



ISS

CRITICAL INCIDENT REPORT

INCIDENT DETAILS

- Brief description: Interruption to the availability of some aspects of the NUI website.
- Start date and time: Friday, September 30 - 10:25 PM
- End date and time: Saturday, October 1- 9:40 PM
- Date of this report: October 5, 2011

INCIDENT SUMMARY

All pages, not under the control of the terminal four site manager, were deleted from the web cluster servers.

INCIDENT ANALYSIS

- **How and when did ISS find out about the incident?** Issue noticed at 4:30 PM on Saturday, 1 October by ISS.
- **Which service(s) affected?** The public facing University website and some other, non--forward facing sites were unaffected.
- **What locations were affected?** All (university hosted websites).
- **What was the user impact?** University hosted websites, with the exception of the public facing University website, were unavailable until 11 p.m. on Saturday, 1 October.
- **How was service restored?** Once it was confirmed that all components of the web cluster were functioning normally, files were restored from latest backup.
- **If service restoration was a work round how & when will a permanent solution be effected?** The solution was not a work round .

- **What is needed to prevent a recurrence?** Inform terminal four technicians that not all pages, hosted on Web servers, are controlled by site manager and never to use the ‘synch and cleanup’ option.

- **Are we currently at risk of recurrence or other service disruption following the incident? In what way? What needs to be done to mitigate the risk?** This option cannot be removed from T4’s user interface, so there will always be a risk, albeit small, of a reoccurrence. A note has been added in the T4 technicians notes for NUIG, stating that the ‘synch and cleanup’ option should never be used.

ROOT CAUSE

A T4 technician, working on a support ticket misinterpreted the request and attempted to fix an issue that did not exist. On top of this, while making incorrect assumptions about NUI Galway's T4 site manager implementation and the behavior of an unused (in our implementation) feature of his company's CMS, he invoked the 'synch and cleanup' option in an attempt to resolve the erroneously perceived problem. This resulted in the deletion of every file, not controlled by T4 site manager. Because of a peculiarity of this feature, where it does not behave correctly the first time it is used, this also resulted in some T4-controlled pages being deleted, including the website's home page.

Because the homepage was missing, NUI Galway's hot standby solution, hosted by HEAnet, was automatically activated. This ensured that the public facing website and also some older sites were visible to site visitors. Unfortunately, the service does not have sufficient capacity to backup all of the pages hosted by NUI Galway and because of this approximately 80% of the pages on our servers were unavailable until the restore process was completed.

FOLLOW UP ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following actions have been carried out:

1. Informed t4 that the 'synch and cleanup' option should never be used.
2. Restored all missing files and symlinks.

The following actions remain to be carried out:

1. Remove relative symlinks, created in the wrong directories during the automatic symlink restore (low priority).

LESSONS LEARNED

This episode confirms a previously identified risk when using T4 site manager. Even though the support request, in this case, was perfectly clear, more care will be taken in the future to ensure that such requests cannot be misinterpreted.