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Library Tech Notes

The UNLV Libraries Technology Committee

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TECH NOTES

The UNLV Libraries Technology Committee

Camille's Comments

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Just about all of the 15 hand-me-down IBM PS/2s we received from System Computing Services have been installed around the library replacing old and dim Wyse (dumb) terminals. We have been fortunate to get another batch of hand-me-down microcomputers — this time from Administrative Computing. They will be giving us 53 machines, most of which are 286s and 386s. Myoung-ja Lee Kwon met with the AUL's to determine the distribution of these machines. These microcomputers will be going mostly in public areas for patron use with some of the higher end 486s going to staff. We have only received 10 of these machines with six arriving just last week. We don't expect to receive all of the machines for another month or so.

Last week, I attended the Innovative Users Group (IUG) meeting at ALA's Midwinter meeting in San Antonio. I was pleased to see that this users group is an active one. Members asked tough questions of Innovative, and they are serious about pushing Innovative to continue to enhance INNOPAC. Release 10 will be available later this year, but they still have some libraries who do not have Release 9 yet! The IUG will be compiling and ranking suggestions for enhancements throughout the year. Functional experts (users who have "intimate knowledge of the INNOPAC module which is their focus area including alternate ways of implementing features in that module") will review the requests to determine if they haven't already been addressed in Release 9.0 or 9.1 and if not, evaluate their merit and begin prioritizing the enhancement requests. These will be posted on the IUG's home page (currently under construction). The IUG is looking for functional experts in the following areas: Acqui-

sitions, Cataloging and Authority Control, Circulation - Financial Functions (general), Circulation - Financial Functions (bursar's office), Circulation - Materials Booking, Circulation (not elsewhere defined), Circulation - Reserves, Management Information, OPAC, Serials, Services and Communications, System Management, and Reference Databases. If you are interested in donating some time to this effort by serving as a functional expert, please call me for further information. I am going to take this opportunity to alert you to Innovative's home page (URL: <http://www.iii.com>). There you will see demonstrations of Innovative's new products including Web-Pac, their hypertext interface for the online catalog. The home page has links to 20 or so libraries that have Web-Pac installed. This product allows you to search the catalog using a Web

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TechHumour



Because of his ongoing ability to increase office productivity, the "Employee of the Month" award again goes to Mr. Coffee.

PC Mechanic

When Windows Crashes... A Horror Story

One day Joe was working at his computer. He had a lot of reports to write, with graphics galore included. Now and then he exited from his word processor to start up a spreadsheet and update some figures, then exited again. Every hour or so he also checked his email.

Suddenly, while finishing up the last (and very long) report of the day, he clicked on "File/Save" and the usual dialog box came up—but without anything in it (it was totally blank except for the "OK" and "Cancel" buttons). "I have a very bad feeling about this," thought Joe, and clicked the "Cancel" button. The dialog box disappeared, leaving a big blank hole in his document. He tried clicking the "Save" button on the toolbar, and waited... and waited... and waited. Finally, after about a minute, the same blank dialog box came up.

Getting very nervous, Joe tried clicking some other buttons. Nothing happened. He tried switching to another Windows program with the <Alt><Tab> keys. An ominous box popped up on screen announcing that a "General Protection Fault" had occurred, and the user could "Close" or "Ignore." Clicking "Close" left the entire screen black except for the "Close" button, which remained alone on the otherwise blank screen. At this point the mouse pointer locked up, the keyboard locked up, even the "three-fingered salute" (<Ctrl><Alt>) failed to reboot the PC, and Joe pressed the reboot button in desperation. Of course, he hadn't saved his very long report for several hours....

If all this sounds like the computer user's version of "Rosemary's Baby," it's unfortunately nonfiction. From the day it arrived in the stores, Microsoft Windows has always had one severe limitation (though calling it a "bug" is probably overkill). No matter how much memory you have on your PC, you can easily use up one small key chunk of it and have Windows go completely psycho.

(Warning: If you're allergic to technical stuff, skip the following paragraph!)

