Minutes of the Computing Advisory Committee
October 27, 1998

Those attending: Al Allen, Ruth Bernhart, David Blakesley, JP Dunn, Duke Koch, Geoff Nathan, Jackie Smith, Carolyn Snyder, Mike Wainer

- The meeting began with Al reporting on a national Gartner Group symposium, which included a forum on university computing. Some of the major issues discussed included worry about Y2K compliance on the desktop (especially in spreadsheets that might be used to make crucial decisions).
- The University session specifically dealt with distance learning questions. Problems discussed included the need to develop tools for building web-based courses, getting new people to join in the area and instituting a rewards system for development of distance learning materials.
- The university-wide directory server is currently operational, but its existence has not been made public because IT is awaiting administrative approval, and there are some legal issues that have not yet been worked out.
- Due to overcrowding on the campus e-mail system a new machine was installed and the current machines have upgraded memory. There is still a problem with external e-mail being routed through the SIUC system, and IT is working on this problem. At the moment IT is seeing more than 100,000 mail transactions between 1 and 4 PM daily. A further change has been to isolate internally directed e-mail from those messages going out of the system.
- As for local connectivity, Al reported that there has been enthusiastic response to the ethernet connections at Thompson Point (over 100 subscribers), but the special dialup system available at the East Campus dorms still has fewer than 100 subscribers, despite having room for over 1000. In addition, IT is negotiating with the Board of Education to get access to an INTERNET pipe that is coming through the Student Center, and that would expand our available bandwidth by a factor of 2 to 5.
- It was also announced that the University's new Budget and Planning committee is looking into expenditures on technology by all academic departments on campus.
- Duke asked what kinds of site licenses were available on the Oracle system, and Al replied that we have licenses for the database program for several different platforms, and although there is as yet no official distribution policy people can go over to the Oracle office to pick up a CD with the appropriate programs.
- Al reported that the Netscape calendar program is still under development, and is the next project after the directory server is up and running. He also reminded the committee that IT is commissioning ARC (a unit with the Psychology department) to conduct a campus-wide survey of computing. Questions to be addressed are 1) what is in place (equipment, connectivity), 2) which tools people are using (in order to study possibilities for site licensing), 3) readiness for Oracle, 4) training and educational needs and 5) what do users want to do, and what do they need to do it.
- Jackie asked about the status of off-campus connectivity, and Al replied that they are working on a formal RFP to go out to local vendors to supply dial-up internet connectivity at a reasonable cost. Considerable discussion ensued about the difficulties of arranging for lower-cost dial-up services in Southern Illinois. Political, economic and other issues appear to make arrangements difficult.
- Geoff introduced a handout consisting of a guesstimate of how much it would cost to put a computer on the desk of every faculty member who does not currently have one, and another set of figures on the approximate cost of replacing every faculty desktop every three years. Al suggested adding in figures to ensure the continuous updating of networking infrastructure at the same time. David asked about providing computers for teaching assistants. Carolyn pointed out that the information from the Budget and Planning committee alluded to earlier would be particularly useful to this committee, and Geoff will look into getting the committee a copy.
- Some discussion of the other talking points suggested by Geoff ensued, but more discussion will be needed, beginning with the next meeting. In place of bringing in an outside consultant, someone suggested that SIUC may well have local talent who could help advise on restructuring.
- On the topic of a reward system, and a training system for departmental computer experts, Al suggested some documents written by Cheryl Farabaugh-Dorkins that addressed this issue, and Geoff will bring those to the next meeting.

- The next meeting of the committee will be November 10 at 3:30 in the Library Conference room.

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