Academic Computing Newsletter: Spring 1986

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The College at Brockport

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STUDENT COMPUTING ACCESS PROGRAM (SCAP) HAS MAJOR IMPACT ON CAMPUS; ABOUT $400,000 ALLOCATED FOR IMPROVING ACADEMIC COMPUTING RESOURCES

SCAP Funding Essential. "Since the Student Access Program (SCAP) began in 1983, the infusion of these special and specifically-designated funds has made possible access to computer resources by students that would not have been possible otherwise," Dr. Mel Smagorinsky, Director of Educational Communications and Campus SCAP Coordinator, states. With SCAP allocating about $400,000 to Brockport in the three years of its existence, he points-out that although the College has expended some of its own funds for computing purchases, as well, "the regular College budget could not have supported an acquisition program of this magnitude."

Major Improvements. What SCAP has enabled Brockport to do in just three years to improve its academic computing resources and to give students access to both new and improved facilities is significant. Among the improvements are:

*Upgrading the central academic computer to a super minicomputer, the PRIME 9955 with 8 MB memory, providing four times the processing capacity of the previous PRIME 750, and several times the PRIME 400, the academic computer in use when SCAP was introduced.

*Providing a Micro Vax II to meet the needs of the Mathematics and Computer Science Department for a specialized computer to support certain aspects of its curriculum.

*Providing a central, all-college microcomputer facility, and then expanding and improving the facility to enable students to do word processing and to use more sophisticated software. Students now have access to over sixty Apple II systems, as well as printers and word processing software.

*Providing microcomputer and peripherals to academic departments who demonstrated special programmatic needs.

Origin of SCAP. In 1983 the legislature appropriated $3.9 million for the improvement of student access to computing. SUNY then developed a plan, in consultation with the Director of the Budget, enabling each campus to receive a share of the appropriation proportional to its enrollment. Funds were appropriated again by the legislature in 1984 and 1985.

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SCAP HAS MAJOR IMPACT ON CAMPUS >> continued from page 1 <<

Local SCAP Planning. At Brockport, the SCAP Coordinator, working with the Computer Policy Advisory Committee, develops plans for using SCAP allocations for improving the College's academic computing resources. The plans are presented to the Academic Council for review, and then submitted to SUNY Central Administration for approval.

More Improvements. As a result of the SCAP allocations and locally planned use of those funds, improvements in the access Brockport students have to computing resources, in addition to those already described, include:

* Additional terminals to provide greater access to the Burroughs B-6800 central computer and to the PRIME 9955.

* New computer graphics and microprocessing laboratories, primarily to support the Computer Science program.

* Thirty-two ports added to the PRIME 9955 to accommodate more simultaneous users.

* Software for use in the Microcomputer Laboratory, academic departments, and for developmental/remedial applications in Learning Skills Services.

* More display terminals in the expanded users area of Academic Computing Services to give students greater access to the upgraded PRIME.

SCAP at Three. Today, Brockport students have access to significant computing resources not available to them just three years ago. And that is just what the legislature had in mind for SUNY campuses when it funded SCAP in 1983. If Brockport is typical, SCAP is a program that is working. At Brockport it is working very well.

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Director's Column

*CAMPUS MICROCOMPUTER MAINTENANCE PROGRAM ANNOUNCED
*NEW COORDINATORS' GROUP EXPLORES DEVELOPMENT OF SUNY COMMUNICATIONS

Melvin P. Smagorinsky, Director, Educational Communications Center

Two Topics. The high cost of microcomputer maintenance on the campus served as the impetus for finding a way to reduce those costs. The result of the effort is a newly announced program, and the first of two topics I'd like to discuss in this column. The second topic, telecommunications planning and development, offers the interesting possibilities of terminals on our campus being able to access computing resources on other SUNY campuses, national networks such as BITNET, and beyond that world-wide computing resources.
The Computer Maintenance Program

Goal: Lower Costs. On June 1st of this year, the Educational Communications Center (ECC) with the assistance of Administrative Data Processing (ADP) will initiate the new Computer Maintenance Program. The program's goal is to provide maintenance and repair service for certain microcomputers and printers (identified below) in use in academic and administrative areas on the campus at the lowest possible cost to the College.

