

CASE STUDY

EPFL

The Ecole Polytechnique Federale Lausanne (EPFL) is one of the two Ecoles Polytechniques fédérales in Switzerland. The school encourages daily collaboration among its 10,000 students, professors, researchers and entrepreneurs, resulting in groundbreaking work in science, technology and architecture.

Challenge: No Unified File Management Architecture

Previously at EPFL, each department had its own homemade solution for managing data—usually on a Windows file share. Often, an assistant in each department was responsible for maintaining the department's server, creating a bottleneck whenever changes needed to be implemented. EPFL also had several centralized file storage repositories across the campus, but none of them provided an easy way to share data with people inside or outside of the school.

Students and faculty relied on email to exchange data and files, but due to email size limitations, faculty needed to apply for authorization from the Computer Center in order to send out large email attachments.

As a result, the Computer Center at EPFL wanted to provide the school a common, web-based file management and sharing solution. The Knowledge and Information Services (KIS) team at EPFL investigated SAP, Novell, Oracle among other commercial solutions, but discovered that their applications were cost-prohibitive and included complex features that school did not need.

As a champion of open source technologies, the KIS team also reviewed various open source solutions, but they could not find an enterprise-quality solution which addressed their institution's scalability and advanced file-sharing needs. In the end, EPFL chose the Xythos Enterprise Document Manager because Xythos offered a WebDAV-based file management solution that was easy-to-use and integrate and provided group-based file and folder management.

Xythos Deployed Through UPortal

Xythos was initially deployed to the EPFL campus in March 2006 and has now been deployed to the entire campus of students, faculty and administrators—10,000 in total.

ECOLE POLYTECHNIQUE
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Key Facts

Industry: Higher Education

Product: Xythos Digital Locker

Audience: Students, Faculty and Administrators

Benefits

- Enables online collaboration
- Eliminates investments in zip-drives, RW-CDs and floppy drives
- Reduces paper and printing costs
- Widespread adoption and use by students and faculty.

Why Xythos?

- Minimal maintenance and support
- Intuitive user interface
- Positive feedback from pilot users



“With Xythos, we now have secure, shared workspaces for each of our classes, projects, departments and more—increasing collaboration among our 10,000 students, professors, researchers and entrepreneurs.”

Predrag Viceic
Project Manager
EPFL

Xythos was deployed as a custom portlet on the school’s UPortal-powered portal, named “myEPFL”. Developers at EPFL used Xythos APIs to create a portlet which gave every person in the school’s LDAP system access to four basic directories:

Private: Allows students and faculty to access their own private directories

Public: Allows an authenticated user from EPFL to access school documents with read-only access

Dropbox: Allows students to upload documents, such as homework and term papers

www: Allows everyone with access to myEPFL to access the folder and its contents

EPFL has also created several web services around Xythos, including a web service that allows internal and external users to upload files to Xythos through a web form—without connecting to myEPFL. In the future, EPFL plans to create a secure, shared file storage within Xythos for every class on campus, so when a student subscribes to that course, they will automatically become a group member with access to course materials.

“Xythos’ flexible APIs and open standards-based architecture made it easy integrate a wide range of document management functionality as portlets into our school’s portal,” said Predrag Viceic, project manager at EPFL. “With Xythos, we now have secure, shared workspaces for each of our classes, projects, departments and more—increasing collaboration among our 10,000 students, professors, researchers and entrepreneurs.”

Xythos Manages 91,500 Files and Supports Rapid File Exchange

EPFL has already added over 91,500 files to its Xythos system in just a few short months. People are using Xythos for everything from:

- Collaborating on research;
- Sending files to external colleagues as links instead of email attachments;
- Uploading vacation photos; and
- Moving documents from legacy systems to Xythos.

“Xythos offers an easy, OS-agnostic way to share files with people inside and outside of EPFL.” said Predrag Viceic, project manager at EPFL. “As a result, Xythos is helping to reduce the burden on IT and save on disk storage.”

Predrag and his team have received a lot of positive feedback about Xythos and plan to continue to build on Xythos’ functionality within their myEPFL portal.