occasional domain
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HARVEY MUDD COLLEGE

SPECIAL ISSUE

Plug into Computing at HMC!

Using the Microcomputer Labs

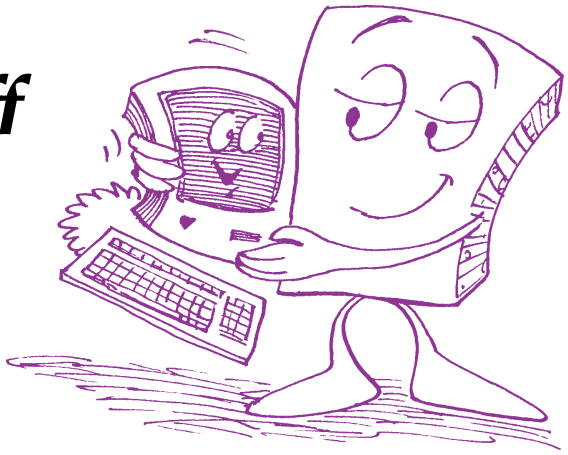
Academic Computing maintains several microcomputer labs (primarily Macintosh and PC computers) on campus for use by students, but also available for use by faculty and staff. We have a Pentium lab (Parsons 146), a Power Macintosh lab (Parsons 144), and a third lab with a mix of Pentium and Macintosh computers (Parsons 159). Each lab has a laser printer and the third lab also has two color scanners. The labs are open 24 hours/day, seven days a week and there is no charge for printing. When school is in session there are student consultants available to answer questions during the day and on some evenings.

The microcomputer labs are set up so that there is only a minimum amount of software installed locally on each hard drive. Most of the software applications are installed on Academic Computing's Novell file server instead. Installing the software on the file server rather than on each microcomputer provides a consistent installation of the software on each machine and allows us to upgrade software packages more easily. It also permits us to offer wider access to software for which we have only a few licensed copies. Having a minimum amount of software installed locally also makes it easier to maintain the microcomputers since the hard drives can easily be reformatted and restored to working order.

There are a wide variety of applications available on the file server. Besides the standard tools in Microsoft Office including Word, Excel, Powerpoint and Access, there are a great number of other more specialized applications. For desktop publishing we have Adobe PageMaker; for graphics we have a wide selection including Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator. KaleidaGraph, Maple, Mathematica and SPSS are among the tools available for mathematics, graphing and statistics. In addition to applications packages like these we also have a selection of freeware and shareware utilities such as anti-viral programs and disk utility programs. The applications themselves are organized somewhat differently depending on whether you are using a PC or Macintosh.

To use the microcomputers in the labs you will first need to login to the file server. All new students are automatically given an account and password on the file server. Faculty, staff or guests at HMC who do not have an account can contact Academic Computing for information about obtaining one (or check our account policy on the Web at `http://www.hmc.edu/comp/policy/accounts.html`). An account also includes space on the file server where users can store their personal files. In addition there is a volume for group projects so students and faculty can have a shared space to store files.

Meet the AC Staff



IN THIS ISSUE

Just in case you are wondering who or what the cute (?), crazy (?), weird (?) cartoon drawings are—they are caricatures of the gravity-defying cinder blocks, or "warts" as Mudders affectionately call them, that are the hallmark of the College's architecture.

Occasional Downtime is composed on a Apple Power Macintosh 6100/66 using Aldus PageMaker 6.0. The primary typefaces used are Times and Optima. We wish to thank Sally Rich Arroyo of the HMC Office of College Relations for all her help.

Harvey Mudd College's Academic Computing Department is responsible for maintaining and supporting the UNIX and VMS-based computers as well as the Macintosh and PC file servers used by faculty, staff and students. Academic Computing also manages several microcomputer labs on campus, helps support departmental computer resources, and maintains the campus-wide network.

Richard Parker is the Director of Academic Computing. Richard is responsible for planning and budgeting for AC and develops policy recommendations regarding academic computing at HMC. He is chairman of the Harvey Mudd College Computing Committee and is on many other policy-making committees for the six Claremont schools including the Claremont Colleges Computing Committee. He also oversees the Claremont Intercampus Networking Effort.

