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Is an Active Archive the Solution for Big Data? by Cross Roads

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Big Data â€“ what it means can be specific to whom you ask. From the proliferation of rich detail captured by businesses, online and offline, to the amount of metadata that supports information gathered, Big Data means Bigger Storage. For IT managers, the rapidly growing necessity of more data storage, without drastic budget expansions is a key area of concern for the upcoming years. More than ever the concept of data tiering with an active archive is beginning to become standard for enterprise organizations that have mountains of data to maintain.

Data tiering simply means assigning different data to specific media/tiers based on performance needs. For example, archived projects might be stored in an offsite, offline tape library, while active projects remain in an onsite disk pool for rapid access. But, what happens when a company needs quick access to archived projects for audit compliance or in the event of a disaster? Data stored in offline tape libraries can take days, if not weeks to retrieve. This is where the active archive comes into play. An active archive gives users a streamlined way to store and access all of their data. From mission-critical data to files stored long-term, an active archive empowers businesses to access data in real-time, without extensive delays in retrieval.

A new archive appliance, StrongBox, transforms large tape libraries into a streamlined active archive. This transformation from stagnant, offline tape libraries into a dynamic, accessible data repository brings new opportunities for tape to contribute to the active archive, giving businesses the opportunity to take advantage of the low cost of ownership. The active archiving solution that StrongBox delivers gives uncompromised data access while keeping storage costs as low as possible.

Active Archiving Brings together the Storage Community

The purpose of an active archive is to bring data from heterogenous systems into an always online and accessible archive. Without an active archive environment, data access is limited, and accessing files stored in an offline tape library can take days or weeks. This isnâ€™t profitable in todayâ€™s real-time business world. Storage vendors are recognizing this and the customer-driven need for active archiving has brought together leaders from around the data storage and archiving industry.

An active archive environment is likely composed of several parts, or data tiers. Data tiering refers to storing data on media that matches performance requirements. For example, an active project may be stored on HDD, while data with long-term, low-access requirements could be stored on tape. To bring these mediums together, an HSM or archiving application is often used. More and more, companies are looking for non-proprietary solutions for creating an active archive environment. This means that disk, tape and software/application vendors must start to deliver appliances and services that meet this growing customer need.

A few weeks ago, leaders from around the storage community gathered to discuss the state of tape in todayâ€™s marketplace. Notable attendees included: Molly Rector (SpectraLogic â€“ tape libraries), David Cerf (Crossroads Systems â€“ StrongBox LTFS NAS Archive) and Peter Faulhaber (Fujifilm Recording Media), and many more. The consensus was clear â€“ innovations in active archiving include the use of LTFS tape to be used as NAS storage. Previously, tape may have been thought of as anything but â€œactive.â€• Thanks to LTFS technology and innovative archiving appliances, like the Crossroads StrongBox, tape empowers high-capacity, cost-effective active archive environments.

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Crossroads StrongBox is designed to address the need for a low cost and highly reliable a LTO5 LTFS, presenting itself as traditional network-attached storage-NAS while leveraging the new a Active Archive.

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