CNS /Update Newsletter Feature

Director's Word

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UF Information Technology

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As information technology professionals, we have seen an explosive growth in our industry. New technologies emerge and quickly grow into mature service offerings. In this environment, we try to integrate these new technologies in ways that allow us to expand our services while maintaining reliability. In the following paragraphs, I will tell you some of the ways that NERDC has been growing with industry changes.

We have been working with staff from the Registrar's Office to help implement a new document-imaging solution to UF's records storage needs. This project will allow UF to store and retrieve records and reports online rather than from microfiche. The Internet interface will be EAGLE (the Enhanced Application Generation Language for the Enterprise), which is featured in a later article in this issue. The imaging project uses two NT servers for scanning and image recognition and two servers on two different nodes on the NERSP complex for tracking documents and storing them. NERDC will maintain the servers and will manage userid access and privileges to the system.

We are very lucky to have a talented and knowledgeable networking staff. We feature their work later in this issue. Some of their accomplishments from the past fiscal year are detailed below.

In January 1999, we acquired an IP multicast routing service for video-conferencing. We were able to broadcast the January 1999 Board of Regents meeting from the UF Touchdown Terrace, a series of seminars in support of summer undergraduate research programs sponsored by the Brain Institute, and a lecture on affirmative action issues from the Cynthia Chestnut Lecture Series.

Three more institutions were added to FloridaNet as part of the Internet2 project. They are Florida A&M University, the University of South Florida, and the University of Central Florida. The next two schools to be added will be Florida International University and Florida
Atlantic University. FCLA (Florida Center for Library Automation) traffic carried over FloridaNet has been so fast that we have been able to discontinue at least one local line.

Other network enhancements included adding 56K dialup capability to our system; increasing the number of dialup lines to more than 1,000; and cooperating in UF projects to rewire campus buildings and to add walkup computing support on the UF campus. And, due to the rising complexity of network security issues, this area will be a strong area of focus for us in the coming year.

We currently have a reliable, switched, fast Ethernet core network. It is our plan to upgrade segments of the network as needed to gigabyte Ethernet speeds. There are newer and faster technologies available, but using them before they mature would sacrifice the reliability of our network. Our focus will be on pursuing redundant, loadsharing Internet connections to increase the capacity and reliability of our existing network. A new Internet router is also under consideration to handle increased network load.

It is not widely known that a significant portion of what you know as NERDC is funded by and reports to the Office of the Provost as a UF department. A major priority for this group, Network Services, is the on-campus network at UF. Of course, NERDC still has its SUS (State University System) mission but the UF mission is more prominent than it has been in years past.

Since the inception of GatorLink accounts, more than 68,000 account applications have been processed. In the past year, GatorLink mailbox space has increased from 5 to 20 megabytes, and we have added student web pages—also with a 20 megabyte storage space.

Our OS/390 (MVS) computer was upgraded from an IBM 9672-R45 to a model R55. We also doubled the central memory to 4 GB and upgraded the operating system on this computer. This was necessary for several reasons. First, we needed more capacity to handle the expected Fall 1999 load. Second, we needed resources to prepare for the year 2000. We are running a second copy of the OS/390 operating system in a separate logical partition set up just for Y2K testing. Attached to this special partition are dedicated disk storage and a tape drive. Once we are successfully into the next year, we hope that those resources will be enough to get us through Fall 2000.

As noted above, NERDC initiated a Y2K test facility for use by owners of campus computer applications. This facility duplicates the MVS production environment, and with the use of software that simulates dates (like Hourglass and Date/2000) allows users to test their Y2K conversion efforts. NERDC has participated on the campus-wide Y2K Simulation Committee, whose mission is to test inter-relationships between administrative applications on campus to make sure that they are Y2K ready. Our representative on this committee coordinates our efforts to provide the needed testing resources. Our Y2K-readiness information is available in DOCWEB document D0101 and at: http://www.cns.ufl.edu/info-services/y2krefs.html (editor’s note: this page has been archived).

At this time, we continue to maintain our NERVM computer to minimize inconvenience to our user community as we gradually remove it from service. We successfully migrated users from VM POP to mail servers on other computers, but we still maintain batch job submission, file editing, and host-mail resources. During this process, we were able to help many people switch to the IMAP mail protocol which uses far fewer system resources than POP3.

In October 1998, NERDC co-ordinated UF’s first Information Technology Security Awareness Day. Speakers covered basic computer security guidelines as well as Network and
Internet security guidelines such as firewalls, encryption, security policies, transaction security, and future issues. We look forward to our continuing participation in this event.

As you can see, we are working on many exciting projects that integrate computing further into our daily lives. We expect to continue to provide the most effective and reliable services that we can while keeping pace with new technologies that emerge in this fast-paced environment. We want to hear from you and invite you to let us know when you need assistance or special resources.

Ron Schoenau
NERDC Director

Your Comments are Welcome

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

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