

Oxford University Computing Services Picks Kanaka for Mac OS X

Kanaka: Benefits of Deployment at Oxford University Computing Services (OUCS)

- Automated Novell eDirectory login and home directory access for Mac OS X users
- Lowered end user support and administration costs, enhanced security
- Eliminated custom provisioning application development
- Eliminated manual configuration process to connect Mac OS X computers to network resources

Background

Best tool for students to successfully complete four or more years of study at a top-ranked university? It's not an iPod. It's a connected computer—securely authenticated to the university network, and automatically provisioned with each user's home directory and network storage resources.

As a renowned center of teaching and research, Oxford University attracts students and scholars from across the globe. From the student population of 18,000, more than 130 nationalities are represented. Regardless of location or operating system used, each student needs to be able to quickly and easily connect to the Oxford University network to access their home directory, and to share and manage their electronic resources.

Objective

Provide Mac OS X users of public area and lecture room computers with automated network access while enhancing security and lowering support overhead.

Situation before Kanaka

Public area computers in common areas and lecture rooms are increasingly available across the Oxford campus, including a growing number of Apple computers. Yet, connecting Mac users to network resources on other vendor platforms at Oxford University, such as user home directory and storage space on NetWare* servers, has long been a support-intensive exercise in frustration for system administrators, as well as a challenge for developers.

"We have spent a considerable amount of time working on manual solutions for integrating OS X Macs into our Novell eDirectory environment, but we were never happy with the methods," said James Partridge, Apple Mac/NetWare Specialist, ICT Team, Oxford University Computer

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Services. "None of the custom approaches integrated well with our existing methods of managing user accounts or file store. In fact, we never felt comfortable deploying any of these manual methods in our production environment. We had to find a solution, though, because we aren't allowed to have public workstations with unauthenticated access, and this was the situation we were in with our public area Macs. Unauthenticated access to resources on JANET (Joint Academic NETwork) – the UK education and research network – goes against the JANET acceptable use policy. "

Each student's education depends on being able to focus on the course of study, and not on reconfiguring network settings for each campus computer they use, or having to remember a complex login name or configuration details. Prior to implementing Kanaka, Oxford students using public area Mac OS X computers needed to manually configure the guest computer's network drive mappings in order to login and access their home directories and file store on NetWare. But in all too many cases configuration errors ensued, and a technical support person would be called to perform the configuration. In addition, because the machines were logged in with generic standard user accounts, this meant that users would leave files littered all over a desktop that was then available to anyone – clearly not satisfactory.

Situation after Kanaka

"The scope of our Kanaka deployment is still small, but we anticipate it will grow both within our department and in the University. Thanks to Kanaka for Mac OS X, connecting our Mac users to Oxford network resources managed by Novell eDirectory, such as user home directories, is no longer a problem," said Wylie Horn, Team Leader, Network Systems Management Service, OUCS. "We also wanted tighter integration between the public area Macs and Windows machines. In other words, users should be able to use either type of machine and still have access to the same files in the same file store. We can do this now with Kanaka trivially and automatically. In fact, not many users do use both types of machine but admin overheads are reduced by having everything in one place. Kanaka's auto discovery feature eliminated the need for Mac users to know where their storage is located on the network, and eliminated the manual process of mapping associations to the storage. With links to storage now being built dynamically based on the user's identity at login, our Mac OS X users can now move from machine to machine and not have to worry about remembering the location of their storage or traverse from the root of a volume down to their storage in order to access files."

"Kanaka was simple to deploy, continued Horn. "Server setup was straightforward, and deploying and configuring the Kanaka client is also trivial. As Novell system administrators, we appreciate Kanaka's centralized management through Novell Remote Manager (NoRM). But the main benefit

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of Kanaka is the product's transparency and ease of use due to the almost seamless integration with Mac OS X. By eliminating the manual configuration process for our public area Macs, Kanaka is reducing support issues by making the login process painless for our public area Mac users, who are more or less unaware of Kanaka, apart from the information available to them in the Kanaka Dashboard, such as Password Reset."

"OUCS was also a beta site for Kanaka, so we've helped the product evolve and mature into the product it is today," noted Partridge. "Kanaka worked quite well even at a fairly early beta stage. But pre-release products exist to be improved by feedback from beta users, so Condrey developers took our suggestions and those of the other beta testers and integrated them into the released product. In addition to the many benefits provided by the Kanaka for Mac product, the support both from Condrey Corporation and from the Kanaka beta forum has been excellent."

"We are very pleased with customer acceptance of Kanaka for the expanding Mac OS X market, and especially grateful to OUCS for being one of the product's first customers," said David Condrey, CEO of Condrey Corporation. "As one of the initial Kanaka beta sites, Oxford University Computing Services staff was instrumental in suggesting features and enhancements which are now available in the shipping version."

Conclusion

In large scale education and enterprise environments, a scalable directory service and applications that extend its schema to use information stored in it provide the optimal way to manage users and heterogeneous computing resources. Kanaka for Mac OS X plugs into any Novell eDirectory infrastructure, automating access configuration and significantly easing the administrative burden and support overhead of providing secure, trouble-free network access to large numbers of Mac OS X users.

"We deal with many 3rd-party vendors and suppliers and it's safe to say that our experience with Condrey Corporation has been first class in every respect," concluded Partridge and Horn. "Kanaka delivers everything OUCS needs to connect Mac users as securely, simply, and as inexpensively as possible. We're also greatly impressed with the quality of support. Their support staff are among the most technically knowledgeable, responsive and friendly people we have had the pleasure of dealing with. The result is a product and a vendor relationship we can depend on."

About Kanaka

Kanaka has two components, a directory access plug-in for OS X workstations and a NLM (NetWare Loadable Module) running on a NetWare server.

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Kanaka also requires Novell Native File Access with Apple File Protocol or SMB/CIFS loaded on the server with the user's storage.

Kanaka authenticates MacOS X clients to eDirectory by integrating into the Mac OS X log-in subsystem, enabling context-less login on OS X clients. Each user's home directory location is derived solely from the standard HomeDirectory attribute in eDirectory, eliminating the need to manage a separate (Apple Filing Protocol) AFP-related attribute.

About Condrey Corporation

Condrey Corporation is a software engineering company that specializes in Identity, Storage, and File Management solutions that run on multiple platforms, including Microsoft Windows, Macintosh, Linux, and Novell NetWare. The suite of products work together to provide an Identity Based Storage Management solution that enables organizations to address end user storage and collaboration needs, automate key administrative tasks, and dramatically reduce the cost of managing and supporting a large numbers of users.

Condrey Corporation is strategically aligned with a wide variety of technology companies, including Apple Computer, Inc., Microsoft, and Novell, Inc. Condrey Corporation's flagship product, Storage Manager (formerly File System Factory), is commonly found in several industries, including Government, Finance and Banking, Healthcare, and Education.

David Condrey, Founder, CEO, and President has been delivering world-class solutions for more than ten years and has become a recognized innovator in the Identity, Storage, and File Management spaces.

For more information

Kanaka trial versions enable all features of the full version of the product. Visit our web site for more information about Kanaka.

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