

SOCIETY OF SWEDISH LITERATURE (SLS) IN FINLAND

Dell EMC Unity and Dell EMC Atmos help the minority Swedish population in Finland preserve its cultural heritage

OVERVIEW

ESSENTIALS

Industry

Non-profit

Organization Size

1,100 members/100 employees

Business Challenge

- Create a modern IT infrastructure that is easy to deploy and use, flexible, and supports the organization's work while protecting its digitized cultural treasures

Results

- Dell EMC Unity hybrid system improves performance of front-line storage
- Two Dell EMC Atmos systems protect digital archives
- Unity's HTML5 interface and VMware integration simplify IT management
- Support for multiple storage protocols (block, file, and vVols) streamlines storage footprint
- Built-in unified snapshots speed recovery from ransomware

CULTURAL TREASURES THAT CAN'T BE REPLACED

The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland was established in 1885 when the Swedish-speaking Finns felt that their language and culture were at risk of dying out. (The organization is known as SLS for its name in Swedish, Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland). Its mission is to preserve and strengthen Finnish-Swedish cultural heritage in a country where Swedish-speakers make up only five percent of the population.

One of the eldest non-profit organizations in Finland, SLS together with Kulturfonden (which it owns) awards nearly 34 million Euros each year in scholarships as well as research, culture, and literary awards. SLS is one of the largest managers of private charitable funds in Finland.

When Karola Söderman became head of information management at SLS, she joined an organization greatly in need of her expertise. SLS had never had a formal IT department. The person in charge of technology had been "a historian with an interest in computers," Söderman recalls.

Realizing the scope of her challenge—building a modern IT infrastructure from scratch—Söderman contracted Enter SystemSolutions Oy (Enter), an IT consultancy she had worked with previously, and hired Mats "Madsen" Wikholm to be SLS's IT manager.

Enter performed a thorough evaluation of SLS's IT requirements and then worked with Söderman and Wikholm to address them. Storage was critical because one way SLS fulfills its mission is by archiving a wide range of materials related to Swedish life in Finland—everything from photos, to hand-written documents, to films, books, recordings, and so on. Swedish-speaking Finns regularly show up at the SLS office with boxes of relics like old reel-to-reel tapes, floppy disks, and ancestors' diaries.

Today a growing part of the donated material is born-digital. Digitizing these cultural treasures is an on-going endeavor. To date, SLS has digitized about 50 TB of the material it has received, which represents about two percent of the total. Not everything will be digitized; SLS's archivists make that determination.

It is vital that the digitized material is stored securely because in many cases, the digital versions will be all that remain. "Photos continue to fade, and magnetic tapes wear out," Söderman explains. "In some cases, after we've played a tape to digitize it, it falls apart."

Solutions

- Dell EMC Unity
- Dell EMC Atmos
- Dell EMC VNX
- Dell EMC Data Domain
- Dell EMC NetWorker
- Dell EMC Cloud Tiering Appliance
- Dell EMC Connectrix
- VMware

“If it’s in storage, it has to be there forever, literally,” adds Wikholm. That meant that the backup system in use at the time (a small disk array that backed up to tape) had to go. SLS could not take the risk of having a tape fail and losing the information on it.

AN EASY DECISION TO GO WITH DELL EMC

The choice of the storage vendor wasn’t difficult. With help from Enter, SLS compared offerings from several major vendors. Given SLS’s stringent data safety requirements, Dell EMC was the clear winner. Also Söderman and Wikholm had enough past experience to rank Dell EMC at the top of their list in terms of support.

“I had used Dell EMC at previous places of work, and the support was always magnificent,” Wikholm says. “From our multivendor integrator perspective, the quality of the support from Dell EMC is top-class compared to any IT vendor in existence,” adds Juha Auvinen, CTO of Enter.

For its digital archives, SLS chose Dell EMC Atmos, an object-based cloud storage platform for storing, archiving, and accessing unstructured content at scale.

“We chose Atmos mainly because of its unique built-in data integrity and safety features that ensure the security of our priceless digitized data,” says Wikholm.

SLS deployed two Atmos devices, one in its Helsinki headquarters and one in a satellite office in Vaasa. The Vaasa facility functions partially as a disaster recovery (DR) site, but users there do have access to the information on Atmos. One of the features that Wikholm and Söderman value greatly is that Atmos allows them to restrict access to read-only. “Deleting something from there could be a catastrophe,” notes Wikholm.

“The Unity user interface seems like a godsend, or close to it.”

Madsen Wikholm
IT Manager, Society of Swedish Literature in Finland

For primary storage, SLS started with Dell EMC VNX systems but has since moved to a Dell EMC Unity hybrid flash storage array. Wikholm was impressed with Unity before he even owned it. He was a beta tester of the new Unity Hybrid, which also gave him the experience to easily deploy the virtual edition (UnityVSA).

“He put it on his laptop and took it on holiday,” Auvinen says. “He really liked what he saw.”

With Unity, SLS gets enhanced performance as well as a number of features that make life easier for Wikholm, who as IT manager in a small organization “wears about 10 hats,” as he says. One of these is Unity’s HTML5 management interface (Unisphere).

“The Unity user interface seems like a godsend, or close to it,” Wikholm says. “It’s quite intuitive. For example, getting a CIFS share up and running is lot easier in Unity.”

Another time-saving feature is Unity’s full unified support for multiple storage protocols, including block, file, and VMware Virtual Volumes (vVols). Unity’s tight integration with VMware reduced setup time to just a few minutes. And on an on-going basis, it lets Wikholm manage storage directly from VMware vSphere.

Unity’s built-in unified snapshots also make Wikholm’s life easier, especially when he’s dealing with ransomware, which SLS has experienced four times. “Unity snapshots are the quickest way to recover from that,” he says. “Not having to go to the backups and restore from there makes it a breeze to get the files back.”

Company Overview

The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland is a scholarly society for the collection, archiving, and dissemination of knowledge about Finnish-Swedish culture.

There's more about Unity that Wikholm appreciates, and he looks forward to taking advantage of more of its functionality, including the built-in REST API.

According to Söderman, guidance from Enter played a key role in moving SLS from its previous ad hoc IT environment to the modern one it has today.

"As a whole, Enter is a company of very competent people, and we like the guys very much," she says. "They really listen to their customers. They are not selling a package to you. They are listening and trying to analyze what you really need."

CONTACT US

To learn more, contact your local representative or authorized reseller.

