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Windows Administrators Meeting
September 10, 2004
Notes (taken by Steve Kunz)

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Meeting Started (9:05)

Announcements

On September 8 AIT announced it would no longer support Microsoft Windows 95, 98, ME, and NT operating systems. The announcement was sent via email to the CCSG mailing list with the subject "Reminder of September 1st support standard change". AIT is now at the same level as the university minimum computer support standards (see http://www.iastate.edu/computing/standards/support.html). Current ScoutKits for these systems will be moved to the "Mature" ScoutKit list for a transition period (until June 2005). Doug Stevens (Ames Lab) raised some concern due to the fact that there is lab instrumentation that will not operate on modern operating systems. The main issue is anti-virus software support. Kunz and Hauber (AIT) noted that the announcement indicated that anti-virus support would be maintained for theses systems even after June 2005 as long as the manufacturer continues to provide it. However, McAfee stopped support for Windows 95 anti-virus software in June 2003, and has announced the end of support for Windows 98 in June 2005. Norton AntiVirus may be a temporary substitute for some departments.

Imaged Systems and OpenAFS

Kunz discussed an issue with OpenAFS and imaged systems that is being worked on. When you image a system with OpenAFS installed, the imaging process strips away the "LoopBack" connector that OpenAFS needs. At the current time the only solution is to reinstall OpenAFS on each system after it is loaded from the image (not a good solution). AIT has a couple people working on this problem. More when we know it.

Open Discussion

 Russ Hoffman (STAT) offered a tip on a product he had found for a staff person having "carpal tunnel" problems related to "mouse clicking". A product he found called "RSIGuard" (http://www.rsiguard.com) will automatically "left click" at the mouse pointer location after a configured amount of time (after the mouse movement stops).

Kunz offered some topics that would probably be of interest.

AutoIt: Kunz discussed "AutoIt", a very nice scripting language that is a combination of Perl, Visual Basic Script, and C. This "no cost" product can be used to do a variety of programming tasks on Windows systems, including running tasks, watching for windows needing responses (and supplying the responses), registry

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management, etc. Scripts can be compiled into a small executable that needs no additional components carried along (and no installation). Excellent help files are included with the product. AIT is already using AutoIt for some important functions. For example, the "Computer Inspector" project has major components coded in compiled AutoIt scripts. Some ScoutKits are being converted to carry along AutoIt "helper functions" to perform tasks previously unavailable in Scout. Check out AutoIt by going to the author's site at http://www.hiddensoft.com/autoit3.

OpenAFS and Roaming Profiles: Kunz talked about ongoing work in supporting Windows "roaming profiles" and "home directories" in AFS. The latest copy of OpenAFS has new support (the "LoopBack" adapter) that allows the notation of \\afs\afs.iastate.edu\... to be used for a UNC mount syntax. Work done at other universities (University of North Carolina at Charlotte, for example) allows slight modifications to OpenAFS that let roaming profiles, home directories, and folder redirection work fairly seamlessly. AIT will be doing more research in this area. The new increase in AFS base quota for everyone (250MB) makes this project more of a reality for us now.

ListSync: Kunz talked about issues revolving around the "ListSync" project. This project is the creation of security groups based on Acropolis college, department, and class lists. The main issue slowing this project down is FERPA (federal student privacy laws) and the exposure of private information. Information on FERPA is available at http://www.iastate.edu/~registrar/info/confid.html.

There are two main areas of exposure to be concerned about when creating security groups based on class lists. First, the security group itself has a "Members" attribute that would show (by default) all the students that are members of a class. This can be hidden by an ACL (Access Control List) denying anyone from seeing the "Members" attribute. Second, each user object has a "MemberOf" attribute, which shows the groups that user is a "member of". This means by default anyone could pick a student user object and see what classes they are taking (by viewing the class lists they are on). Again, this can be handled by an ACL denying anyone from seeing the "MemberOf" attribute. Unfortunately this is an "all or nothing" setting. You cannot ACL the "MemberOf" attribute to show some groups (set up by an OU manager, for example) and not others (the class list groups). One idea presented by Kunz was that the user objects in the general "Users" container be ACL'd in this manner, but the college/departmental OUs be left as they are. Kunz indicates he wants this done at the "container" level, not the "user object" level. The reason for this is that the inheritance of the container could handle the privs, as opposed to re-doing the ACL each time an object moves from one container to the next.

Anybody having ideas/feedback on this can feel free to email skunz@iastate.edu.

Meeting Adjourned (about 10:05)

Next meeting is scheduled October 8.