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Long Term File System (LTFS): An Open Format Specification for LTO 5 and Onwards

LTFS (Linear Tape File System) also known as Long Term File System (LTFS) provides a file system on an LTO-5 cartridge that appears as a disk-like file system when accessed with LTFS client-side software. It is based on open source software with versions available for Mac OSX, Windows, Linux and Unix. LTFS was initially developed by IBM and was released to the open source domain. All LTO consortium members, including IBM, HP and Quantum, now support LTFS. Recently, the open format specification for LTFS (Linear Tape File System) Version 2.0.0 has been released on March 11, 2011. As per the white paper published by International Data Corporation (IDC), the open standards provided by the LTO program will encourage competition among suppliers of tape storage systems.

LTFS is excellent for long term storage (i.e. archiving). All current long term storage options on tape require the archive software to create their own tape format, or to use an existing encapsulation system (e.g. tar). If you are talking seriously long term storage (several years to many decades), there is a real possibility that the company that made the tape format you are using could cease to exist. Having a tape format that is independent of the application is an awesome way to work around this issue. Archive software companies have already expressed interest in supporting this new format.

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