Patience Brooks provides support for the Macintosh and PC-compatible computers in the Academic Computing labs. She is responsible for the selection, installation and maintenance of software on the file servers, and oversees the maintenance of microcomputing hardware used in the labs and on the network. She administers the Novell network, and can answer questions about the various microsystems and the software they run.

Andy Davenport is the Network Manager for Academic Computing. Andy is in charge of maintaining and improving the campus-wide network and the network connection to the rest of the Internet for Harvey Mudd College and the other Claremont Colleges.

Elizabeth Hodas is the department's User Support Coordinator. She is responsible for making sure that user support happens in a timely and efficient fashion. She serves as a liaison between faculty, staff and students and the rest of the AC staff. If you're not sure who to talk to when you have a computer problem, Elizabeth is the person to see first. She writes documentation on the various computer resources available at HMC and makes sure that the documentation available is current. She also edits AC's newsletter, *Occasional Downtime*, and organizes and runs workshops.

Anh Le handles the maintenance and repair of the college-owned microcomputers and provides some software support as well. He has a well-stocked workshop, and can order parts to replace anything he is unable to repair himself. Anh also works with Andy to maintain and upgrade the campus network wiring.

Chris Marble is the campus UNIX Systems Manager for Academic Computing. He generally provides UNIX support for machines in departments other than Academic Computing. This includes the HP 9000/700 series workstations in the Engineering, Math and Physics departments. Chris also works with departmental technical support personnel so that they can handle day-to-day operations like backups.

Matt Masterson is the Audiovisual Manager. He provides audiovisual services for on-campus classes and events. He maintains the inventory of all A/V equipment and systems. He also trains and supervises student assistants in the use of A/V equipment.

Cynthia Souza handles administrative functions for AC. As the office manager, she maintains our budgets and is in charge of purchasing and all the accounting and payroll functions associated with AC. She maintains the inventory of all of AC's equipment, and keeps a calendar for the department. She can also provide user support for many of the more widely used software applications.

Roger Wiechman runs the VMS cluster at HMC. This busy general-access cluster is centered around *thuban*, alias *HMCVAX*. Roger installs new hardware and software on the clusters, sets up and maintains VMS user accounts, and can answer technical questions regarding VMS and its associated utilities as needed. Roger is also involved with user support for DOS and Windows and for faculty and staff dial-in to the campus network from off-campus.

Joe Youn is the Information Resources Manager. He is employed by both Harvey Mudd College and CINE, the Claremont Intercampus Networking Effort. His CINE duties include maintaining and developing Claremont Colleges information systems (i.e. mailing lists, Gopher, World Wide Web, etc.) and administration of the machines that support the information systems and the network monitoring workstation. Joe's HMC duties include the development of HMC information systems and of campus-wide user databases as well as administration of the machines that support these systems. Joe is also the head administrator of the general-purpose HMC Academic Computing UNIX machine *osiris.*

Editor's Notes

The summer is almost over and the fall semester will soon be upon us. In preparation for the new academic year this issue of *Occasional Downtime* is devoted to introducing the Academic Computing Department to our incoming first-year students and to the new faculty and staff.

Articles in this issue include an introduction to the members of the Academic Computing staff, a description of our microcomputer labs and how to use them, and a discussion of our supported software policy. We've also included a set of commonly asked questions by new users for our usual Questions & Answers section.

In addition we have a special article this month on e-mail etiquette. E-mail is a very important part of everyone's day-to-day work at HMC and knowing how to use it appropriately is an important skill for new and experienced users alike. This article is reprinted with permission from the University of Michigan's *Information Technology Digest.*

You can find out more about the Academic Computing Department by visiting our Web site at `http://www.hmc.edu/comp/`, especially our Frequently Asked Questions section at `http://www.hmc.edu/comp/doc/`.

—Elizabeth Hodas

Occasional Downtime is published bimonthly by the Academic Computing Department at Harvey Mudd College. It is also available in a variety of formats on the HMC Web Server. Comments and questions can be directed to `downtime@hmc.edu`.

E-Mail Etiquette: When and How to Communicate Electronically

How would you notify personnel in your department of a policy change? Set up a meeting with a colleague in another department? Wish a sister who lives in England happy birthday? Inform an employee of a change in job responsibilities?

