

Faculty Access to Files: Anywhere -- Anytime

Sali Kaceli

Manager of Academic Computing

Philadelphia Biblical University

200 Manor Ave.

Langhorne, PA 19047

Tel. (215) 702-4555

Email: skaceli@pbu.edu

<http://www.pbu.edu>

Abstract

This session will highlight a new technology provided by Novell Inc. that allows the faculty and students of Philadelphia Biblical University access their files from anywhere, anytime both securely and with very little configuration on the user end. This technology solves many problems related to faculty ending up with many versions of the same document, disks going bad, etc. By using Novell iFolder the faculty is given the freedom of accessing the files in a variety of ways: client based access, web based and through Netdrive. A demonstration of the system implementation, functionality and how it developed will be presented in this seminar.

Introduction/Background

Philadelphia Biblical University (PBU) is one of many institutions striving to bring technology in the classroom while teaching Biblical truths. The university has about 1300 full-time students offering various degrees from undergraduate to graduate. With the increase in the number of programs and with the development of technology, a new need arose whereby the faculty, staff and students needed access to their files from anywhere at any time. Floppy disks or zip drives were not able to meet this need. Transparencies were outdated. Besides that there were cases where faculty had to deal with multiple versions of the same presentation and other issues. The Information Technology Department, a staff of 5, is striving to support every aspect of computing: infrastructure, database, web, hardware, server upgrade and maintenance, training, and student computing.

Most of the faculty have one computer in the office, another computer that they may use with a projector in the classroom, another at home and a laptop. A problematic scenario might include difficulty in accessing a file on the personal laptop computer, or accessing an outdated version of a file while attending a conference.

In light of this, since we have a licensing agreement with Novell Inc. that provides access to a suite of good stable applications. One of them being iFolder. It initially came out as part of Netware 6 but can also be purchased as a separate product. The advantage of this system meant that there would be less problems for faculty to experience and less disks we had to troubleshoot. It meant that it would meet needs by having files follow the user wherever they were as long as they have some kind of Internet connection.

The Project

Just like any other project in IT, we had to start with the testing phase. We installed and then tested it with a few user accounts and then running live with a few users willing to try. We started the project in Nov. 2001 where certain faculty were willing to try this new technology. One aspect of the project was that whatever we were going to use it had to be relatively simple and require very little from the user. However, a few considerations had to be kept in mind:

- a. security
- b. integration with current system username and password
- c. reliability and being able to use the files if no connectivity existed

Using primarily Novell and NDS for our account information, the security was not much of a problem. SSL (Secure Socket Layer) was already provided with the product. Since SSL certificates are quite expensive, we had to use one from our system, but the disadvantage was that the user is prompted to accept the certificate. This was solved by simply posting a note on the website. This is just one of the methods of accessing the files over the web. Using the client (2MB file) or the Netdrive does not present this problem.

Integration

Novell iFolder utilizes LDAP authentication, and since we were using Novell Directory Services (NDS) that was not a problem. With version 2.0 of iFolder, one can also configure it to run on Windows 2000 server and utilize the Active directory LDAP, or you can run it on Linux systems. The system is also scalable to handle thousands of users and at the same time requiring little or no configuration on the IT end.

iFolder Benefits for the Institution

1. Seamless data access
2. Data Safeguards and data recovery
3. Reliable data security
4. Cross platform support
5. Simple data and account management
6. No training requirements

Seamless Data Access

Novell iFolder empowers our faculty and staff and student by enabling their data to follow them wherever they go. Our users no longer e-mail themselves project files so they can work on them from home and the frustration associated with sorting through different versions of the same file on different machines has been significantly reduced. iFolder stores and synchronizes users' work in such a way that no matter what client or what location they log in from, their files are available and in the condition that they expect them to be.

Data Security and Recovery

iFolder uses encryption to store the data on the server. As such, the data is secure from unauthorized access, but it can also be easily safeguarded from system crashes and disasters that can result in data loss. When one of our faculty saves a file locally, the iFolder client can automatically update data to the iFolder server. This data immediately becomes available for nightly backup by the university IT staff.

iFolder makes it easier also for IT managers to ensure that all of an organization's critical data is protected.

