CNS /Update Newsletter Feature

Open Up! New Technologies Implemented

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The NERDC Open Systems Group (OSG) began the new year by implementing two new, important technologies to enhance services. Four new nodes were received and installed on the NERDC SP complex (NERSP).

The first two nodes were replacements for the smtp.ufl.edu service. More powerful nodes were needed to run virus scanning software on each message as it is received by the smtp.ufl.edu nodes. Additional information on the new virus scanning service appears on the cover of this issue of /Update.

Initial results of virus scanning were a bit startling. Initial calculations show that about 25% of all e-mail presented to smtp.ufl.edu, including e-mail sent from anywhere to a GatorLink e-mail address (even if that address is forwarded), contained a virus. Several campus units have already expressed appreciation for this service. We appreciate the opportunity to offer a service that benefits us all.

The remaining two new nodes are running the Network Dispatcher component of IBM's Websphere Edge Server. This software accepts incoming network traffic and then redistributes it to a cluster of application servers, allowing a group of servers to work in concert to support a single user application. The Network Dispatcher has an "advisor" component that continually checks the health of each of the servers in the cluster. If one of them stops responding for the "advised" service, no new traffic is routed to that server until it again responds. This provides an opportunity to perform diagnostics and repairs while providing uninterrupted service to the user application.

The first application to use this new cluster technology was SMTP. Since then, several high-volume customer Web sites, such as FACTS and ISIS, have been redeployed using this technology. It's hoped that most of the Web servers on the SP complex will be clustered in this manner by the time this article is published.

These new services are the culmination of almost two years of work. As has been discussed in previous "OSG: Open Up!" articles, it is labor-intensive and time consuming to perform the reconfigurations, upgrades, and service redesigns necessary to make enhancements to the NERSP computer system. Most of this work was accomplished without inconvenience to our customers.

Your Comments are Welcome

We welcome your comments and suggestions on this and all UFIT documentation. Please send your comments to:

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