

Is Your Mainframe Data Secured?

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Section 1

Executive Summary

This whitepaper discusses the methods for improving the handling tape media.

While most banks use software to back up and track their network data, they are relying on a spreadsheet and a shoebox to track and store their mainframe data. It may work, but is it secured? Not hardly!

The good news is that a secure and cost-effective means of safeguarding data exists. TapeManager from DSI simplifies tape tracking and safeguards banks against accidental data loss. Best of all, tiered pricing makes TapeManager affordable regardless of the bank's size.

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Tracking and Reporting

Unlike the spreadsheet and shoebox method, TapeManager can automatically track tapes by age, title, serial number, location, number of uses and several other attributes. These attributes can all be used to view and sort a variety of pre-configured reports. Auditors prefer a printed or emailed report versus a torn notebook page or spreadsheet that relies on manual updating by an operator. The robust reporting functionality also simplifies planning for disaster recovery tests.

Most institutions have a system for rotating backup tapes off-site for temporary storage before they are brought back to be reused. TapeManager movement rules can be defined to conveniently indicate (via a daily report) which tapes should be moved, and to where. At a glance, the IT manager can determine where all tapes are currently located. This is critical in a recovery situation. Until the right tapes have been reloaded, no bank can go online.

In addition to convenience, not knowing where your tapes are can get you in trouble. According to the latest recommendations of the Federal Financial Institutions Examination Council (FFIEC), which is a regulatory body comprised of the five major bank examining agencies, “financial institutions should address the security of their back-up tapes at all times, including when the tapes are in transit from the data center to off-site storage.”¹ With Tape Manager’s movement rules and reports, tape transit information reports can be automated and easily supplied to examiners upon request.

Policy Management

IT managers would like to say that no one has ever scratched (or overwritten) a tape that should have been kept, but usually they cannot. Unless automated controls are in place, it is inevitable that a tape will accidentally be erased. To help prevent potentially career altering mishaps, TapeManager has retention rules that can be configured to define how long tapes should be kept before they can be rewritten. Rules can be defined for passage of time, and for generations of the same tape. For example, a Monday backup tape might need to be kept for seven days, and one generation. This would mean that in order for a Monday tape to be scratched, seven days would have to pass and at least one newer Monday tape would have to exist. If an operator accidentally mounts the wrong tape before the conditions are met, TapeManager will alert the operator and require a manager’s approval before allowing the tape to be overwritten. This feature can be a lifesaver in a busy computer room.

Media Reliability

Backup media does not last forever. Rather than wait until a read or write error occurs during a disaster, why not track tapes by parity error, age and number of uses? TapeManager will monitor the media and allow you to retire individual pieces before they fail at an inopportune time. This helps save time and data lost to defective media and allows the IT manager to effectively plan tape inventory replacement.

Media Stacking

The exciting new “Tape Stacking” feature supported in the next release of TapeManager will enable clients to save a great deal of money by reducing the number of tapes purchased. Simply put, the Unisys TapeStack utility allows TapeManager to store and track multiple tapes by stacking them on one piece of physical media. As tape drives become faster and blank tapes cost more money and hold more data, stacking tapes becomes a necessity. Why put one gigabyte of data on tapes that can hold 400 gigabytes? Stacking multiple backups on these high capacity tapes saves time and money. Tape stacking also streamlines operations because you have fewer tapes to create, manage, store off site and retrieve in a DR situation.

Easy to use

All of the features of TapeManager are easy to use. TapeManager includes a utility interface that runs in MARC. The program can be installed on your host in about five minutes and completely configured in an hour. Once installed and configured, TapeManager does the rest. The operator and manager can now review reports, move media and rest assured that the computer is actively assisting in the prevention of data loss.

Summary

The shoebox and spreadsheet are gone, along with the likelihood that the bank was going to accidentally overwrite a tape and incur unwanted liability. Auditors are pleased to see that tape tracking is active rather than passive, and that safeguards are in effect. Auditors also like concise, thorough, and flexible reporting options—it makes their jobs easy and gets them out of the computer room quickly—a true win/win. TapeManager is a cost-effective, easy to use tape management tool that no bank should be without.

¹ FFIEC - IT Handbook Infobase
(www.ffiec.gov/ffiecinfbase/html_pages/infosec_book_frame.htm)