

The DTH — keeping up with the times

This is the second of two articles on desktop publishing.

By **JIM GREENHILL**

Staff Writer

Back in the fall of 1984 a visitor to the offices of The Daily Tar Heel walked through a newsroom containing aging typewriters. By the end of the school year, those typewriters were gone and student journalists were using a new \$140,000 computer system. Four years later that system, too, is gone.

At the beginning of this summer, The Daily Tar Heel replaced its Vartypewriter EPICS system with a combination of IBM and Macintosh products. The paper sold the old system for \$15,000 "and I consider that a real good deal," said DTH Director Kevin Schwartz.

Few were interested in buying the five-year-old system, Schwartz said.

"It was a good thing at the time," said Bill Leslie, one of the paper's two production coordinators. The Vartypewriter system was state of the art technology when it was bought and the DTH got a good deal, he said. Its importance was that it gave the DTH

control of production, he said.

The Vartypewriter system was based on proprietary technology, Leslie said, in which there was no access to programming. "It meant you were locked into a single vendor and you had no compatibility with other systems," Leslie said. "The bottom line was that it was terribly expensive."

Incompatibility with other systems meant that it was impossible for the DTH to have Associated Press wire stories feed into the system, or for reporters to type in stories from a remote location, or for a modem to be used to link into the growing number of national data bases, Leslie said.

The service contract alone on the old system was 10 percent of the purchase price every year, Leslie said. He attributed the high costs to the limited market products like the EPICS system had and to clients' dependency on the manufacturer for service and supplies.

"Those kind of costs kill, especially small companies like the DTH," he said.

For around \$60,000 — less than half the price of the previous system

— the DTH has bought a system that is larger (12 EPICS editorial terminals were replaced with 15 IBM Personal System/2 Model 25 editorial terminals) and more versatile.

"If you look at the industry as a whole, we've moved from being right behind to being right on the forefront," Schwartz said.

The new system allows the paper to capture wire copy, edit it and lay it out on screen. In the future, a sports reporter covering a Tar Heel basketball game in Atlanta, Ga., will be able to type his story straight into the system from his hotel bedroom. Using modems, the DTH can access national data bases.

"It's going to profoundly affect the way that newspapers gather information," Leslie said. "The smallest newspaper in Podunk, Wis., can do research on a major story."

Production costs have fallen, but quality has improved. "Our costs are now 10 percent of what they were," said Stacy Wynn, DTH production coordinator.

Instead of typesetting galleys in a costly machine that required constant

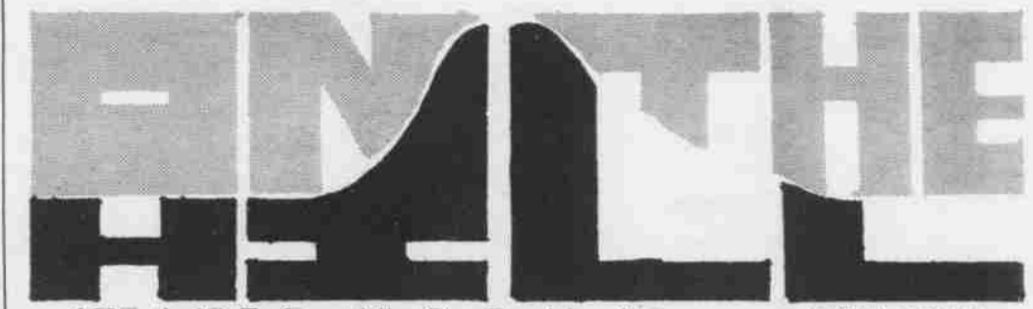
maintenance and expensive chemicals, the newspaper is now laid out on a large Macintosh screen using Aldus PageMaker. The whole page of editorial copy is then printed out on a laser printer and pasted up on the pages with the advertisements.

The new laser printer is a Vartypewriter product. Companies like Vartypewriter are responding to the obsolescence of the old systems by introducing proprietary software for PC systems and compatible support products like the new printer, Schwartz said.

And training has become easier. "You can't get through this University anymore without using a computer, even if it's just to write a paper," Schwartz said. "By the time someone comes in to be a writer, it's likely they've already used an IBM or a Macintosh."

In a short time, The Daily Tar Heel has come a long way from beat-up typewriters to high-tech typesetters.

Or, as Leslie said, "Five years ago this was still a dream."



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Restaurants

Speaking of Mom and Dad, if you have their credit card (or just a fat wallet), dress up and take the limo to La Residence, a private Rosemary Street home converted into a French restaurant. It's very expensive and gives you shivers just walking by the place. Fortunately, they have opened up a new, less expensive section of the restaurant, a cafe, which offers casual, indoor or outdoor dining, excellent food and wonderful atmos-

phere.

Going from the sublime to the ridiculous, what to do when you've got that late night, buzz-induced craving? You hit Hector's or Time-Out, that's what. Hector's, a Chapel Hill tradition since 1969, offers greasy but great burgers which are perfect for a 2 a.m. snack. Always, always get their double-cheeseburger on pita (with chili), but have plenty of napkins on hand. Time-Out is famous for its

chicken and biscuits. Get a chicken and cheese biscuit and argue with Billy, the cook who has achieved a great local following, while staring at all the former UNC athletes adorning the walls.

A lot of fine eateries have been left off this list, but that can't be helped. Remember, don't study so hard that you end up eating all your meals on campus and thus forget to treat your palate properly.

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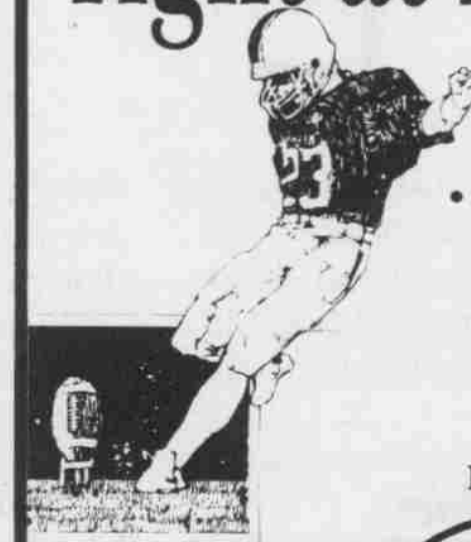
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