



## Dublin Institute of Technology protects vital virtual learning environment from down time with Lifekeeper for WebCT

*"The successful introduction of WebCT to DIT meant that the availability of the system was critical right from the start."*

*"If our WebCT system went down at this early stage of adoption, it would spell disaster for the whole roll-out. As early success is key to the successful introduction of a virtual learning environment, it was extremely important that it had a good reputation from the start."*

Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) is Ireland's largest institution of further education. Founded in 1887 with the establishment of technical education in Ireland, DIT today continues to build on this long and proud tradition of education. DIT's six faculties Applied Arts, Built Environment, Business, Engineering, Science, and Tourism & Food serve 22,000 students and 2,000 staff.

**Dr. Kevin O'Rourke**, Project Manager, of the Learning Technology Team at DIT said:

*"24/7 availability is already expected by academics, and students now want access to courses at any time. As e-learning becomes the norm, technical reliability is a key component of the teaching and learning environment."*



### DIT Chose Lifekeeper

*"Any sense that the technology was unreliable would have seriously affected the success of the whole strategy. From the beginning of the project, we could not allow for a critical failure in the system which might affect user access to courses."*

Building confidence in WebCT among academic staff was number one on the list of priorities of the learning technology team. The system that supported it not only had to work, but had to be seen to be the best solution available.

To assist in the introduction of a WebCT e-learning system, a team of five began work in May 2002 specifically to help in the transition of courses and teaching to a blended-learning environment. The three year roll-out has involved the learning technology team, academic staff in all six faculties, library

staff, IS Services, Student Support Services (counselling, careers, etc.), and the Learning and Teaching centre.

DIT has implemented Lifekeeper to protect its vital WebCT servers from damaging downtime. Following the advice of WebCT, DIT chose the LifeKeeper solution from Open Minds High Availability Solutions, the SteelEye Competence and Support Centre for the UK and Ireland. WebCT performed their specific parts of the implementation, and Open Minds performed the SteelEye implementation and testing of the failover.



## Solution Details

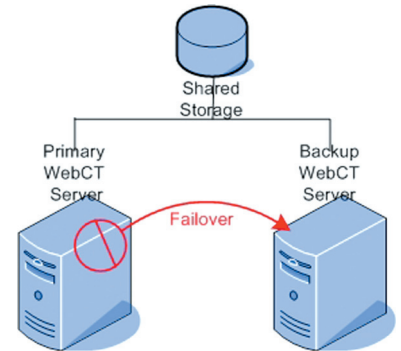
*"By the end we had a working failover solution. It was installed in March 2003, and to date we are extremely happy with it."*

*"The solution gives us the additional capability to perform maintenance to the systems during office hours. There is no longer any need for IT staff to work out-of-hours to perform regular system maintenance. It also gives automatic failover out-of-hours, when system administrators are not on duty."*

LifeKeeper monitors WebCT continuously. If any of its system resources do not respond, then this is an indication that they are not available. If a resource is not available for a pre-set interval, then LifeKeeper recovers the application on the backup server.

The failover provided by the Open Minds high availability solution has already proven itself on one occasion when there was a system problem, and the result was that the users continued as normal with little disruption (failover time is currently less than sixty seconds). The failover system has given minimal loss of service in the case of hardware, network, or software failure. It also allows DIT to perform hardware

maintenance and OS upgrades whilst the backup server runs the application. Lifekeeper also allows the servers to continue running out-of-hours without staff having to be available 24 hours per day. Any problems result in a failover which can be resolved the next day with no loss of service.



## The Future

*"I think that the failover solution has made our lives easier, because it has made the WebCT software easier to manage on a day-to-day basis."*

DIT is currently reviewing their disaster recovery plan and will be looking into an off-site backup using LifeKeeper data replication. In addition, the possibility of using LifeKeeper to protect other applications used by DIT is also being considered.

*"LifeKeeper from Open Minds has given us peace of mind and, ultimately, happy staff and students,"* concluded Dr. O'Rourke.



## About Open Minds

*"I am not worried about what would happen if the system went down. All in all, with the help and expertise of Open Minds working with WebCT, it has been much easier to implement than I had thought it would be."*

*"It would be difficult for me to quantify how much this has saved DIT, but it certainly has saved me a few sleepless nights."*

Open Minds provide software solutions, support, consultancy and training for High Availability, and Disaster Recovery solutions for IT systems. A strong team of technical consultants offer experience gained from many years of successfully installing and supporting LifeKeeper solutions throughout the world in order to implement effective and easily maintained High Availability Solutions.

Open Minds is the registered SteelEye competence centre for the United Kingdom and Ireland. We have longstanding partnerships with VAR's, Software Houses and Systems

Integrators to provide a full technical backup including pre-sales, installation services and support required to fully implement a high-availability solution.

For more information, please visit [www.openminds.co.uk](http://www.openminds.co.uk)

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