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DISTINGUISHED LECTURE SERIES

GASCHNIG/OAKLEY MEMORIAL LECTURE

LESSONS FROM PROJECT ATHENA

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Wednesday, April 13
3:00 PM
Wean Hall 7500

ABSTRACT

Project Athena's primary goal is to improve undergraduate education at M.I.T. with the application of of networked engineering workstations. To this end, it has deployed 700 such workstations and about 70 servers of various types in a networked client-server architecture. Five technical developments were required in order to deploy this system: a window system to hide otherwise incoherent programming interfaces of bit-mapped displays, a network authentication system to allow services to identify clients, a network naming system to allow clients to locate services, a service management system to minimize administrative effort, and substantial rearrangements of Berkeley UNIX to adapt it to the networked workstation environment and to minimize hand-tailoring.

As might be expected, quite a number of interesting problems were encountered along the way: debates among proponents of personal computers and proponents of engineering workstations; management of deployment and operation at such a large scale, preparing our institution to cope with a new technology, unrealistic expectations, and fighting (or finessing) the traditions and perspectives of the supplying industries.

Coffee and Doughnuts will be served in the CS Lounge at 2:45 PM