CNS /Update Newsletter Feature

Operational Services: Manning the Machines

CNS Document ID: u011108a
Last Updated: 10/26/01

UF Information Technology

UFIT

2046 NE Waldo Rd, Suite 2100
Gainesville Florida 32609-8942
(352) 392.2061
<editor@cns.ufl.edu>
Table of Contents

Operational Services: Manning the Machines ............................................................. 3
  New Hardware ........................................................................................................ 3
  User Support ........................................................................................................ 4
  Looking forward to the future .............................................................................. 5
Operational Services: Manning the Machines

With responsibility to monitor the systems at NERDC around the clock, the need to keep up with fast-changing hardware and software, and the challenge of helping users after everyone else has closed, Operational Services (Operations) has had a busy year!

Operations at NERDC responds to all these needs and more. Last year the group's biggest project was moving off of NERVM, the operating system which the data center phased out in March 2001.

"It still is work for some of my staff members who are busy updating internal documentation that has references to NERVM in it," said Bill Carr, Operational Services manager.

New Hardware

While the data center phased out old systems, Operations also added new hardware: a Robotic Tape Library, the IBM Enterprise Storage Server (ESS) 2105 "Shark" Disk Sub-System, and line printer replacements.

"The Robotic Tape Library, also known as the IBM 3590, will definitely provide better services eventually to our user community. Right now it's helping users by allowing us to do more efficient daily backups and off-site backups for our in-house data," said Carr.

"Eventually the 3590 could replace the tape library in its current form," said Carr. But those with legacy systems will still be accommodated for a long time, Carr said. "As long as we still have customers who come in with round tapes, we will continue to find a way for them to read their data."

Another new addition is the "Shark" Disk Subsystem. The Shark, the code name for IBM's Enterprise Storage Server (ESS) 2105, is expandable, and will eventually replace our RAMAC III disk subsystem. The newer equipment uses less space and power while providing more storage capacity.

"The Shark is definitely more, better, smaller," Carr said.

The HP DesignJet printer that tackles large-format printing jobs and color plots is also new for Operations. "We are very happy to have a quality replacement for the Versatec Plotter," Carr said. "As far as Operations is concerned, we spend far less time servicing the new plotter and it's far more efficient as a printer."
User Support

Besides all the new hardware that's been integrated into Operations, they've continued their mission of user support.

"There are always at least two bodies here, even on Christmas Day," said Carr. "We answer the phone 24-hours-a-day, 7-days-a-week, 365 days a year. In many cases people will call us because they don't know where else to call. We will help them if we can or direct them to the UF Computing Help Desk, or other support resources."

The role of Operations includes monitoring the hardware and that's seen a surprising shift to using PCs. "We now use the 'little' computers to monitor the 'big' computers," Carr said.

"PCs are becoming more of an Operations tool than they used to be. We've developed a series of routines for which we use PCs: storing our documentation, monitoring the network, and monitoring the Internet traffic flow as well."

Carr said he sees the future of Operations becoming more about service and less about
hardware. "Operations will always be here though; we'll always have MVS mainframe activity. I tell people we'll eventually become 'Mindspring with a mainframe!' We will still have people who want to calculate three million particles through the universe and they'll need teraflops of processing power and beyond. And, there's the stability that comes with MVS that you don't get with any kind of a PC yet."

**Looking forward to the future**

A peek into the future as Operational Services Manager Bill Carr sees it includes a Robotic Tape Library that users could access as their own personal virtual library, images stored on CDs that people could access easier than microfiche, and a super-fast network.

"We'd love to get rid of the round tapes. I can foresee a future where the 3480 tapes would cease and desist due to being replaced by the automated tape library. It's much more efficient both spatially and economically. We'd reclaim quite a bit of space and it'd be better for our users too," Carr said.

Another future possibility is CDs in lieu of Computer Output Microfiche (COM), also known as microfiche. "CDs are a wonderful replacement. We here at UF have an imaging pilot project going on. It's not ready yet, but when it is, it'd be great to dispose of COM. It's very expensive to maintain the machine that creates COM," Carr said.

The super-fast network has already started showing itself at UF and other universities around the country which have joined the Internet2 initiative.

"The network itself is going to get bigger and faster very quickly, I think. It's been getting exponentially faster. I bet it will experience an explosion of growth. It's a relatively new technology that's only been worked on for the past 15 years. That's young compared to other computing technologies that have been around twice as long," Carr said.

Whatever the future may hold, Carr thinks there will always be a place for Ops. Ops is the place where there's always someone monitoring the machines and making sure all's well.

**Your Comments are Welcome**

We welcome your comments and suggestions on this and all UFIT documentation. Please send your comments to:

**UF Information Technology**

**UFIT**

2046 NE Waldo Rd, Suite 2100
Gainesville Florida  32609-8942
(352) 392.2061
<editor@cns.ufl.edu>