Several Reasons. There are several reasons for introducing a campus microcomputer maintenance program. The increasing number of micros and peripherals on the campus has meant increasing expenditures for maintenance contracts with vendors, at ever increasing prices. In addition, a worrisome quantity of equipment has not been covered by a maintenance contract, and as a result would be very expensive to repair on a "time and materials" service call basis (estimated minimum service call is $225), or would be set aside for lack of repair funds and not be available for use. Finally, a means for systematically determining what equipment needs to be replaced is needed so that when the cost of maintenance becomes excessive appropriate action can be taken.

Effecting Savings. To attain its goal of providing maintenance services at the lowest possible cost to the College, and at no cost to departments and budgetary units, the program will employ members of the technical staffs of the ECC and ADP. In this manner, it is anticipated that maintenance services can be provided at a significantly reduced cost, and that equipment that is not now on a service contract with an outside vendor can be covered.

Eligible Equipment. Equipment eligible for coverage under the program includes the following purchased with State or Research Foundation funds: Apple II series CPUs, disk drives, monitors; IBM (PC, XT, AT) CPUs and disk drives (IBM monitors cannot be repaired locally); Zenith CPUs, disk drives, monitors; and, Okidata printers. In order to receive maintenance services under the program, all eligible equipment must be registered on forms available from the ECC.

Services Provided. Four types of services will be available under the new program at no charge for either parts or labor. (1) New equipment will be set-up and checked-out at the departmental work site. (2) Service calls will be made, with the equipment either being repaired on-site, or taken to the shop for repairs. When possible, equipment will be provided on a loan basis during the repair period. (3) Information will be provided with respect to the nature of the problem. Problems related to software or an operator, rather than to the equipment, will be reported accordingly. However, the technical staff will not provide assistance with resolving software or operator problems. (4) Determinations will be made when it is more practical to replace equipment than to repair it, based on the cost of repair and frequency of service.

Program Staff. Les Kuhn, Supervisor, ECC Microcomputer & AV Technical Services, has the responsibility for managing the new program. Bob Giblin, ECC technician, and Rick Smith, ADP Communications Specialist, are members of the program staff. All will continue to have other assigned technical duties for the ECC and ADP.

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>>> Suggestion: To avoid discomfort during extended computer use, sit comfortably back in the chair, with the feet flat on the floor. The knees should be at a comfortable angle, so that the blood flow to the thighs and knees isn’t restricted by the edge of the chair. <<<
Telecommunications Planning and Development

Upgrading Communications. Recently, I attended the first meeting of a group of coordinators appointed from SUNY campuses to work with the new Office of Administrative Information Systems (AIS) on exploring options for SUNY to upgrade its communication capabilities. The options to be explored encompass telephones, computing and television, and if implemented could markedly enhance communications capabilities across the SUNY system.

SUNYnet: New Inter-Campus Network. A new data communications network, SUNYnet, will be established to join all SUNY campuses and will enable terminals on one campus to access computing facilities on another campus. SUNYnet will also connect all SUNY campuses with Central Administration. A possibility being explored is that of exchanging data files among SUNY computing facilities when they are linked by the inter-campus network. And, on an experimental basis, the flexibility of the inter-campus network to transport telephone communications within SUNY and to link with the state system will be investigated.

More to Come. I’ll be sharing more information with you on this subject in this column in future issues.

Manager's Column

*REVIEW COMPUTING REQUIREMENTS BEFORE SUBMITTING PROPOSALS
*NEW IBM PC/XT CLUSTER COMING SOON *ACS GRAPHICS LAB CAPABILITIES
*SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS *SPSSX TEST SITE

E. Arthur Fiser, Manager, Academic Computing Services

Review Computing Needs. Proposal writers are reminded that a review of computing requirements is to be done prior to the submission of proposal materials to the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs. Most funding agencies recognize the need for computing support as a part of research. Acquiring funds in this manner is one of the few ways available to enhance computing resources for research applications. However, including funds in the proposal for computing support is not intended in any way to jeopardize the prospects for obtaining funding.

New IBM Cluster. The arrival and installation soon of seven new IBM PC/XT systems will enhance the microcomputer facilities available on the campus beginning with the summer sessions. Presently, some sixty Apple II systems are available in the Edwards Microcomputer Lab. Each IBM system will have a minimum of 256K of memory, and two 360KB diskette drives. Current plans call for the units to be connected so that all software will be available from a fixed disk server unit. The software available will include: PC-WRITE, a word processing package; PC-CALC, a spreadsheet application; and, PC-FILE, a data base program. Data can be exchanged between PC-CALC and PC-FILE, while PC-WRITE includes mail-merge and spelling check features.

