Computing History: 1990s to Now, Smaller & Personal

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UF Information Technology

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Table of Contents

Computing History: 1990s to Now, Smaller & Personal .......................................................3
Smaller and Smarter ..................................................................................................................3
Bigger and Faster ........................................................................................................................3
We’ve Come a Long Way ............................................................................................................4
Today at UF ..................................................................................................................................4
Sources: ......................................................................................................................................4
Computing History: 1990s to Now, Smaller & Personal

As part of the celebration of the University of Florida's sesquicentennial, we've been looking at the history of computing at UF and around the world. This month, we're wrapping up the series with a quick glance around to see where we are... and where we're going.

Smaller and Smarter

Computing in the first years of the new millennium is continuing the trend of the 1990s. The small are getting smaller, the powerful are getting more powerful, and they're all getting smarter.

Computing has become not only increasingly personal in the last two years, but also pervasive. The term pervasive computing describes the emerging trend toward numerous, casually accessible, often invisible computing devices, frequently embedded in the environment and connected to an increasingly ubiquitous network structure. The devices themselves have begun to merge. You can buy a cell phone that's also a camera and a PDA. You can install a refrigerator that can download your e-mail and tell you when the milk is going bad.

Experts say all these trends will soon have computers melding with the environment until you won't know you're using computers at all. They'll be your microwave, your front door, your jacket. Once they cease to be intrusive, they'll become truly helpful.

Bigger and Faster

On the other hand, IBM and Chinese computer manufacturer Downing Information Industry Co. Ltd., each announced within the last six months plans for powerful supercomputers with massive memory, processing power, and bandwidth capabilities.

Designed to wear: In spite of its small size and low power consumption, the "QBIC" (belt integrated computer) supports a wide range of applications such as surfing the Web, playing games or recording and processing sensor data. It features a CPU XScale Processor (400 MHz scalable, 32 MB internal Flash Memory), 256 MB SDRAM, flex connection, and standard interfaces (USB, RS-232, VGA, ...)
We've Come a Long Way

UF opened its first computer lab, the Statistical Laboratory, in 1952.

Fifty-one years later, Americans have embraced their computers. About 137 million American adults are online. Around 66 percent of all adults in the US now have access to the Internet, and research predicts that 28 million US households will have a home network by 2006.

Today at UF

The University of Florida is a leader among public universities in information technology. As a member of Internets 2 and 3, with an increasingly wireless campus, technologically advanced classrooms, the portal, and a move to a single interface in administrative work with the Bridges project, UF has positioned itself to meet the technology demands of staff, students, and faculty in the coming years.

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