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Most college students cannot live without using computers

By Sarah Barrett
 Staff Writer

Computer. The word alone is taboo for some college students. For others it calls to mind a tool they can't live without. No matter how college students view computers, they will, in most cases, have to use them at least once before graduating.

"I don't think you can get through here without using a computer," said Linwood Futrelle, manager of the University's microcomputing labs.

A lot of professors don't require students to use computers as much as they encourage it, he said. In many classes, working on a computer is not required, but students can't do work without it.

Since the Microcomputing Support Center started in 1985, the number of students using computers has grown dramatically. In 1985, students signed to use computers 7,400 times in the two MSC computer labs then in existence, Futrelle said.

This past fiscal year, students signed in 183,000 times at the 10 MSC-staffed labs, he said. So far, students have signed in 140,000 times in the nine months of this fiscal year, he said.

The MSC and the Academic Computing Service were recently reorganized into the single department of the Office of Information Technology. The MSC-handled microcomputers and the Academic Computing Service handled the mainframes.

The 10 staffed OIT labs and the 14 unstaffed residence hall labs house about 400 computers and are available for any student to use, Futrelle said. About 45 percent of the computers are IBM PCs, and 55 percent are Macintosh, he said.

If not at the University, students will definitely need computer experience in the job world, said Danny Martschenko, training manager of OIT User Services.

Despite the increasing role of computers in society, some students have never used a computer before.

"The initial fear of using a computer is what shys most people from using it," Martschenko said. A lot of people think it's too late to learn, but it isn't, he said.

OIT User Services, located on the fourth floor of Hanes Hall, offers year-round training for a lot of major software packages for IBM and Macintosh computers, he said. There are classes geared toward writing papers and reports, and everybody writes papers, Martschenko said. One of his students called the classes the best fringe benefit on this campus, he said.

Each course is two hours long, and OIT puts out a monthly schedule of the courses. Students can go to OIT User Services and get their names on a mailing list to receive the monthly information. They must register for the courses and can do this by calling 962-1171. There are a lot of people on the mailing list, Martschenko said, but most of them are University staff and faculty, not students.

He said not as many students participate in the classes as he would like,

because many students are not aware that these classes are available to them.

Most people probably are not shocked by the idea of using computers to do homework, to find a job or even as a career, but using computers to improve one's social life is pretty unbelievable.

One aspect of computers that can serve a social purpose is electronic mail. Electronic mail, commonly called E-mail, is a system by which people communicate electronically instead of using voice or paper, Futrelle said.

To use the University's E-mail system, students need to get a free mail ID and information from OIT data entry supervisor, Louise Clayton, in 35 Phillips Hall, he said. Then they can go to a computer lab with E-mail or hook their computer into the networking system that can connect computers from all over the world.

To communicate with E-mail, people type messages on the computer and transfer them to a person's account where that person can read them. The messages are stored in the account, and no one can read them except the receiver.

E-mail is easier than chasing a person on the phone every day, Futrelle said.

Martschenko said it was possible to talk to anyone in the world with E-mail, and it's free.

E-mail also serves a practical purpose. Students who have it can subscribe to different services, many of which are free. For example, they can electronically get information about courses and seminars, and they can receive the OIT class schedule.

Ruth Anderson, a senior computer science major from Winston-Salem, said she found out that she was admitted to the graduate schools through E-mail, and she used it to find out about the departments at the schools.

Most professors, graduate students and upper-level computer science students have E-mail, she said. "It's a great way for professors to tell you about homework."

Students who do have computer knowledge can use it to make money while they're still in school.

OIT employs about 100 students, Futrelle said. The salary for jobs at OIT ranges from \$4.50 per hour to \$8 per hour, depending on the student's computer knowledge, he said.

Students may also look for computer-related jobs in other departments on campus, he said.

Leslie Malone, a senior from Durham, works for OIT in Wilson Library. Her job consists of entering data and documenting for computer programs, and she updates and maintains the campus information center called INFO, she said.

Students may get information about the campus from INFO at Davis Library, Undergraduate Library and South Building, she said.

Seniors or graduate students tired of looking for a job after graduation or baffled about where to look can use a computer to help them in their search.

Any senior or graduate student registered with the University Career Plan-

ning and Placement Service can access the Automated Job Hot Line for free, UCPPS director Marcia Harris said.

This hot line was developed four years ago with a grant from the Parents' Association, she said.

UCPPS was the first placement center in the country to establish a program like this and won an award for it, she said.

Students may access the hot line on any touch-tone telephone by calling 962-CTPS, Harris said.

When the job seeker calls the hot line, a computer matches his skills and interests with the requirements and openings of jobs stored in the computer, she said.

Despite the benefits of E-mail, a lot of people don't use it.

Futrelle said this happened because people don't know it's available, and they don't know what they have to do to get it.

Perhaps the most obvious way students use computers socially is with video games.

Zach Nelson, a sophomore music and history major from Wyckoff, N.J., had competitions with all of his suitmates in Teague Residence Hall during his freshman year. They played the game Risk, and the competitions got to be very big, lasting hours at a time, Nelson said.

"We'd have a party, turn the computer on, and things would go from there," he said.

Nelson, an avid computer user, said he doesn't write anything anymore.

"It's faster for me to type than write, and I use the computer for everything I would use a pencil for."

An unusual way Nelson uses his computer is to write music. As a member of the Clef Hangers, UNC's all-male a cappella group, Nelson has begun to arrange music on his computer.

He said he programs notes on the computer. The computer then sends these programmed notes to a processor that he hooks up to it. The processor accepts the computer program and transforms the programmed notes into music played by almost any musical instrument.

Nelson said writing music on the computer saved him a lot of time because it allowed him to find mistakes in the music before playing it for the Clef Hangers.

After being introduced to the wonderful world of computers, students may wonder when they should buy one.

"If you're going to buy a computer, you should buy it here because you can't get it cheaper," Martschenko said.

He said he worked in the computer industry before working at OIT, and the industry had the hardest time competing with school discount prices.

The University's Ram Shop computer store sells Macintosh, IBM and Zenith computers and sells about 1,500 computers a year, said employee Robert Ward.

The manufacturers of the computers offer students a discount of about 25 percent off the retail price, he said.

GRADUATION 1991



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 Address _____
 Phone: Day _____ Night _____

Please circle the date desired:
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Please indicate preferred time: _____
Please indicate the earliest and latest acceptable times:
 Between _____ and _____
 (Dinner hours 5:00 to 10:30 pm Lunch 12:00 to 3:00 pm)

A deposit of \$8.00 times the number reserved is requested as a guarantee.
 Number in party _____ x \$8.00 Amount of deposit \$ _____
 Payment method (circle): MC VISA Check
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