Five years ago, most people would have said "official memo," "phone," "mail a card," and "face-to-face meeting," respectively. These are all very different methods of communication, and they have different requirements.

Because the policy change is an official action, you would want people to see it on letterhead and have a file copy for reference. A quick phone call would suffice for the meeting, though. Phone calls to England are expensive, so you would probably mail your sister a card. Job actions, however, are sensitive and best handled face-to-face.

These days, many of us are turning to electronic mail for communications we used to handle by phone, letter, or even face-to-face meetings. E-mail is easy to send and does not depend on both parties being available at the same time. It even provides a written record.

E-mail may seem to be the perfect form of communication, but it does have some limitations, and it is not always the appropriate choice. It is important to understand its pitfalls and how to work around them. The four major pitfalls of e-mail are missed signals, lack of context, permanence, and unfamiliarity.

Joseph M. Saul, ITD, University of Michigan

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MISSED SIGNALS

You can't communicate as broad a range of information in e-mail as you can in a face-to-face meeting, or even in a telephone call. Your words come across, but all the non-verbal signals—facial expressions, eye contact, body language, tone of voice—are lost. We usually don't think about it, but we depend on those signals for information about the context of what is said; we need the signals to help us interpret the meaning beneath the words. Without them, we are often left to guess at the other person's intent.

These non-verbal signals are the main reason that most people prefer to handle sensitive issues (such as employment actions) in face-to-face meetings. When the situation is already potentially tense and you want your meaning to be absolutely clear, you want to have as much information as possible flowing back and forth.

Conversely, this is why e-mail conversations can become so heated. It's hard to say something "with a smile" in electronic mail, and it is all too easy to misinterpret an offhand, joking remark as a personal attack.

Once tempers flare, both parties—each operating without those important nonverbal cues to meaning—tend to read their worst fears into the written words and react in kind. This can happen even among friends, but when the parties involved don't know each other well, it can be worse.

As a result, experienced e-mail users have developed conventions for showing when they are joking—interjections such as "<grin>" or the use of "smileys," such as this: : -)

(If you haven't seen one of these before, tip your head to the left to see the smile.) Unfortunately, these methods are not universally understood and communicate only a limited amount of meaning.

What is the best way to avoid misunderstandings due to missed signals? Give e-mail correspondents the benefit of the doubt and seek clarification (for example, "You sounded annoyed in that last reply. Am I reading you correctly?"). If there is a

dispute, don't hesitate to call someone on the phone or talk to them in person.

LACK OF CONTEXT

A note stuck to your door is informal; a signed memorandum on departmental letterhead is official. The way a message is sent tells the recipient a lot—people have learned to recognize the status of a message from its context and formatting cues.

In e-mail, however, both kinds of message look the same. You can't send an e-mail message on letterhead or on scented stationery. As a result, your recipient not only lacks the non-verbal content of your speech, but he or she also lacks the traditional symbols that would show its status and context. If people in your department receive an e-mail message saying "Please get all grades in by the 25th," they don't necessarily know whether it is an official statement of policy or a plea for help from an overworked administrator.

As we start to use e-mail interchangeably with all of the other communication methods available to us, we have to develop ways of making the context of the message clear. Eventually, we may have "electronic letterhead" for verifiable official messages. Until then, the best solution is to explain your message's status and context right up front. You might, for example, state "This is a formal announcement from the office of the director," if indeed that's what it is.

PERMANENCE

Unless your phone is bugged, a phone call leaves no permanent record. E-mail, however, does—and it can be forwarded again and again and come back to haunt you long after you have forgotten why you sent the original message. (This is especially true on mailing lists, where some list members may not see your message until weeks after you sent it.) Because electronic mail is so easy to send and seems so ephemeral, people often forget just how permanent it is. You can achieve a kind of immortality through your e-mail well out of proportion to the amount of effort it takes to send it.

It can be a good idea to explain your intentions to the recipient of a message. If you do not want your message forwarded to anyone else, say so.