Windows has to keep track of every button, slider, menu, and window on-screen at any time, and each one of these items uses up a small amount of memory. Unfortunately, Windows' designers set

aside a small (65,536 bytes) dedicated chunk of memory for this purpose, never dreaming of how complex and bell/whistle-ridden modern Windows applications would get. (Windows 3.1 doubled this allocation, but it was like adding lanes to a freeway—it only works for a little while). If this chunk of memory (called "system resources") fills up, Windows goes bonkers, even if you have 16 megabytes of memory on your PC.

(End of technical stuff.)

What uses up this memory? Well, not all Windows programs give back the memory they've used for system resources when they exit. (This is called a "resource leak".) This means that each time you start up a program and then exit it, you're left with fewer resources than before. Sooner or later Windows goes psycho. The worst offenders in this area tend to be big word processors.

How do you know if you're heading for a crash? The easiest way is to pull Program Manager to the top and click on "Help," then "About Program Manager..." The last line displayed is the important one; it tells you what percentage of your system resources (the memory we've been talking about) is still free. If it drops below about 30%, you're in real danger. The safest bet in this case is to save your work, exit Windows completely (to a DOS prompt), and then restart Windows (by typing "win"). This completely rebuilds Windows' memory structures and allows you to start fresh.

As a matter of fact, it's not a bad idea to get into the habit of exiting and restarting Windows every couple of hours just as a precaution. This usually only takes a minute or so and gives you a chance to rest your eyes (and your mouse hand). There are programs you can buy that run in the background and automatically warn you when system resources get low, but unless you're really obsessive, they're probably strictly for the software gadget crowd.

Incidentally, Windows 95 and Windows NT have pretty much solved this problem—they allocate so much memory for system resources that you'd probably never use it up in normal circumstances.

So take a break now and then, and help Windows keep its sanity.

Lamont Downs

"If all this sounds like the computer user's version of 'Rosemary's Baby,' it's unfortunately nonfiction"

Technology Committee Goals 1995-96

Accepted with revisions:
December 12, 1995

- I. Contribute to the progress of NEON and its associated databases and to the utilization of networking technologies (LAN, Internet) available in the library.
 - A. Meet regularly with the Systems Librarian to discuss problems or questions that arise in the various sections of the library.
 - B. Evaluate the databases available through NEON and make recommendations for databases that could be added to the system.
 - C. Work with the Reference/Instruction section to review the information screens and screen design of NEON and its associated databases and to make recommendations for changes to those screens.
 - D. Review the revised library home page and provide input and feedback to the library web development team.
 - E. Evaluate the library's gopher and its value as an information resource in light of the growth of the World Wide Web.
 - F. Coordinate discussion and review of the new products available from Innovative Interfaces, Inc. and their possible implementation in the library.
- II. Assess library needs for computing equipment.
 - A. In the spring of 1996, compile an annual wish list to coincide with section equipment requests for the Systems Librarian who will then forward the list to the Associate Dean.
 - B. Identify those staff or sections that have specific needs (e.g. CD-ROM drive or scanner) to assist the Associate Dean in the distribution of new and existing equipment.
- III. Assess staff software needs.
 - A. Conduct the periodic software assessment survey.
 1. After the survey is complete, publish a list of software currently in use in the library. The list shall identify the section name and the software name and version.
 2. Compile a list of experts based on the survey and publish the list in *TechNotes*.
 - B. Make recommendations to the Systems Librarian regarding software purchases so that staff in different sections are using compatible software for basic functions such as word processing and spreadsheets.
- IV. Promote adequate staff training and current awareness of computing technologies.
 - A. Continue to issue *TechNotes* on a monthly basis.
 - B. Disseminate information to staff on new technologies and products through *TechNotes*, electronic mail, lecture series, etc.
 - C. Report in *TechNotes* on innovative uses of computing technology found in various sections of the library.
 - D. Sponsor training sessions for staff on various topics (word processing, UNIX, Netscape, etc.) at various levels (i.e. beginning to advanced).
 1. Make recommendations to the Internetworking Specialist and the half-time systems training specialist for new and additional training sessions.
- V. Review and revise the library's computing goals drafted in Spring 1994.
 - A. Identify objectives to meet the computing goals.