Graphics Lab Capabilities. The ACS Graphics Lab is equipped with eight Tektronix 4010 compatible graphics terminals. Two units have high resolution color capability, and one, a DEC VT-240, can be used with a video projector for large image display. Dr. Yao-Tang Liao, Department of Mathematics and Computer Science, has assisted with the establishment of these resources, and has also implemented the Graphical Kernal System on the PRIME for producing programs which are device independent.
Software Development Projects. Since this past summer we have been cooperating with CACI, Inc. in the enhancement of their SIMSCRIPT-II.5 simulation language compiler. The project was completed earlier this semester and their new user's manual contains an acknowledgement of our participation. Another application from CACI, Inc., NETWORK II.5, will be converted at Brockport to run on PRIME systems. NETWORK II.5 is an interactive system that requires no programming to do network analysis in a simplified fashion. Included will be NETSTRUCTOR, a comprehensive network teaching package.

SPSSX Test Site. During the fall term we were a test site for the new release of the SPSSX statistical package. With the installation of the version 2.1, the PRIME system implementation is current with the versions being run on IBM and DEC computers. Several members of the faculty provided input during the evaluation period; our particular appreciation goes to Dr. Fred Halley, Director of the Data Analysis Laboratory for his efforts on the project.

NEW VERSION OF PRIMOS OPERATING SYSTEM INSTALLED

Auto-Speed Detection Supported. During intersession, a new version of the Primos operating system for the PRIME was installed which supports auto-speed detection on ACS dial-up telephone lines. This capability makes it possible to accommodate modems which transmit at different speeds. With each version enhancement of the PRIME operating system, all compilers and support utilities are upgraded to correct errors and to add some minor features.

Next: Primos 20. During the summer, ACS will evaluate the next major release of Primos, revision 20, for installation for the fall semester. As with all PRIME changes, the new Primos versions reflect a design philosophy which minimizes the impact on the user and makes internal changes transparent.

"EXPRESS" DECISION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM NOW AVAILABLE IN ACS

System Combines Capabilities. EXPRESS, an information analysis system which combines capabilities for selection, analysis and display of data is now available in ACS. With EXPRESS a Decision Support System can be built that provides technical, data-based support for decision making. Leasing the system was made possible through funding from SCAP.

Used in Business. Among the major local users of EXPRESS are Kodak and Xerox. The Department of Business Administration and Economics will explore uses of the system in its present courses, as well as potential uses in new courses to be developed in the area of management information.
SUMMER SCHEDULE FOR ACS USERS AREA

Summer Hours. The following schedule of summer hours has been announced for the ACS Users Area:

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<th>May 10 - May 11</th>
<th>June 2 - July 3</th>
<th>July 7 - August 8</th>
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<tr>
<td>May 12 - May 23</td>
<td>Mon. - Thur. 9 am - 9 pm</td>
<td>Mon. - Thur. 9 am - 6 pm</td>
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<td>Mon. - Fri. 9 am - 5 pm</td>
<td>Friday 9 am - 5 pm</td>
<td>Friday 9 am - 5 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 24, 25, 26</td>
<td>Saturday 1 pm - 6 pm</td>
<td>Sat. and Sun. Closed</td>
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<td>Closed</td>
<td>July 4 - 6</td>
<td>August 9 - September 3</td>
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<td>Sat. and Sun. Closed</td>
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Notices Available. Notices of holiday closings and system shut-downs are available on the system by typing "NEWS"; the status of all campus computing resources can be learned by calling 395-2390.

CALL NOW FOR AVAILABLE 1986 FACULTY/STAFF COMPUTER WORKSHOPS

A Reminder. The 1986 Computer Workshops for Faculty and Staff are scheduled for the three-week period following graduation—May 12 - 30. A total of fourteen workshops have been planned. For information on available workshops contact Theron Rockhill as soon as possible at 395-2199, or 395-2194 (to leave a message).

ZENITH OFFERS $1897 Z-148 WORKSTATION FOR $999 UNDER SUNY PROGRAM

New Promotion. Zenith is currently offering its ZF-148-42 dual drive desktop micro at the package price of $999. Included in the package is a choice of one of two composite monochrome monitors, and a 256K RAM upgrade kit, giving the Z-148 512K RAM. It is one of several micros available at a discount to faculty, staff and full-time students under an agreement between Apple, AT&T, IBM and Zenith and the SUNY Research Foundation. For more information contact the Educational Communications Center, A-8 Edwards Hall, phone 395-2348.