The convention on mailing lists and Usenet newsgroups is that private e-mail should not be publicly posted, but people are occasionally thoughtless or unaware of the convention. To be safe, think very carefully before sending a (*continued on page 7*)

DO

- Do review messages before you send them out to make sure you are really saying what you want to say. This is especially important as end-of-semester stress rises.
- Do be as polite as possible; terseness can be taken as hostility.
- Do make it clear to the recipient what type of message you are sending, especially if it is official.
- Do give correspondents the benefit of the doubt; try not to assume the worst.
- Do be patient with inexperienced e-mail users.
- Do, if possible, include the portion of the message you're replying to in your reply; people often forget the original context.
- Do enjoy and use responsibly the e-mail resources available to you as a member of the University of Michigan community.

DON'T

- Don't send a message when you're angry; cool down, look at the message again, and then decide whether you really want to send it. Most e-mail programs let you easily save a message for sending at a later time.
- Don't copy an entire, large message in your response just to add a line or two of commentary.
- Don't reply to "all recipients" unless they all need to see your reply.
- Don't type in all capital letters; this is SHOUTING and is considered RUDE.
- Don't send off-topic messages to mailing lists, especially work-related lists.
- Don't send chain letters or messages recruiting participants in make-money-fast schemes; doing so not only violates University policy, but may also violate federal law.
- Don't edit quoted messages to change the overall meaning.

Supported Software at HMC

Academic Computing maintains a large collection of both Macintosh and PC software on its file servers. This software is available to all HMC faculty, staff and students with a valid account and password for the file servers.

The software can be run off the file server over the network. The file server contains both freeware software, which can be copied freely, and shareware software, which can be copied but for which the user is responsible for any shareware fees. Commercial software installed on the server is regulated by a key server which controls how many users can access the software at any one time and which requires that you be connected to the network. This is necessary for software packages such as Aldus PageMaker and Adobe Photoshop for which we only have a certain number of licensed copies. We are legally required to delete any unlicensed software that we find on our machines.

GUIDELINES FOR ALL INSTALLED SOFTWARE

In general, software is installed on our file server because it has been requested by a department or individual faculty member as a necessary resource for academic course work, or because it is perceived to be potentially useful to a significant fraction of the HMC community. In either case, the requesting party serves as sponsor for the software package, and is responsible for providing legal copies of installation disks (or CD-ROMs) and documentation. Academic Computing will install the software, and will ensure that the software can be launched and exited correctly. The sponsor who requested its installation is responsible for running any tests after the software is installed. If necessary, Academic Computing will run further tests if provided with test files and procedures.

The sponsor should furnish information about the software's publisher, so that Academic Computing can contact technical support, if necessary, and a copy of the manual, or other documentation, as appropriate to add to our documentation library. The sponsor is responsible for providing all other documentation and supplying assistance to those using the software; we will route all questions relating to the use of the software back to the sponsor. At the sponsor's request, we will investigate and provide information on how to print from within the software or use the software to access other existing Academic Computing resources (for Level 2 or Level 3 software). We will upgrade the software if requested to do so by the sponsor.

AC SOFTWARE SUPPORT LEVELS

Academic Computing has developed a three-level system of support for the software installed on its file servers.

LEVEL 1: Software which is used by a single course or department for instructional purposes, or which is of potential interest but limited importance to the HMC computing community.

LEVEL 2: Software which is used by multiple courses or departments, or by a core course which is required for most or all students, or which is of general interest and significant importance to the HMC computing community as a whole.

LEVEL 3: Software which is of critical importance to the HMC computing community.

Academic Computing is effectively the sponsor of all level 3 software. We will maintain the software's manuals in our manual library, and will contact the

publisher for technical support in areas beyond our expertise. Our student consultants will be able to answer simple operational questions about the software, and some consultants or Academic Computing staff members will be able to answer more technical questions. As appropriate, we will offer periodic workshops to novice users for software considered to be of critical importance to computing campus-wide, and will offer intermediate workshops for particularly complex and/or important software. Upgrades to level 3 software will usually only be performed during the breaks between semesters. Academic Computing will take responsibility for locating, purchasing, installing, testing, and upgrading the software.

THE SUPPORTED SOFTWARE LISTS

Every software package supported by Academic Computing has an entry in our supported software list, containing the following information: program name, version number, publisher, and the level of support assigned to the software. The Macintosh and PC lists also mirror the directory structure of the file server they are installed on and can be used to help locate a particular software package on the file server itself.

The Supported Software Lists can be found on the Web server at `http://www.hmc.edu/comp/doc/`.

