



# LRDC Computing Services

Computing Services Newsletter

April 2002

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## **LRDC Computing Services Survey**

by Karen Bassett and Gary Wilde

We'd like to thank everyone who submitted an LRDC Computing Services Survey. While the Computer Resource Committee is still reviewing the responses, we want to take this opportunity to highlight some of the feedback from the Center users. Your valuable input will help us improve existing services and help determine what new services to provide in the future. LRDC has a vast range of technical needs. Unlike most environments, our faculty, staff, and students use a wide range of hardware, software, and operating systems. Our goal is to provide resources that will benefit the maximum number of users, while staying within the constraints of the budget.

The overall rating for Computing Services was very good. Some of your concerns about existing services are being addressed with upgrade plans that are within the current budget. Requests for additional services will be addressed by the Committee. From some of the responses, it is clear that there is some confusion about certain Computing Services procedures. This article highlights some of our current upgrade plans and also addresses the rationale behind some of our recommendations and procedures. If you have any concerns that are not addressed below, or have any concerns in the future, please feel free to contact Karen (x4-7037) and/or Gary (x4-7042) to set up a meeting.

### **LRDC File Servers**

The LRDC file servers are designed to store work-related files in a central location to facilitate project collaboration. We recommend keeping all important files on your server, as they are backed up nightly. This will not only protect your data in the case of a hard drive failure, but it will also allow you to access your files from any computer. Our Novell NetWare 4.11 servers suit LRDC's cross-platform environment well. Use of the file servers is nearly identical for Mac and PC users. NetWare 4.11 is a very flexible network operating system. We can customize directory rights based on individual and/or project needs. We will be upgrading the file servers this summer to faster systems with more memory and

much larger hard drives. We still ask that you do not store applications, entertainment-oriented files such as music and video clips, or computer backups on the servers. While it is true that hard drives are inexpensive, the servers are backed up nightly over the network, which is both a time-intensive and costly procedure. If you have special storage needs, you should contact us. We recently purchased a Snap server for temporary backups (e.g., computer upgrades and rebuilds) that can accommodate a special request.

### **Network Access**

LRDC network ports will soon be upgraded from 10BaseT to 100BaseT. This will more than triple your network speed. A 10/100 BaseT Ethernet card is required to utilize 100BaseT. If your system was purchased within the last couple of years, it will most likely already have a 10/100 card. Center funds will cover the cost of the port upgrade; however, projects wishing to have 100BaseT access will be responsible for the cost of the Ethernet card. If you would like to upgrade to 100BaseT, but do not have a 10/100 Ethernet card, we have them in stock for \$45.00 each. We will install and configure them for you.

### **Ordering Equipment**

Since moving to the PRISM on-line purchasing system, in which orders are directly faxed to the vendor (once electronically approved by Jack or Carol), most stocked items are received in about a week. However, since we cannot guarantee an item will be in stock, we encourage people to plan as far ahead as possible. This is especially true now, since many of the items we received quickly were from the e-Store. On April 1, CSSD abruptly announced the e-Store had closed. Also, note orders with individual equipment over \$5,000.00 are still required to go through the Purchasing Department for approval, and will take at least 2 weeks. When planning your orders, please keep in mind the following:

- ☞ Ordering custom-built systems will take longer than pre-configured systems.
- ☞ Vendors often announce new hardware and/or software before the items are actually ready to ship. This is especially true for new Mac hardware; we have experienced ship times as long as 8-12 weeks from Apple Computer.
- ☞ Parts (e.g., memory) for older and obscure equipment are in low demand, therefore, will typically take longer and be more costly than parts for current equipment.
- ☞ Computer setups are done in the order received. Although a typical setup might only take a day or two, expect at least 3-5 days, depending on the current workload and the number of computers ordered.

### **Printing**

Most survey respondents were very satisfied with our printing resources. Over the last 2 years we replaced 9 laser printers. We also purchased a second color laser printer. Poster printing received many favorable comments. LRDC was one of the first departments on campus to purchase a large-format plotter. Our HP DesignJet 755 CM is more than 5 years old. With careful use, we hope this printer will have a long life-span. The DesignJet is a much more fragile piece of equipment with many more movable parts than standard laser printers, so it is important to have extra time in case of technical difficulties.

