



**LIQUIT HELPS TEXAS A&M'S IODP ADVANCE
RESEARCH COLLABORATION WITH APPLICATION
ACCESS EASE**

SUMMARY

CUSTOMER: Texas A&M University Research Foundation's International Ocean Discovery Program (IODP) coordinates seagoing expeditions to study Earth's history recorded in sediments and rocks beneath the ocean floor.

CHALLENGE: The IODP 6 person IT and help desk team could not efficiently deploy, maintain, and update all applications and devices across its onshore team of 137 researchers, project managers, analyst, and publication/administrative support personnel.

SOLUTION: The IODP IT team chose the Liquit end-to-end application management platform, including Liquit Workspace integrated with Liquit Access Manager and Liquit Release & Patch Management. This would provide fast and reliable anywhere any device applications and services access that end users demanded.

RESULTS: With the entire IODP team now using the Liquit platform, application deployment has gone from hours to minutes. Automation and the self-service approach of the Liquit Setup Store has dramatically reduced help desk inquiries and freed up over 20 percent of IT team time that they now devote to other projects.

IODP

With many of the earth's historical secrets buried beneath the oceans, the International Ocean Discovery Program (IODP) is the vital research link to that discovery via the 470-foot scientific drillship, JOIDES Resolution. But it is their onshore team working from their facility on the main campus of Texas A&M University in College Station, TX that analyzes and publishes the data from those explorations for the scientific world.

IODP COLLABORATION CHALLENGES

IODP's legacy application management and workspace software could not keep up with their needs for fast application deployment and updates. This made collaboration, productivity, and analysis difficult in their on-campus facility, where applications played a vital part in research development, publication, and administration. "The software's limitations were apparent to us in 2019, but the challenge became more acute with the pandemic, which essentially made the team remote," explained IODP Help Desk Supervisor James Cordray.

The six members of the IODP IT team provided all aspects of technical support to the onshore IODP staff and the shipboard researchers. Operating from their own on-campus facility, IODP had been using on-premises ZENworks suite tools for application management, deployment, provisioning and updating. According to IODP IT Configuration Manager Courtney Landry, ZENworks was inadvertently causing delays in application deployment and updating with the IODP staff working remotely:

"ZENworks was unreliable in its delivery because we would schedule application package deployments that would never

reach its destination. These limitations were apparent when everyone was still working in one facility, but the pandemic's remote work requirements made the problem worse, so we began discussing alternatives."

DISCOVERING THE LIQUIT SOLUTION

In early 2020, the IT team began discussing potential replacements for ZENworks to deliver fast and reliable application deployment and updating while positioning them for future application management needs. Initial searches included Microsoft Endpoint Configuration Manager, Chocolatey, PDQ and others, but they each lacked vital functions that IODP needed.

IODP IT Professional II Kerry Mullins had been instrumental in developing application packages and maximizing the use of ZENworks in his five years with IODP. He also brought a long history with the suite from his decade with the city of College Station, which gave him insights that led to the discovery of the Liquit Platform. "ZENworks originally shipped with a program called Bundle Commander (now called Setup Commander)" explained Kerry. "Liquit acquired it and began merging its functionality and the Setup Store with Liquit Workspace, which led me to the Liquit platform."

Courtney's configuration manager predecessor arranged a meeting with Liquit to learn more about what the solution offered, and it impressed the IODP IT team. This led to a full demonstration and setup of a cloud sandbox environment with several applications, which allowed the IODP team to see how Liquit worked. "That sandbox phase convinced us Liquit would work well for us, so we moved forward," said Kerry.



Two months of further discovery with the demo also included the purchase approval process headed by Courtney, the current configuration manager. The team explained the many reasons to move forward with Liquit.

While on-premises servers hosted the ZENworks applications, Liquit's cloud-based platform option would enable fast and fluid application deployment, provisioning, automated updating and SSO access. According to James, some basic similarities between ZENworks and Liquit would simplify end user transition, while the many Liquit differences delivered expansive future-proof functionalities for IODP:

"The Liquit Setup Store had an enormous application catalog and automatic app updating, which eliminated manual update searches required with the legacy solution. Having Liquit in the cloud enabled the entire IODP team to travel and work remotely while still having complete and transparent access to all applications and updates. Our previous setup only allowed us to reach them for updates via a VPN when they were on campus."

According to Kerry, while Liquit's automation capabilities were a major draw, so were its extensive templates. "Liquit has pre-built packages for all the common applications, which saves us time by not having to create them from scratch and push them out as we had to do with our former app management suite," explained Kerry.

MOVING FROM LIQUIT THEORY TO REALITY

The IODP IT and Liquit teams worked collaboratively on the implementation and changeover from ZENworks to the Liquit Platform. The Liquit team set up the cloud environment, which enabled IODP to populate the environment with access to university issued end user devices. Liquit provided support in educating users how to log in and get applications set up in the Liquit Store. "The process was pretty smooth since we had already moved everyone over to laptops for remote work with mostly PCs and a few Macs," said James.

According to Kerry, the Liquit and IODP teams communicated via emails with fast responses when questions arose:

"Once Liquit set up the cloud server and provided the administrator accounts to us, we first saw what programs they had prepackaged that we could add to it. They had most of the programs that we use, and we just added those to the Liquit environment. We then began gradually building application packages that weren't already prepackaged and added them to Liquit, but the entire process was pretty fast."

SAVING TIME AND MAKING USERS HAPPY

With the vast majority of IODP end users on the Liquit Platform, the team cited the great end user response and time savings for the IT team, which included:

- Taking package development from an hour to 5 minutes
- Liquit pre-built packages that further reduced package development time from 5 minutes to less than a single minute.
- An average 20 percent time savings for IT team in all aspects of application management that they could devote to other projects.

While few end users used the more complicated self-service application aspect of ZENworks, the IODP team has instituted a concerted education and usage campaign for self-service with Liquit. "Once they understood how easy and expansive the Liquit Setup Store is, we never hear from many end users again," said Kerry.

Courtney echoed this humorous sentiment and expressed how this feature is expanding end user application use: "Having our end users take advantage of self service has led to amazing time savings for us and convenience for end users. They're even requesting additions to the Liquit Setup Store, which we love."

THE FUTURE FOR IODP AND LIQUIT

IODP is looking to expanded use of Liquit in the future that may include moving their imaging process over to the platform. Another possibility being discussed is implementing a Liquit environment on the ship to enable the MCSs to bring the same functionality to researchers on the ship as the broader IODP team on the shore.



ABOUT LIQUIT

Liquit makes applications and end-users work harmoniously and transparently in the way that everyone demands and expects. At the same time, we give your IT team the management and provisioning control that's fast, simple, and transparent. This is how end-to-end application management was meant to work for every enterprise and organization.

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