

Look Book

The National Library of South Africa

This article first appeared in the April 2009 issue of *Novell Connection* magazine.

In a pioneering project, the National Library of South Africa (NLSA) has successfully migrated its entire estate of desktop PCs from Microsoft Windows to SUSE Linux Enterprise Desktop. By adopting Linux and the Novell edition of OpenOffice.org, NLSA saved R 5.5 million in software licensing costs and gained a more robust and secure working environment.

> Overview

The National Library of South Africa (NLSA) is a custodian and provider of the nation's key knowledge resources, with campuses in Cape Town and Pretoria. Mandated by law to collect and preserve published documents and make them accessible, NLSA's collections include books, rare manuscripts, periodicals, government publications, official foreign publications, maps, technical reports and newspapers.

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> Challenge

One of the stated goals of NLSA is to “reach out” to the population of South Africa, and accessibility of information is a key goal for the library. To assist readers and researchers in finding resources, NLSA had around 200 public computers running Microsoft Windows and Office. The organisation had a similar number of computers for internal use, also running Microsoft Office as well as a variety of administrative and financial systems.

With the goal of making services available to a larger number of users, NLSA planned to update and expand its desktop and server infrastructure. As a public body, the organisation needed to find a cost-effective solution, and

also wanted to align itself with central government policy, which calls for state institutions to adopt open source technologies wherever practical.

Simultaneously, NLSA wanted to resolve issues around security and productivity on its existing computers. There were frequently problems with viruses and other malware, causing loss of data and significant downtime.

> Solution

To comply with government guidelines, reduce costs and improve security, NLSA opted to migrate from Microsoft Windows and Office to SUSE Linux Enterprise Desktop and OpenOffice.org Novell Edition. As the first major public body in South Africa to make the move to open source, NLSA is blazing a trail and creating best practices for others to follow.

“Migrating to SUSE Linux Enterprise Desktop enabled us to comply with Cabinet policy on the use and adoption of Free and Open Source Software (FOSS), and it also considerably reduced the cost of rolling out our new estate of desktop computers,” said Lesiba Steve Ledwaba, Executive Head: ICT, National Library of South Africa. “Across our two campuses we now have 725 desktops running Linux, 505 of which are public-access terminals.”

Prior to the decision in favour of Linux, NLSA had determined that the cost of the Microsoft Windows operating system and the Office productivity suite would total R 5.7 million. By contrast, the licensing cost of SUSE Linux Enterprise Desktop came to just R 170,000. Because OpenOffice.org Novell Edition is included with SUSE Linux Enterprise Desktop, NLSA was able to avoid R 5.5 million in unnecessary software licensing fees.

“Choosing Microsoft software for our desktop and server estates was financially impractical; SUSE Linux Enterprise Desktop and SUSE Linux Enterprise Server gave us a better quality product at a much lower cost,” said Ledwaba. “Of course, we needed to take into account training to ensure that our users would be comfortable working in the new Linux environment, and Meso ICT Solutions provided exceptional support for that aspect of the migration project.”

NLSA worked with Meso ICT Solutions during the transition to SUSE Linux Enterprise Desktop. Meso ICT Solutions used its adup (Application Desktop User Profiling) toolset to profile internal users' skills and experience, then monitored their progress in becoming proficient in the new Linux desktop environment.

“The adup tool was a key decision factor for the migration: Meso ICT Solutions gave us the confidence that we could make the move to SUSE Linux Enterprise

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Desktop quickly and painlessly,” said Ledwaba. “Meso ICT Solutions’ proactive approach was great—they really made sure that users bought into the new technology.”

> Results

By choosing SUSE Linux Enterprise Desktop for its estate of 725 computers, NLSA avoided the high initial and ongoing costs for the equivalent Microsoft solutions, as well as gaining a more stable and secure environment for users.

“Our staff and the wider community of public users really

enjoy using SUSE Linux Enterprise Desktop and OpenOffice.org; we are getting very positive feedback,” said Ledwaba. “The acquisition cost savings were vast—in the region of R 5.5 million—and we will also avoid the future cost of upgrading to new releases of Microsoft Windows and Office.”

Another benefit of deploying Linux is that it places lower demands on the desktop hardware chosen by NLSA. This will translate into long-term cost savings, as it will no longer be necessary to upgrade hardware as frequently as in the past.

“There is genuine enthusiasm in our organisation about the adoption of Linux, and with Novell’s assistance we are building up internal knowledge to share with other public bodies in South Africa,” said Ledwaba. “Our successful adoption of SUSE Linux Enterprise Desktop and SUSE Linux Enterprise Server enables us to serve as an example of what other governmental organisations can achieve.” **N**

Products and Services

SUSE Linux Enterprise Desktop
SUSE Linux Enterprise Server

Results

- Migrated 725 desktop computers to Linux
- Installed SUSE Linux Enterprise Server on five blade servers
- Reduced software costs by 95 percent
- Improved security and user productivity