Once we have your completed poster, it will be printed within 48 hours during typical weeks, and 5 days during high-volume weeks (e.g., before AERA, Board of Visitors). We charge LRDCers only \$42.00 for a 3 x 4 foot poster with 50% ink coverage compared to the Copy Cat price of \$114.00. Copy Cat also requires a minimum of 48 hours notice. If time permits, we will accept posters from outside departments. Outside departments will be charged prices similar to Copy Cat, since they do not contribute "tax" dollars towards our operating budget. Jo-Anne Krevy (x4-7060) is the contact for printing posters. You may also contact Jo-Anne to schedule training if you have never created a poster and need help getting started.

## **Staff Overview**

We want everyone at LRDC to feel comfortable contacting anyone on the LRDC Computing Services staff. If the person you contact does not have a solution to your problem, they will direct you to the appropriate person. Everyone in our group should be able to answer general questions. Below is a brief listing of individual responsibilities and specialties. Please see the last page of this Newsletter for room and phone numbers.

**Karen Bassett:** *File server administration (Novell NetWare); network printing; FileMaker Pro; Mac troubleshooting; Newsletter editor; University Computer Account Administrator*

**Gary Wilde:** *NT Exchange server and LRDC Web server administrator; researching and testing new technologies; Windows troubleshooting; hardware troubleshooting*

**Eric Fussenegger:** *File server backups and restores; palm pilots; training and troubleshooting the conference room audiovisual systems; electronic purchase orders*

**Jo-Anne Krevy:** *New user orientation; file server account creation; software training, including poster creation; poster printing; IP administration; machine move requests; electronic purchase orders*

**Shari Kubitz:** *Troubleshooting and training (Mac, Windows, e-mail, software); anti-virus and security; data recovery; electronic P.O.'s; Software Licensing Services orders and renewals; Univ. Computer Account Administrator*

**Tom Simunich:** *Help desk coordinator*

**Student Operators:** *Answer Help Desk phone; first tier support; printer maintenance*

Again, please call LRDC Computing Services with any computer-related problem, question, or concern. We are here to provide computer support to the Center. Contacting us for advice before upgrading a computer on your own might save you time, aggravation, or money. We are often aware of software incompatibilities; we have seen too many people install what they thought was a simple program or utility only to inadvertently crash their computer or corrupt their system, requiring a complete rebuild. We are also familiar with the vendors that offer educational prices and can order most items through PRISM.

## Microsoft Office X Review

by Shari Kubitz

If you are running OS X on your Mac—or have been waiting for applications to become available before upgrading—there is good news! Office X, Microsoft's newest version of the Office suite for Macintosh, is now fully compatible with OS X, capturing the essence of OS X's new Aqua interface and benefitting from its inherent stability. All Office X applications are fully Carbonized. This should significantly improve the speed and function of Office for current OS X users who had previously been forced to use Office 2001 in the slower compatibility mode. While this suite can only run on an OS X system, files created in Office X can be read and shared with anyone using Microsoft Office 98/2001 for the Mac or Microsoft Office 97/2000/XP for Windows.

One of the most noticeable changes is the new interface; featuring text, buttons, and menus that are easier to see and to navigate. In addition to the new look, each of the suite's applications has undergone some changes, albeit some more than others. Of all Office X applications, PowerPoint has changed the least. Entourage has undergone the most changes including improved navigation among mail, address book, calendar, and notes displays, and the redesign of the Calendar window.

While the Office Suite has hundreds of new features, some of the most notable are:

- Transparency:** This feature, available in Word, Excel, and PowerPoint allows you to adjust the opacity of text and graphics, allowing for the overlap of objects.
- Working With Unconnected Text Blocks:** You can work with unconnected blocks of text (e.g., format, move, copy, delete, spell check), by holding down the Command key while selecting multiple sections.
- Customize Keyboard Commands in Excel:** You can now assign commands to keyboard shortcuts in Excel, a feature available in Microsoft Word for quite some time.
- Support for FileMaker Pro:** You can now import FileMaker Pro databases into Excel. (However, you cannot import Microsoft Access files).
- PowerPoint Package Option:** This feature wraps a presentation and all of its related files into one package and then moves it to a single folder.
- Entourage Custom Views:** You can combine the information you use the most onto a single screen.

Still missing from the Mac version of Office are Microsoft Access and FrontPage. Palm users will also be disappointed to learn, that at this time, you still can not sync directly to a Palm device from Entourage, although an update is apparently in the works.

