

B&L Archived Data Manager

Making Archives Useful Again

June 2010



Disk-based backup gets all the press these days. It is a useful technology for production environments and we support it, but the truth is that tape is overwhelmingly the first choice for long-term data retention. Yet here is another truth: tape-based backup is notoriously hard to manage for file-based restoration and compliance.

This is because tape is engineered to serve Disaster Recovery (DR) requirements by enabling large-scale volume restores. Individual file search and restore? Not so much. A lot of this difficulty stems from the inadequacies of backup tape catalogs. Most corporations have multiple backup applications, each with its own catalog. Searching each application's catalog is extremely time-consuming as the stored data may date back years and involve thousands of tapes. And even when IT locates the files that they need, restoration presents its own serious challenges.

We find that B&L Associates' Archived Data Manager (ADM) solves these difficult problems. ADM unifies backup catalogs, allows for efficient data migration and retention, and allows complete control over archived catalogs. This has significant implications for large-scale business processes like data retention management, migration and eDiscovery. This Product Profile will discuss the challenges of managing long-term backup data and how ADM steps into the yawning gap.

Why Tape Seems Absurdly Simple – But Isn't

Tape for archived backup has been around for so long that it qualifies as "ancient" in the storage infrastructure. It is simple to set up backup and archive schedules, and every backup application expects to see tape as the backend storage target. Even with the alternatives of VTLs

and disk-based replication, most archived data eventually ends up on tape. There is a good reason for this. Tape is cheap to buy and cheap to maintain, and it is still an excellent solution for large-scale restoration for DR.

However, in practice tapes are also needed for a variety of usage cases involving single files. These cases include

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file-level restoration, data retention management, eDiscovery and compliance. But tape backup technology was not made to search and restore files easily.

Managing a plethora of physical tapes is also a challenge. Most companies recycle backup tapes, but most keep weekly full backups. Occasionally these may be recycled but this is the exception more than the rule. Over time the backup tape collections grow to hundreds and thousands of legacy tapes. IT cannot willy-nilly destroy these tapes because of potentially valuable information is stored on them. But they become a nightmare of retention, cost, and risk from potential litigation.

Another challenging aspect of managing tape-based backup is backup catalogs. Catalogs are key to restoring backup, and contain detailed information on the backup architecture and backed up files. Because they are constantly updating and are critical to restore, they must also be backed up in order to protect the restore process. Backup applications do this automatically (usually offering IT the choice of incremental or full backups of the catalogs). However, over time they grow quite large. Their size slows down backup, which impacts the entire backup process.

B&L Archived Data Manager

One of the best ways we have seen to centralize and manage this challenging environment is B&L's Archived Data Manager (ADM). ADM provides central management for all historical backup catalogs, regardless of platform or source. The Web-based service centrally indexes and manages backup/archival for data management, eDiscovery and compliance. This enables corporations to quickly find the archived data that they need for eDiscovery and other crucial business processes.

ADM automatically consolidates catalogs from all leading backup vendors using B&L's unique data extraction technology. This centralized view and control enables ADM users to achieve an unprecedented level of control over archived data.

ADM works by extracting and consolidating all enterprise backup catalogs from separate servers into one central, Web-based database. Running a retrieval process on centralized data is very quick, smooth and much more cost-effective than searching across disparate storage. The process speeds up searches, making it far easier for attorneys to meet FRCP demands and to evolve sound case strategies.

And because ADM can carry out scheduled data retention operations, it also protects the organization against

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both inadvertent loss and the risk of keeping potentially damaging data.

ADM Features

ADM grants a single view and point of control to the centralized catalogs, regardless of original backup applications. Users can use this consolidated catalog to search on many different parameters. These include by backup application; backup server or client; file name, date, time; or expiration date. Let's take a closer look at these and other features.

