

Lynn Grove V.A. High School Success Story



Located in the East Anglian coastal town of Great Yarmouth, Lynn Grove Voluntary Aided High School is a mixed comprehensive that serves the local community for students from ages 11 to 16 years. With a rich blend of academic and arts programs for GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education) qualifications, Lynn Grove has also received specialist school status for mathematics, science and technology.

The Challenge

INDUSTRY

Public Education

APPLICATION:

Archiving of Staff,
Student and
Administration Records

SOLUTION:

QStar HSM software
DISC 1000 Blu-ray Library

One of the principle charters of Lynn Grove High School is to act as a technology college, providing students with an extensive course offering across a wide range of computer related disciplines. To meet the expectations of this ambitious status requires careful planning and a substantial IT infrastructure that includes 11 servers supporting over 800 PCs used by the 1,150 students and 100 members of staff.

Government regulations require the long term preservation of staff, student and administration records. A detailed schedule from the educational authorities specifies exactly how long each record type should be retained, ranging from three years to an indefinite period of time. In the past much of this content would have been maintained as paper documents in filing cabinets, but today it is stored almost exclusively in a digital format. While the digital revolution greatly improves efficiency and opens the door to advanced educational opportunities for Lynn Grove students, it also places new burdens on its limited budget and busy staff.

A business of similar size would normally rely on a full time IT management, but this is not the case at Lynn Grove. Typical of many UK state schools, the IT team splits their time between teaching in the classroom and system administration. The challenge for Lynn Grove is to develop a secure archive strategy that complies with strict government specifications for record retention, demands minimal administration, and fits within its budget.

The Digital Archive Learning Curve

The use of computer technology is an integral part of the education curriculum which has presented both the staff and students with a steep learning curve. Schools have had to rethink the entire education process in order to integrate a diverse range of computer based applications. At Lynn Grove, virtually every course makes use of IT and in some media rich classes, students create their own video, audio and graphic content, requiring substantial storage capacity. Over the last two years, the digital storage requirements for Lynn Grove have tripled and this growth rate shows no sign of abating.

Teaching materials, mark books and class records are retained for eight years after the students leave school. Administrative and financial information must be accessible for reporting and audits for six years. Students manage most of their course work online and frequently prepare and submit ePortfolios (electronic portfolios) as part of their GCSE qualifications. These important and sensitive records should be retained indefinitely. With little formal guidance provided by the school district on technical archive strategies, the Lynn Grove staff have taken a page from their own book and educated themselves on the subject of digital data preservation.

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The Solution

Since most of the student courses at GCSE level last for two years, Lynn Grove required a staged archive strategy that provides rapid access for several years while ensuring that completed course work and administration records are securely archived. Critical data for the immediate school year is stored on a primary server and backed up to a second server for short term disaster recovery. At the end of each year, data is migrated to a third server that includes the QStar's HSM archive software and Blu-ray optical library. Records written to the third server are kept online for the remainder of the time the student attends the school, while simultaneously written to Blu-ray media for long term retention using the HSM system.

The Lynn Grove IT staff evaluated and tested several possible solutions before choosing the QStar HSM software for their Windows server and the DISC 1000 library with over 5TB of online archive capacity. They investigated archiving data on magnetic disk, tape and optical and chose QStar with Blu-ray media because of the flexible software features and the extremely stable recording properties of optical storage that delivers long data life and minimal maintenance.

"Digital data is now a fundamental part of our educational mission," explained John Stark, Lynn Grove's IT administrator. "It's essential that we have a dependable infrastructure for the management of content that is actively being created by students and staff, and a secure way of archiving older records. With our limited resources we can't afford to constantly monitor and manage our archive so we spend a good deal of time researching the best solution and testing the alternatives. QStar's HSM software with a DISC Blu-ray library met all of our design objectives, was straight forward to deploy and has been very dependable."



Using multiple protected servers and three tiers of storage that include disk and optical technologies provides Lynn Grove a resilient archive. This well considered strategy will help protect data from media, device or site failure while ensuring long term record preservation. Lynn Grove High School is an excellent example of an organisation that recognises the importance of digital assets and has architected an archive environment that enables it to comply with government regulations that operates within its budget and resource constraints.

"The QStar HSM software plays a key role in our archive strategy," continued John Stark. "HSM helps us to secure our important student, staff and administration records in a simple and flexible way. We can archive all of our records independent of application and without any special integration. With the QStar software, we're confident that Lynn Grove has a strong foundation for the preservation of our digital assets that we can support for many years."

Planning for the Future

The success of the QStar HSM software and Blu-ray DISC library is giving Lynn Grove the opportunity to plan for future archive optimisation. One area being considered is to make better use of the removable Blu-ray media for expansion and redundancy. As the 5TB library fills over the coming years, it has the ability to take older data sets offline and store the Blu-ray media outside the library. Another option is to create duplicate copies of all online media for storage offsite to create a cost-effective disaster

recovery procedure. The QStar HSM software will help the Lynn Grove staff transparently control both of these processes with its offline media management and automated media copy functionality. As the Lynn Grove archive grows in sophistication, the QStar HSM software has the advanced features to evolve with its changing needs.



Lynn Grove V.A. High School – www.Lynngrove.org.uk



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