

CASE STUDY

NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

Northeastern University is a student-centered, practice-oriented national research university with a mobile and distributed global campus community of over 50,000 students, faculty, and staff. As the leading co-op school in the country, several thousand of the University's students are dispersed around the world at varied workstations and time zones.

The University is defining the next generation of individual academic computing support by implementing a bold, strategic initiative called 'Northeastern On Demand', which propelled them to win the 2005 CIO Bold 100 award. When fully deployed to its campus community, 50,000 users will be able to access key desktop applications and file storage as easy-to-use web services, available anytime, anywhere in the world. Northeastern believes that as they enable students and faculty to perform their work and collaborate more effectively, the university will reach its goal of becoming a Top 100 research institution.

Mobile and Distributed Campus Community Needed On Demand Services

Northeastern needed a solution that would serve the needs of their mobile and distributed campus community. Previously, students and faculty were limited to doing their work at set workstations and on specific networks-constrained by locale, location and device. The University's goal was to give faculty and students access to their work, as well as all the tools they need to be more efficient and productive, anytime and anywhere. For example, Northeastern wanted a co-op student who was working for a semester in California, and a faculty member who was attending a conference in Europe, to have the same access to their work and information as those who were working in its Boston, MA main campus.



Key Facts

Industry: Higher Education

Product: Xythos WebFile Server

Audience: 50,000 students, faculty and staff

Benefits:

- Provides portal-based access to document management functionality
- Eliminates the requirement for specific PC systems
- Allows co-op students to be more connected to the Northeastern campus
- Enables students to self-administer files and folders
- Integrates with Northeastern's heterogeneous architecture

Why Xythos?

- Based on open Internet standards
- Modular and flexible technology provides a service-oriented architecture
- Granular control of permissions to documents and folders
- Supports common methods of system-wide authentication

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“With Xythos, Northeastern on Demand will truly enable our users to leverage the Internet to work and collaborate, and ultimately be more effective.”

Bob Weir,
Vice President of
Information Services,
Northeastern University

The Northeastern Information Services leadership team acted on this vision by creating an enterprise portal, called myNEU. myNEU allows students to access University announcements and class schedules, as well as conduct transactions with the University. As a result, students no longer need to stand in line for admissions and student services, but can now access those services through myNEU. The portal was recognized as a success and was acknowledged as a mission critical application by both the administration and students. myNEU was also a key reason for which Northeastern Information Services received a CIO 100 award for resourcefulness in 2003. Despite the portal's success, Northeastern Information Services still saw a need for more—the need to provide dispersed students and faculty with anywhere access to their own files, and a set of application services that would allow them to perform their work no matter what workstation they were using.

The screenshot displays the myNEU faculty & staff portal. At the top, it says 'Welcome Richard Mickool' and 'You are currently logged in.' Below this are navigation tabs for 'myNEU Communications', 'Services & Links', and 'Library'. The date 'August 19, 2005' is shown in the top right. The main content area is divided into three columns. The left column contains 'Announcements' with three items: 'Nominations for Commencement Speakers and Honorary Degree Recipients for 2006', 'Our new ranking in U.S. News & World Report', and 'Holiday Schedule for 2005-2006 Academic Year'. The middle column features 'Blast from the Past' with a photo of an elephant and a caption about a 1967 campaign. The right column has a 'Weather Channel' section for Boston, MA.

Xythos-based “my files” allows students and faculty to easily access and search for their files, and turns myNEU into a collaborative environment

Xythos Provides Anywhere, Anytime Access to Files and Information Via myNEU

Already anticipating that demand for anytime, anyplace access to real-time data and collaboration would become more integral to the campus community, the Northeastern Information Services team pushed myNEU to the next level by creating an initiative called 'Northeastern On Demand.' Leveraging the Xythos WebFile Server, Northeastern On Demand allows the campus community to access their files and applications through myNEU based on a user's login. Xythos' ability to authenticate against Northeastern's LDAP directory creates a secure web-based virtual file management environment for the entire campus community. Now, most everything that a student, faculty member or Northeastern staff member can access on campus, they can access via Northeastern On Demand, no matter where they are located or what platform their PC is running on.

