

College Converts to Digital Video



DVRs Get Top Marks from Security and IT

Ocean County College, located in Toms River, New Jersey, went looking for a new digital video surveillance system when renovation plans forced the campus security department to move out of the building that served as the nerve center for its VHS-based video security system.

“The security department had a triple helping of fiber going into that building to support all the cameras on campus,” explains John Swierz, who looks after IT for the college’s facilities department. “Other buildings on campus were not equipped to accommodate the system, so we needed another solution.”

No tears were shed when it became clear that the VHS system was going to be replaced, Swierz recalls.

The biggest complaint about the older analog technology, he says, was the excessive time consumed searching for video evidence. The other problem was the poor quality of the video resulting from the college’s supply of tapes degrading over time.

Twenty monitors – one for each camera – took up an entire wall of the security office, but “we didn’t have the manpower to station someone there to watch them constantly,” remarks Swierz.

The solution was to go to a digital surveillance and monitoring system, locate DVRs in individual buildings, and network them using the college’s local area network.

Swierz turned to the Internet to research the DVR market and discovered March Networks™ in the process. He put together a request for proposals, invited some dealers in to demonstrate their products and ultimately issued a purchase order to March Networks’ Certified Solution Provider, New Jersey Business Systems, for eight 4000 Series DVRs.

Linux O/S

The final choice was between March Networks’ Linux-based

system and a Windows-based system, notes Swierz.

“I liked the fact that the March Networks Linux operating system was stored on a chip, so if a hard-drive crashes, which hard-drives can do every so often, you may lose your data, but you don’t lose your operating system. You put in another hard-drive and that’s it.”

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John Swierz

Facilities IT Coordinator,
Ocean County College

In addition, says Swierz, the March Networks DVRs are designed to distribute data sequentially across a number of hard-drives, and come with an internal disk-mirroring option, to ensure the least amount of data is lost in case of a hard-drive failure. That means a 4000 Series DVR operating with all four internal hard-drives could still preserve all of its recorded data if a hard-drive malfunctions, depending on the positioning of the failed drive and whether internal disk-mirroring is being used.

Bandwidth usage was a concern for the IT department, Swierz adds, but “the system’s efficient video compression and control feature, which lets us set the amount of network bandwidth it uses when transmitting a file, satisfied them that we weren’t going to bring down the college network.”

Flexible

College security staff retired the 20 VHS monitors and acquired a guard tour application for the March Networks system. One dedicated 27-inch monitor hanging on the wall in the



security office cycles through the cameras, and several other key personnel equipped with software are also able to view live video on their computers.

The DVR system currently records video from eight college buildings, including the college’s gymnasium and a new warehouse with cages full of computers.

When Swierz and his security colleagues were planning for the installation at the gymnasium, they discovered that students with hand-held video cameras were recording intercollegiate basketball games to comply with regulations set by the sport’s governing authority.

The athletics department was happy to share the cost of a larger-capacity DVR and two pan-tilt-zoom cameras, which were installed on the gymnasium’s ceiling. The DVR now records video and audio from each game and CDs are burned afterwards for the coaches.

Safety

The college uses video surveillance to help protect students and staff, and also as an investigative tool for incidents of theft or vandalism.

In one episode, video from the March Networks system was

instrumental in identifying a student who was removing books from professors’ offices and selling them in the library, says Swierz.

As for the future, Swierz is planning to acquire additional March Networks DVRs for the college’s new technology building and for a T-1 connected satellite campus located 20 miles (32 kilometers) away.

He’s also working on a campus-wide wireless network that will allow college security officers to call up video from laptops in their vehicles.

“I’m extraordinarily happy with the system and so is everyone else here,” says Swierz. ✨

Ocean County College

Ocean County College (www.ocean.edu) serves more than 8,000 students at its main 275-acre (111 hectares) campus in Toms River, New Jersey, and a satellite campus in Manahawkin, 20 miles (32 kilometers) away. The public community college is sponsored by Ocean County and the State of New Jersey and has provided area residents with the opportunity to benefit from higher education for more than 35 years.