*For those people
who wonder what
the Tech
Committee does!*

Camille Clark Wallin

Technology Booklist

Abraham, Ralph. *The Web Empowerment Book : an Introduction and Connection Guide to the Internet and the World-Wide Web*. Santa Clara, CA : TELOS, c1995.
(TK5105.888.A25 1995)

Benson, Allen C. *The Complete Internet Companion for Librarians*. New York : Neal-Schuman, c1995.
(TK5105.875.I57B46 1995)

Harasim, Linda. *Learning Networks : a Field Guide to Teaching and Learning Online*. Cambridge, MA : MIT Press, c1995.
(LB1028.43.L43 1995)

Harris, Judi. *Way of the Ferret : Finding and Using Educational Resources on the Internet*. Rev. ed. Eugene, OR : International Society for Technology in Education, 1994.
(TK5105.875.I57H37 1994)

Murray, Denise E. *Knowledge Machines : Language and Information in a Technological Society*. New York : Longman, 1995.
(QA76.9.C66M89 1995)

Thomas, Brian J. *The Internet for Scientists and Engineers: Online Tools and Resources*. Bellingham, WA : SPIE Optical Engineering Press, 1995.
(TK5105.875.I57T48 1995)

Kathy Rothermel

VEGAS.COM Presents Las Vegas

"Provides information about Las Vegas community services and daily news events"

Digitainment Corporation is the company behind the Vegas.com Internet service which is located at <http://www.vegas.com/> on the Internet. The still developing Vegas.com company creates and provides Web pages for Nevada business and also provides the official Vegas municipal Web site. Although there is a heavy emphasis on gaming, hotels, casinos and sports on this page, there is also lots of charming local information.

Other areas in the Vegas.com site provides information about Las Vegas community services

and daily news events. In addition to showguide, real estate and automobile listings, one can also browse and shop other sites on the Internet.

The cost of having a commercial site designed starts in the \$2500 range for up to 4 pages of information. A monthly fee is paid to keep the information posted on the Vegas.com site. Digitainment Corporation also designs commercial multimedia presentations throughout the country.

Paulette Nelson

Comments...

(continued from Page 1)

browser like Netscape. A URL added to the MARC 856 field provides a link from the bibliographic record to an Internet resource. For example, a URL placed in the bibliographic record for Publisher's Weekly allows the patron to jump from the OPAC to this week's list of bestsellers which is currently posted and accessible via the World Wide Web.

Elsewhere in this issue you will find a copy of the Library Technology Committee's goals for

the current year. I think you will see that it is an impressive list that continues to uphold the original purpose of the Library Technology Committee as outlined in December 1991: "... to research and plan for ongoing incorporation of technological changes into our organization. The Committee will keep the library staff aware of the latest developments and innovations in technology as it relates to library services." A tall order to be sure but definitely worth the effort!

Camille Clark Wallin

LYNX

Lynx provides a hypertext interface to the World Wide Web. Hypertext is a method of presenting information so that words in a text can be expanded at any time to provide further information about the word. The word is highlighted, and when you choose to see further information you are linked to it, hence the punny name, lynx. To explore it, just type lynx after you have logged in to your account.

Moving around in lynx

	Use the arrow keys to move around
Down arrow	Highlight the next topic
Up arrow	Highlight the previous topic
Right arrow (or enter)	Jump to further information
Left arrow	Return to previous topic
m	Return to the main menu
space bar	Scroll to the next page
-	Scroll to the previous page

Use Bookmarks to save links

a	Add a link to your bookmark
v	View your bookmark (anytime you are in lynx)

Lynx Commands

	(use ? to get a more detailed list of commands)
/	Search for words within a document
q	Quit lynx
p	Choose to print or mail a file
=	Show file and link info
g	go to a site (Lynx will respond URL to open:) Be sure to include the complete address of the site you wish to visit, including http://

Example:

g
URL to Open: *http://lycos.cs.cmu.edu*
or *http://www.unlv.edu*

Remember that lynx is for text files only. To view pictures and movies or to hear sounds you will need to obtain a hypermedia program such as Mosaic or NetScape, or SlipKnot.