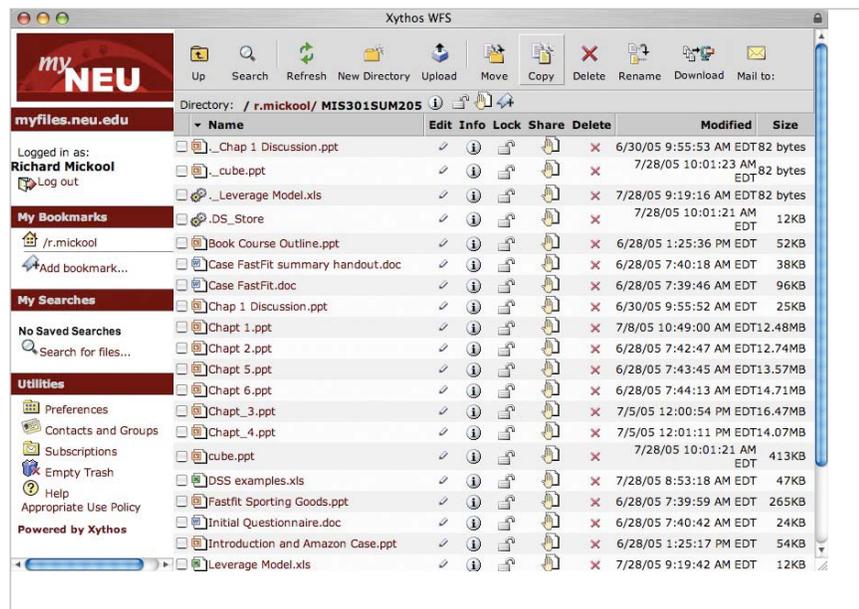


“We also expect a growing utilization of the Xythos' file sharing capabilities with individuals at other universities as our students and faculty use the services to support cross-university research and other initiatives.”

Bob Weir,
Vice President of
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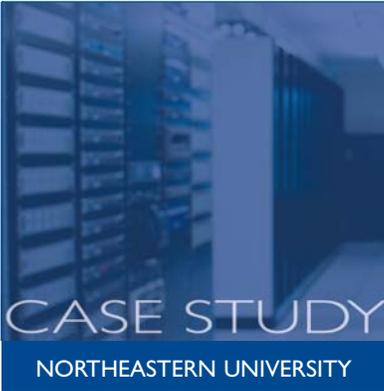
Northeastern On Demand provides the applications users need to access, create and modify data, as well as a secure way to share their work with others, no matter where they are located. Whether working collaboratively on a class project, a research initiative, or a work assignment for a co-op employer, students and faculty can productively connect, regardless of location.

“Northeastern On Demand is a bold initiative to free our users from locale, location and device, providing them with the ability to access their information and files and the necessary tools to be more effective in their work,” said Bob Weir, vice president of Information Services at Northeastern University. “Xythos is a key part of this initiative, enabling the Northeastern community to securely access their files over the web with version control and other basic library services. Strong user-controlled authentication for file sharing was key for Northeastern in an environment of thousands of dynamically reconfiguring teams. With Xythos, Northeastern on Demand will truly enable our users to leverage the Internet to work and collaborate, and ultimately be more effective.”



Xythos WebFile Server gives students and faculty access to a complete set of library services, including file check-in/check-out, version control, comments, subscriptions and more

Xythos WebFile Server appears as a virtual drive available to students and faculty via the web where users can store their work. It also allows users to self-administer at both the file and folder level, enabling collaboration among individuals where one person can host the working files for a team and grant access (read-only or read/write) to other members of the team. As a result, students can easily collaborate with one another without having to involve IT. Xythos WebFile Server also has the added feature of centralized data backup and restoration, ensuring that students and faculty's work will never be lost.



System Requirements

Servers

Any platform supporting J2SE or J2EE including: Windows NT®, 2000, 2003, Linux, Solaris®, IBM AIX®, HP/UX® and Mac OS X®

Web/Application Servers

Apache Web Server, Microsoft IIS®, BEA Weblogic®, IBM WebSphere® and Tomcat

Client Systems

HTTP-enabled devices, including those running Windows®, Mac OS® and Linux

Database

IBM DB2®, Oracle®, Microsoft SQL Server®, PostgreSQL

Northeastern On Demand is expected to build upon the success of myNEU because it can be easily accessed from any device with a web browser on or off campus. Now, faculty and students aren't hindered by what lab or office has which system. Instead, they can access their information and share it with others from whatever computer they prefer or happen to have access to at the time.

Northeastern On Demand Based On Modular, Flexible Service-Oriented Architecture

Northeastern On Demand is based on a service-oriented architecture, emphasizing modularity, adaptability and the ability to customize the platform. Xythos helped to address each of these three areas; Xythos' technology is modular in that it works with any client software that supports web folders or can recognize a mapped drive; it can also be accessed via WebDAV or by any web browser. Xythos is also adaptable, respecting the existing IT infrastructure. Its open standards-based architecture integrates with all common databases, application servers, authentication sources and operating systems—fitting the heterogeneity of the Northeastern campus. Finally, the Xythos WebFile Server provides open, flexible APIs, allowing Northeastern's IT team to easily make changes to the user interface or its embed collaborative document management services within other web applications.

“As we deploy Northeastern On Demand to our university community over the coming Academic year, we expect rapid acceptance and use of the technology,” said Bob Weir. “We also expect a growing utilization of the Xythos' file sharing capabilities with individuals at other universities as our students and faculty use the services to support cross-university research and other initiatives.”

**For more information please call 1.888.4XYTHOS
or visit www.xythos.com**

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