RESEARCH AND DISCOVERY

CREATING A SINGLE SOLUTION TO MEET RESEARCHERS' STORAGE NEEDS

For researchers, the data they collect and produce is very valuable. However, finding a consistent and secure storage location for that data can present a significant challenge. To address this challenge, ICT recently developed a research data storage solution specifically for faculty members called DATASTORE. DATASTORE provides a secure location for research information and reduces the potential for data loss caused by human error, theft or corruption.

Launched at the end of March, DATASTORE provides up to 3 Terabytes of research storage space per faculty member. The new network accessed storage solution can accommodate researcher’s diverse technical requirements while greatly reducing the time-consuming tasks associated with administering a data storage system. With DATASTORE, researchers have the ability to easily manage storage and share access to files or folders from within the data repository with any university-affiliated researcher, graduate student or staff member.

Along with the benefit of having their research data in a safe and secure location, DATASTORE services also include daily backups and access to a dedicated professional technical support staff.

The complexity and volume of research being conducted at the University of Saskatchewan increases each year creating considerable demand for data storage space. Researchers often had to resort to storing critical data on local hard drives or rely on consumer grade devices to support their storage needs. By utilizing DATASTORE, researchers will be better equipped to meet the regulatory data storage standards that are set out by granting agencies. Researchers, research groups, clusters or centres that require more than the standard storage allocation have the ability to access additional storage at a subsidized annual rate of $50 per Terabyte.

Faculty members interested in learning more about DATASTORE can visit usask.ca/ict/services/file-storage/DataStore.

ADMINISTRATION

PUTTING POLICIES IN PLACE TO PROTECT USASK

Remaining at least one step ahead of the bad guys in the battle against cybercrime is an ongoing challenge for organizations. Having the right strategies and resources in place to safeguard the information of our university and the information of our community members was the driving factor behind the development of the university’s new IT Security Policy. Approved by the university board of governors in December 2016, the policy provides all members of the university community with the necessary guidelines for the safe usage and maintenance of IT services at the university.

Building from the IT Security Policy a number of individual IT Security Procedures were developed to help provide additional guidance relating to specific IT security topics such as risk management; service acquisition and outsourcing; security incident response; and end-point security management. Further IT security procedures will be introduced in the coming months.

To help increase the awareness and understanding of IT security amongst faculty, staff and students, ICT recently launched an information security campaign which is centered around a new Information Security website itsecurity.usask.ca. Designed to be a one-stop resource for faculty, staff and students, the website provides information to help identify and report cyberattacks along with methods to protect personal information and the information of other members of the university community.

Faculty and staff are encouraged to begin taking the first three online training modules - these are quick, 2-5 minute videos on timely security topics, followed by a few short questions to test their understanding.

New content and training videos will be added to the website on a regular basis, covering a variety of information security topics aimed at helping all members of the university community to be more cyber aware at home and at work.
COLLABORATION AND COMMUNITY

THE USE OF VIDEO LEADS THE WAY FOR ENHANCED LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Stimulating interest in a topic, generating discussions, or engaging students with course content outside of the classroom are just some of the common reasons why video is becoming an increasingly used medium to support teaching and learning strategies. To help facilitate the growing demand for video capture, production and sharing services, ICT partnered with the Gwenna Moss Centre for Teaching Effectiveness to launch an academic video refresh project. While working alongside instructors from multiple disciplines across the university, the project is helping to formulate an academic video strategy and identify the video tools that are required to support teaching and learning activities at the university.

Currently, ICT supports several video service platforms; however, with expiring service agreements an opportunity presented itself to explore the role video and other related technologies have in the pursuit of the academic mission of the university. During the last few months, members of the project team have conducted surveys and worked directly with instructors and technical support specialists to gain better insight into how video is currently being used and to identify potential applications for future video services.

Once the research is complete the project team will then launch a Request for Proposal to seek out service providers that would be capable of providing the video technology to support this strategy.

The goal is to have components of the video suite in place for the 2017 fall semester and to continue introducing new components of the video suite of services throughout the academic year.

Training and support for the video services will be provided by ICT and the Gwenna Moss Centre for Teaching Effectiveness. Instructors who are interested in learning more about the project can contact Cameron Alexson, Manager of Academic Technologies, ICT.

Visit the newly redesigned CIO website at: www.usask.ca/avp-ict/ to learn more about other ongoing IT initiatives.
COLLABORATION AND COMMUNITY

CONNECTIVITY IN THE CLASSROOM

The revitalization work in the B wing of the Academic Health Sciences Building is now complete, bringing with it new interactive learning spaces that enhance hands-on training and active learning. Design planning for the space began several years ago with equipment installation in the redesigned spaces beginning in the summer of 2016. The spaces were officially completed in December 2016 and reintroduced back into the room scheduling system for the first wave of classes in January 2017.

In total the project included the technological retrofit of five large teaching spaces, three meeting rooms, one small classroom, three large labs and the installation of six large information monitors throughout the buildings. All together the multimedia equipment budget required to support the update of the spaces was $1.2M with further infrastructure costs associated with the modernization and redevelopment of the facilities.

Now complete the large theatre style lecture halls can seat up to 158 students and allow for live lecture broadcasts with dual data projectors, interactive monitors, built-in cameras and wireless microphones located throughout the space. The smaller classroom and active learning labs are outfitted with similar technologies to the large lecture theatres, but the spaces are designed to be more flexible and easily reconfigured to adapt to the class requirements.

ICT continues to work with colleges and space planners from across the university to identify spaces for technological investment. The modernized spaces facilitate the use of technology in support of distance education and provide opportunities for the use of interactive learning techniques.

ADMINISTRATION

IMPROVING PROCESSES WITH AN EYE ON CUSTOMER SERVICE

University service providers have worked together over the past few years to identify strategies for rationalizing the charges that are passed on between departments on campus. These fee-for-service charges are commonly put in place as a cost recovery mechanism to account for the additional resources that are required to develop or support services outside of standard service offerings.

ICT is currently transitioning from a fee-for-service to a core services model with the focus on improving customer service and satisfaction; sharpening the focus on how the services support the core mission of the university; clarifying organizational unit responsibility; improving alignment of services based on need rather than ability to pay; eliminating internal fees where possible; and developing alternative funding strategies.

This mandate to change from a fee-for-service business model to one more focused on core service delivery has provided the foundation which allows ICT to better define what core or standard services are and focus on methods to enhance the delivery of those services. In addition to the benefit of improved service delivery and customer experience, the new model will also eliminate many of the administrative processes required by the colleges and departments to process internal payments and transfers.

ICT is introducing a new IT service catalogue in the summer of 2017 which will include information about all the core services available to faculty, staff and students.