WHERE TO GO FOR HELP

- Send e-mail to one of the system support mailing lists:
  `mac-system-l@hmc.edu`
  `pc-system-l@hmc.edu`
  `system@thuban.hmc.edu`
  `system@osiris.hmc.edu`
- Talk to the student Lab Consultant on duty.
- Call the Help Desk phone line at 7-7777. Or send e-mail to `help-desk@hmc.edu`.

E-Mail Etiquette continued from page 5

hostile or angry message; you can wind up defending your writings long after the feelings that motivated you to write them are past. And you can wind up defending them to people you never thought the message would reach.

UNFAMILIARITY

Most people learn to use the telephone and to write letters as small children. Appropriate phone or letter etiquette is second nature to most adults. Most people on this campus, however, have had electronic mail for a much shorter time—maybe one to five years. Many incoming students have their first experience with e-mail during U-M orientation. Electronic mail is a very new method of communication for most of the people worldwide who use it—and they're still learning the ropes.

As a result, they make mistakes. This isn't surprising; e-mail etiquette is no more intuitive than phone etiquette, and everyone has heard children answer phones with "Who is this?" or simply with silence punctuated by giggles.

People do all kinds of things that offend experienced e-mail users—copying entire messages just to add "I agree," passing on chain letters, replying to entire mail groups instead of just the sender, typing in all capital (which is interpreted as shouting) or all lower case letters. The list of "sins" goes on and on.

Never assume that another person is deliberately trying to be annoying over e-mail without supporting evidence; they simply may not know better. Most people, if told politely, will be happy to follow the conventions. They just need to know what the conventions are.

USE WITH CARE

E-mail can be a wonderful communication tool when used with care. Avoid the pitfalls, think before you act, and remember that we are all learning the ropes together.

QUESTIONS *and* ANSWERS

Q: How do I use the micros in the labs?

A: On the PC you must first type in your *Kato* login name and password before launching Windows. Your home directory is automatically mapped to the H: drive. To logout quit Windows and then type `logout` or `lo` at the DOS prompt.

On the Macintosh open the Chooser (located under the Apple menu). Select the AppleShare icon, select `HMC_MACS` from the list of AppleTalk zones and then select *Kato* from the list of file servers. Type your login name and password and click `OK`. Then select the volume you would like to open. Macintosh applications are located in the volume `Kato.Mac` and student home directories are located in the volume identified by their class year. To logout from *Kato* select `Restart` from the `Special` menu.

Q: I forgot my password. What do I do?

A: If you can, send e-mail to `PWCHANGE@hmc.edu`, indicate that you've forgotten your password, specify which account (e.g. *Thuban*, *Osiris*, *Kato*), and include your name and userid. E-mail requests sent before 3:00 p.m. will be ready the following weekday afternoon (after 1:00 p.m.). You must pick up your new password from the Academic Computing office, and must show ID. If you can't send e-mail, you can stop by the AC office to request the password re-set.

Q: What's the code to get into the labs?

A: To get the lab code you must stop by our office. You must have an HMC I.D. Non-HMC faculty, staff or students should first see Patience Brooks in Parsons 154 to find out if they are eligible for an account on our file server.

Q: One of the lab printers is out of paper, where do I go to get more?

A: If there is a consultant on duty, see the consultant first. Otherwise paper for the lab printers is available in Parsons 148. You should be prepared to show ID.

Q: The toner is low on one of the lab printers. Who do I tell?

A: See the lab consultant on duty, or send e-mail to `ac-consultants-l@hmc.edu` indicating the lab and printer. As soon as a consultant is available, the toner cartridge will be replaced.

Q: How do I get my dorm computer connected to the HMC network?

A: Detailed documentation on how to get connected to the HMC network is available on the Web at `http://www.hmc.edu/comp/doc/networking/`. You should also talk to your dorm network administrator.

Q: Where do I get a cable/connector for the port in my dorm room?

A: Huntley Bookstore sells cables and connectors.

Q: I need an IP address, what do I do?

A: Send e-mail to: `IP-request@hmc.edu`. A form will be sent to you. Fill in the information requested and send it to `IP-submit@hmc.edu`. The network manager will e-mail your IP address within 48 hours.