Hanks, Director of IT, SGS

A solution was designed whereby the VMware



Challenges

- Merger of Colleges
- Centralisation & consolidation of systems
- Make use of existing investment where possible
- Provide platform for future VDI projects

Solution

- Two Nimble CS220 arrays in a replicated configuration

Benefits

- 3-4x improvement in performance
- 50-60% space savings through compression
- Simple management & reporting



cristie data
an iomart company

Storage / Virtualisation
Backup / Recovery / Protection

vSphere estate would be expanded across the two key sites, providing much simpler management and disaster recovery capabilities. At this stage it was decided to demote the ageing Infortrend systems to a backup target and replace with Nimble Storage; a Hybrid Storage platform designed specifically to make use of IOPS performance of SSD and throughput/capacity capabilities of SATA. This platform was chosen for its flexibility of deployment, scalability and simplified management.

The Benefits

Implementing the Nimble storage platform has improved the performance of key systems within the College and given them a greater ability to react to change. It is this platform that will allow the College to realise their ambitions of implementing a Virtual Desktop Infrastructure, improving desktop agility for staff and students, in the coming months:

“Having something that can provide for our immediate capacity and performance requirements was excellent, but I wanted to keep an eye on what we will be expecting from our storage in the future. The Nimble has plenty in reserve, and is independently scalable for performance and capacity, so the design is future proof” Tim Hanks, Director of IT, SGS.

Support and maintenance was also of high importance for SGS, with the Nimble AutoSupport and InfoSight platforms playing a key part in the decision making. Tim’s team are always being asked to do more with less, so enabling the remote monitoring functionality within the CS Series arrays has proved invaluable.

“Cristie have access to InfoSight, which gathers 30 million data points about Nimble arrays each day. We proactively monitor Array health and capacity reports/trends through the online portal and advise customers where configuration changes could be made. Over 70% of support cases are solved

through Nimble AutoSupport without any customer intervention.” Steve Blakemore, Technical Director, CristieData.

The Future

The College will undoubtedly go through many technical changes and challenges over the next 5 years. Tim’s foresight with this latest implementation has built solid foundations, allowing SGS to plan and budget effectively for expansion. The platforms in use are all easily expandable and require little management intervention, allowing the team to focus on other tasks:

“Cristie and SGS have a strong partnership that goes beyond our close locality. Our professional services and support teams are always on hand to offer advice and recommendations. As with all our customers, we develop strong, long-term relationships and aim to prove ourselves as a trusted advisor to the business.” Ryan Smith, Sales Director, Cristie Data.

• About Nimble Storage

Nimble’s flash storage solutions enable the consolidation of all workloads and eliminate storage silos by providing enterprises with significant improvements in application performance and storage capacity. At the same time, Nimble delivers superior data protection, while simplifying business operations and lowering costs. More than 9,000 enterprises, governments, and service providers have deployed Nimble’s flash storage solutions across more than 50 countries. www.arcserve.com

• About Cristie Data

Cristie Data have been IT infrastructure and data management specialists for over 40 years. We take a consultative and platform agnostic approach to any customer project and advise on solutions that are best aligned to your businesses. www.cristie.co.uk