- **Manages data retention periods.** Corporations are notorious for keeping data far longer than they should. ("Forever" leaps to mind.) But this unfortunate propensity risks liability and raises the cost of storing and managing that data. ADM tracks pre-set data retention periods and alerts IT to the files that are ready for retirement. IT can confidently delete these files because they are compliant with retention periods and policies.
- **Central Control.** ADM consolidates multi-vendor archived backup catalogs throughout the enterprise. This means that if different departments, locations or applications use different backup vendors, no problem – ADM will centralize them. This gives users single points of viewing and control for eDiscovery

and for a variety of technology management and business processes that depend on easily discoverable data.

- **Web-based.** ADM uses a Web browser along with Java and Ajax to transport extracted data. This allows it to operate across a variety of operating systems to extract data. Users can securely access ADM using any computer with Internet access, meaning that IT only has to install a single instance of ADM for centralized control across the enterprise.
- **Agentless.** ADM's data collection techniques are agentless, which saves significant IT time and server resources. Agentless technology enables ADM to painlessly extract backup catalogs without IT having to install extra software on servers or clients.
- **Compatibility.** ADM is backup vendor-neutral. It can extract from many leading backup applications including Symantec Veritas NetBackup and Backup Exec, EMC Legato NetWorker, CA ARCserve, and HP Omniback II and Data Protector.
- **Rapid Data Extraction.** ADM works fast to load a server's backup catalog into its database. Loading speed prevents extended interruption

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to normal business and backup processes.

Benefits of ADM

The benefits of ADM are significant for managing the storage infrastructure and the business applications that depend on it. By centrally managing ESI, ADM reduces risk, cost, and data retrieval time.

- **Benefit #1: Reduce backup windows.** As backup catalogs grow over months and years, they consume significant storage space. Over half of that data is inactive and should be retired. ADM identifies inactive data and lets IT migrate retained data to a unified ADM catalog archive. In place of bloated multi-vendor catalogs, ADM presents a consolidated, searchable view of backup catalogs. This feature alone reduces catalog backup times up to 90%.
- **Benefit #2: Centralize administration.** The ADM interface centralizes all production and inactive backup catalogs, whether disk- or tape-based. This lets IT monitor the entire backup infrastructure using a single web-based console. Users can easily search catalog metadata by a range of different criteria and may restore searched data from tape without the original backup software.
- **Benefit #3: Efficiently migrate.** Many companies would like to standardize on a single backup application, but are forced to keep multiple applications for legacy tape. ADM removes vendor lock-in by rendering the original backup application unnecessary. It also aids migration by quickly loading a server's backup catalog into the ADM database for centralized search and retention management.
- **Benefit 4#: Save energy costs.** Off-site tape vaults may not use much energy but backup servers do. When the backup server is outdated – and IT is only keeping it for its backup catalogs – then these servers are wasting space and energy. By moving backup catalogs to ADM and decommissioning servers, IT can realize significant savings from power, cooling and data center real estate.
- **Benefit 5#: Meet eDiscovery requirements.** The majority of eDiscovery requests involve backed up data, and the majority of those backups are on tape. ADM helps organizations to efficiently meet eDiscovery requirements and lowers risk into the bargain. ADM searches across centralized backup catalogs, which saves dramatic amounts of time over older methods of tape-based search. The search process is also defensible and preserves chain of

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custody with fully auditable tracking reports.

- **Benefit #6: Manage data retention to lower risk.** “Keep everything” demands large storage purchases, IT time to manage them, and greatly increases the time that IT needs to search through vast tracts of backed up data. ADM enables IT to know what information is relevant and where to find it, and protects compliant deletion decisions. With ADM, IT can run central deletion policies across all catalogs to greatly improve data retention management.

Taneja Group Opinion

Backup remains the flagship of data protection. Many backup vendors pour major money in improving the initial backup process. But the fact is that when

it comes to managing, searching and restoring backup files, we are still in the Dark Ages.

This used to be a minor irritant but no more. These are the days of real consequences from poor data retention including steep energy costs and built-out data centers, failed eDiscovery requests, and the inability to locate critical information on time.

We find that next-generation ADM has stepped into the gap with a new way of managing backed up information for retention, safety and value. If your company is struggling to manage long-term backups – and most of them are -- then we urge you to take a very close look at Archived Data Manager.

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