



Chapter III

Up in Smoke: Rebuilding After an IT Disaster

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On July 3, 2002, fire destroyed a facility that served as both office and computer server room for a College of Business located in the United States. The fire also caused significant smoke damage to the office building where the computer facility was located. The monetary costs of the disaster were over \$4 million. This case, written from the point of view of the chairperson of the College Technology Committee, discusses the issues faced by the college as they resumed operations and planned for rebuilding their information technology operations. The almost-total destruction of the college's server assets offered a unique opportunity to rethink the IT architecture for the college. The reader is challenged to learn from the experiences discussed in the case to develop an IT architecture for the college that will meet operational requirements and take into account the potential threats to the system.

ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND

Western University¹

Western University (WU) is a public, liberal arts university located on the west coast of the United States. The university's student enrollment is approximately 12,000. WU focuses on undergraduate and master's level programs and is comprised of seven colleges, plus a graduate school. WU receives much of its funding from the state government. The university has earned a strong reputation for educational quality, particularly among public universities. In its 2003 ranking of "America's Best Colleges," *US News & World Report* ranked Western University among the top 10 public master's-granting universities in the United States. The university community takes pride in WU's status. According to Dr. Mary Haskell, President of WU, "Continued ranking as one of the nation's best public comprehensive universities is a tribute to our excellent faculty and staff. We are committed to maintaining and enhancing the academic excellence, personal attention to students and positive environment for teaching and learning that has repeatedly garnered Western this kind of recognition."

College of Business Administration

The College of Business Administration (CBA) is one of the colleges at WU. CBA's programs focus on junior and senior level classes leading to degrees in either Business Administration or Accounting. In addition, CBA has an MBA program. About 10% of the students at WU (1,200 FTE) are registered as majors in the CBA. Each year, CBA graduates roughly 600 persons with bachelor's degrees and about 50 with MBA degrees.

CBA has four academic departments — accounting, decision sciences, finance and marketing, and management — each of which has about 20 full-time or adjunct faculty members and an administrative assistant. Other academic and administrative units for the college are the college office, three research centers, and the CBA Office of Information Systems (OIS) — about 20 persons total.

Organizational Structure of Information Systems at Western University and CBA

The organizational structure of information technology (IT) support services at WU includes both centralized and decentralized units. Figure 1 shows a partial organizational chart for WU that depicts the different groups and personnel relevant to the case.

WU Information Systems

WU's Office of Information and Technology Services (OITS) group is a large centralized organization that provides university-level services to the WU administration, the seven colleges, and students. OITS is headed by the Vice-President for Information Systems Services Ken Burrows and is organized into three areas: User Support (US), Administrative Services (AS), and Information Technology Services (ITS). OITS has offices in Thompson Hall, which houses the WU administration offices, and the Administrative Center located approximately one mile off campus on 23rd Street (and more often called "23rd Street" than by its proper name of "Administrative Center").

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