As with all new software releases, there are unwanted features and new problems. For example, when closing certain palettes in Office X, there are animated effects which take longer, can be annoying, and cannot be disabled. More importantly, Office X does not consistently apply antialiasing, an important OS X feature that prevents a jagged look. Office X applies antialiasing to icons, buttons, Excel charts and header text, and all the text in Word. However, the text within Entourage e-mail messages and within cells on an Excel spreadsheet may appear rough or jagged.

In short, while Office X is not a good enough reason alone to upgrade to OS X, current OS X users should find a much improved suite of applications. Office X is available through LRDC's Microsoft Campus Select agreement. Anyone interested in using Office X should call x4-7033 to schedule an installation. If you would like your own CD, please contact Shari at x4-2881 and provide a project and account number. We can order CDs from Software Licensing Services for \$5.00 each, the cost of the media only.

## **Converting Hard Copy, Multi-Page Documents to PDF**

by Shari Kubitz

Have you ever had a hard copy of a multi-page document that you wanted to make available as a PDF? With the increasing popularity of PDF files, finding an efficient way to create them can save hours of work. In the past, the process would likely be very time-consuming—especially if you were using a flatbed scanner and were individually scanning each page.



More than 2 years ago we purchased an Axis 700 network document scanner for the 5<sup>th</sup> floor copy machine. Once your e-mail account is added to the scanner, you can scan a document using the copy machine and it will automatically be sent as an attachment to your e-mail account. This is most helpful when you have a multi-page document; you can scan the entire paper in a fraction of the time it would take to manually scan each page.

The Sharp Imager offers several settings affecting the quality of the text and graphics, as well as the resulting format. When your goal is to create a PDF, it is important to consider the effects these settings can have on the ultimate size of the file. If the PDF file is intended for a web site or an e-mail attachment, the file size should be as small as possible without sacrificing readability. While the Sharp Imager allows you to scan directly to PDF, the size of the file is often extremely large (several megabytes) and the quality is no better (and sometimes worse) than other formats.

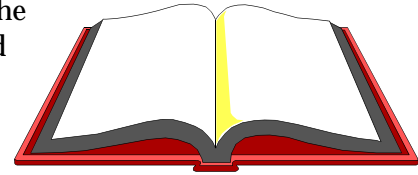
Through testing, we have found that using the Sharp Imager to scan the document in TIFF format is the most effective way to create PDF files from multi-page documents. Microsoft Office XP for Windows and TIFF-Sight for Mac can both open and manage multi-page TIFF files. Once the TIFF is open, the full version of Adobe Acrobat can be used to create a PDF. All of these programs are available for use on the shared computers in room 506.

If you have any questions, would like a training session, or need to have your e-mail account added to the network scanner, please contact Shari at x4-2881.

## LRDC User Documentation Update

by Karen Bassett and Shari Kubitz

Our group maintains documents for using computers on the LRDC network. This year, all documents will be updated to provide you with the most up-to-date information about LRDC's computing environment. We purchased a magazine rack to house LRDC documentation and frequently requested CSSD documentation.



### The following documents have been updated:

- ***Using a Macintosh on the LRDC Local Area Network***
- ***Using a PC on the LRDC Local Area Network***
- ***Using Eudora Pro for Mac as an IMAP Client***
- ***Using Eudora Pro for Windows as an IMAP Client***
- ***Dialing Into PittNet and Accessing the LRDC File Servers From a Mac***
- ***Dial-up Access to the LRDC File Servers From Windows 95/98/Me***

You can pick up copies of these and other documents, including past LRDC Computing Services Newsletters, on the rack across from room 506 or you can call x4-7033 to ask a Student Operator to send you a copy through campus mail. You can also view, download, or print PDF versions from: <http://www.lrdc.pitt.edu/compserv/documents.htm>.

CSSD documents available on our rack include documentation for dial-up access (both Mac and PC) and Mulberry. These and other CSSD documents are available on-line from: <http://technology.pitt.edu/documentation/index.html>.

## Computing Services Staff Roster

Karen Bassett, Manager	Room 508A, x4-7037
Gary Wilde, Manager	Room 506A, x4-7042
Eric Fussenegger, Systems Analyst	Room 507, x4-7060
Jo-Anne Krevy, Systems Analyst	Room 507, x4-7060
Shari Kubitz, Systems Analyst	Room 504, x4-2881
Tom Simunich, Help Desk Coordinator	Room 506, x4-7033
Jeff Flotta, Student Operator	Room 506, x4-7033
Chris Huber, Student Operator	Room 506, x4-7033
Zac McCoy, Student Operator	Room 506, x4-7033

