hat it means to be non-profit and use a Mac

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The Institute for Research on Learning (IRL) is a non-profit research institute located in Menlo Park, California. IRL's mission is to develop greater understanding of how people learn and to put that understanding to work. We help schools, community organizations and businesses develop effective strategies for learning and work so that people and organizations can reach their full potential.   As an example, an organization may approach IRL with the question, "Why don't my employees know how to do their jobs after six months of training?" or IRL may seek funding to study at-risk students and then develop programs to help get them more interested in school.   In their work on a project IRL will conduct a research study, and then based on its findings, work with stake holders to design and implement solutions.

So how does the Macintosh computer fit in to all of this? When IRL started in 1987 Apple donated equipment and software to IRL. Since that time the research scientists and staff have built on that initial donation, and through purchases and subsequent donations from Apple, IRL has continued to use the Macintosh. Over the years this has meant that IRL has been able to work with a platform that is cost efficient and fulfills their computing needs.

Today IRL is still using Macintosh (60+), with its computers evenly divided between desktop and powerbooks.   Although we have looked at other systems, we've found the overhead costs for other computer systems prohibitive. Thanks to the Gistics ROI Technical Brief (http://www.gistics.com) it's easy to understand the cost implications of computers and their role in the workplace.

The network administrator for IRL takes care of all the hardware/software and technical needs of the Institute.   He also takes care of 2 ASIP 6.x file servers, QuickMail Pro mail server, Retrospect backup server, Apache web server and FileMaker Pro database server, DNS server, telephone services, remote connections services and does all the ordering of supplies for computers and printers.   In his spare time he seeks donations to help keep purchasing and operational costs down.   Many of the donations IRL receives are passed on to technology-limited local schools that IRL works with,

providing teachers and students with the opportunity to work with computers and expand their learning avenues.

So, given today's computing environment of rapid change, high expense, multiple platforms and hardware and software compatibility issues between them, how does IRL work with its variety of clients?   Because the less expensive, friendlier Macintosh is far more versatile than other computer systems, we can overcome compatibility issues we encounter. Compatibility is less of a issue if you are open minded and a hunter of solutions in a world that requires a good understanding of just how the computer world works... a world where some do not think differently.

To learn more about IRL take a look at http://www.irl.org
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