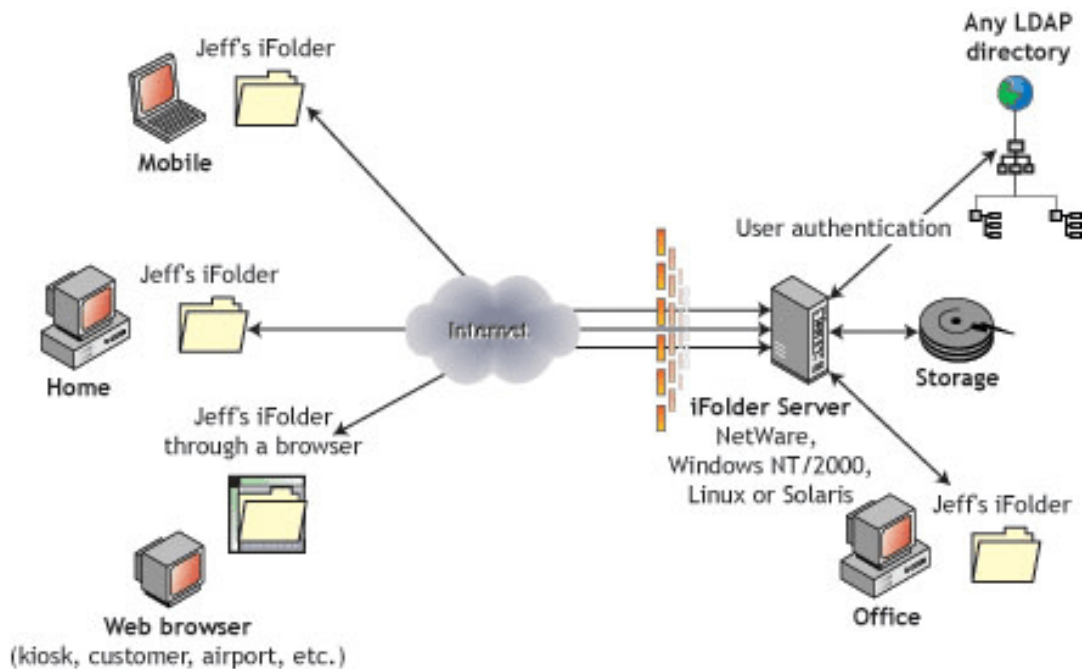
Simple Data and Account Management

Novell iFolder was designed to allow for easy setup and management by IT professionals. The iFolder server can be managed from any location using a standard Web browser. It also does not require the IT Department staff to perform routine maintenance tasks with its automatic file updates, synchronization, and encryption. Also, since local files are automatically updated to the network, iFolder ensures that data is protected on both corporate and individual levels.

No Training Requirements

IT personnel no longer have to condition or train users to perform any special tasks to ensure the consistency of data stored on their laptops and on the network. With Novell iFolder, users simply store their files in their local iFolder directory on their PCs. Their files will be automatically updated to the iFolder server and any other workstations that they use. iFolder works seamlessly behind the scenes so users don't even need to know it's there.

IFOLDER TECHNOLOGY (FIGURE 1)



How to Install iFolder

1. From a browser, go to the iFolder Server URL
2. Click on download iFolder client (IFOLDERCLIENT.EXE) and click OK.
3. Select the location where to download the file.
4. Go to the location where you saved the file to continue the installation.
5. Click NEXT for the Language.
6. Click on X sign to close the license agreement.
7. Click YES to accept the license agreement.
8. Click Finish to complete the installation.
9. Reboot the computer if asked to.

Logging in to iFolder

1. Click Continue after reading the short introductory message to iFolder.
2. Enter your network User ID and password.
3. Click the Login button.
4. Click OK to place a shortcut to your personal iFolder files on your desktop. When you install the iFolder client, a personal folder is created for you on the hard drive of your computer and the iFolder server. By default, this personal folder is installed in My Documents\iFolder\userid\Home.
5. Enter your pass phrase and confirm it if you want the information encrypted.

NOTE: If you checked the box next to Automatic Login when you logged in to the iFolder client, you can disable it by right-clicking the iFolder system tray icon and then clicking Logout.

Accessing Your Files Over the Web

From time to time you may need to access only one file from iFolder while you are away on vacation, seminar or visiting. This tool meets this need.

1. Open a browser and go to the URL of your iFolder server [URL](#)
2. Click Login
3. Click OK to accept the Security Alert
4. Click YES to accept content from Novell (this will be installed only once)
5. Enter your username, password, and pass phrase (if you have one), and then click Connect.

Once you are logged in, you will see your personal iFolder files. They appear in a directory structure. To expand the folder and view the files, double-click the Home folder.

From the browser you can download and upload files to the server or delete, create, and rename them. Only the changes are then uploaded to the iFolder server and synchronized out to all the other computers where you have the iFolder client installed.

Log-in and Log-out

To log in, right-click the iFolder icon in your system tray and then click Login. To logout, right-click the iFolder icon and then click Logout.

Deleting Files

If you delete files from one computer in iFolder, the files in all computers where you have iFolder installed will be deleted. When deleting files, make sure that you do not delete something you will later need.

The Conflict Bin

The Conflict Bin Viewer displays a list of files that were saved before they were deleted or overwritten during synchronization with the server. You can restore any of the listed files or permanently delete them from your computer.

Conclusion

The implementation of iFolder at Philadelphia Biblical University has met a great need for the faculty, staff and students. The users have benefited in the aspect that they now can install the iFolder Client on as many Windows client machines as they like. They can use the same network login name and password to login to iFolder . All information is secure and encrypted during the synchronization. Now the faculty do not have to worry about disks and different versions of the same file or corrupted documents.

Additionally, the IT staff can now focus on improving other information services, rather than dealing with frustrated users who cannot recover lost or damaged files from floppy disks or from personal email accounts.

References

Novell Inc., Website <http://www.novell.com/documentation/lg/ifolder20/index.html>, April 21, 2003. iFolder Professional Edition 2.0 Documentation.

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