No End in Sight to the Digital Data Deluge

The world's information is doubling every two years, according to IDC, with 1.8 zettabytes (1.8 trillion gigabytes) created and replicated this year alone. That's enough information to fill 57.5 billion 32GB iPads.

The 2011 IDC Digital Universe Study sponsored by EMC includes the vast amount of data that is created and stored, as well as transient data that is typically not stored, including digital television signals for shows watched, but not recorded.

The study highlighted the consequences of storing, managing, and securing all that information.

Over the next 10 years, the study said, the number of servers (virtual and physical) around the world will increase 10-fold, the amount of data management by data centers will increase 50-fold, and the number of files they will have to process will increase at least 75-fold. Meanwhile, IDC noted, the number of IT professionals in the world who are responsible for managing all that information will only grow by a factor of 1.5.

Other findings include:

- Since 2005, annual enterprise investments in the cloud, hardware, software, services, and staff to create, manage, store, and generate revenue from information have increased 50% to $4 trillion.

- Although cloud computing accounts for less than 2% of IT spending now, almost 20% of information will be "touched" by the cloud by 2015 somewhere in a byte's journey from originator to disposal.

- Too much data remain vulnerable to hackers and thieves. IDC estimates about half the information that should be protected in the digital universe are protected.

- In 2011, the cost of creating, capturing, managing, and storing data was down to one-sixth of what it was in 2005.

- Since 2005, annual investment by enterprises in the digital universe has increased 50% to $4 trillion – that's money spent to create, manage, store, and derive revenue from the digital universe.

IDC's findings call for big changes for the data center industry. The research firm said the demand for physical storage space will continue to grow, and data centers will need to adapt to keep up with that demand. IDC predicts increased automation and a shift toward new infrastructures developed to enable cloud computing and "big data."

One of the biggest challenges involves how to manage huge datasets and extract business value from them. "Big data will inject high-velocity requirements associated with capture and analysis, as well as results/predictive reporting," IDC writes. "Big data deployments require new IT administration and application developer skill sets. People with these skills are likely to be in short supply for quite a while."

At the present rate, IDC estimates that about 7.9 zettabytes will be created in 2015. **END**

A Decade of Digital Universe Growth

- 2005 – 130 exabytes
- 2010 – 1,227 exabytes
- 2015 – 7,910 exabytes

Source: "2011 IDC Digital Universe" study

Google Ends EHR Service

Google has decided to end its electronic health records (EHR) initiative after three years. According to *The New York Times*, Google Health failed to attract enough users. The service required users to enter, update, and edit their health data online. By contrast, the U.S. government's EHR initiative offers up to $40,000 in incentives for hospitals and doctors who move patients' paper records online.

Analysts say EHRs are new to most people, and even early adopters have found them difficult to use. "Personal health records have been a technology in search of a market," Lynne A. Dunbrack, an analyst at IDC Health Insights, told *The Times*.

To illustrate the challenge for Google Health, a 2011 IDC Health Insights survey found that 7% of consumers had tried online EHRs, and fewer than half of those individuals continued to use them.

But Google is not the only business to abandon the consumer health records space. *The Times* said Revolution Health retired its personal health record service last year due to too few users.

Other providers of online personal health records include WebMD, Microsoft, RelayHealth, and Dossia. But analysts note that most of these providers work in partnership with insurers and health providers, while Dossia is an employer-sponsored personal health record.