

January 2000

This page displays an up-to-date listing of changes and events in the Computer Center. We'll also place notices here regarding computer updates, scheduled events, or problems that may affect our users.

January 10, 2000

Y2K Update

MSU has not had any Y2K related problems reported to the Computer Center. You may have heard many people talking about Y2K as a non-event. That is not true, Y2K problems did exist. Computer professionals did a very good job of making sure the problems were fixed and did not interrupt computer processing. At MSU, our Y2K Task Force has been working since February, 1997 to make sure MSU was ready for Y2K. We conducted an inventory of nearly all equipment on campus and determined if each item of equipment had a date dependency. We looked at computers, fax machines, printers, network equipment and even CMU video machines. MnSCU awarded MSU a final 'green' status in November 1999. The Computer Center worked closely with the Physical Plant in making sure we were ready. MSU worked closely with the city of Moorhead and the Red Cross to make sure the community was ready. The best result of the preparation is that we now have a much better disaster readiness plan in place at MSU.

On December 31, 1999 several MSU employees were on duty on campus. We watched several computer systems roll into the new year with no problem. Even the Data General computer rolled to 2000 with no problem. We did learn later that some of the DG applications did not work after 12/31/1999. Calendar, for instance, did not work. Any possible Y2K problems should be reported to the MSU Computer Center.

BR 161 Computers Relocated

Over Thanksgiving break, the Computer Center replaced the computers in BR 161 with new Gateway computers. Funding for the replacement came from our Y2K budget reserve and from academic affairs. Our policy is to relocate computers into other areas. Therefore, during the Christmas break, we redistributed the computers from BR 161 to other campus locations. Five computers went to general maintenance worker (GMW) locations to be used with the new campus scheduling program (EMS). Other EMS scheduling locations were Nemzek, Art, and Speech Theatre. Ten stayed in CSIS to be used in a networking class lab. Two were used to replace very old computers in Administrative Affairs while two more were used as replacements in the Physical Plant. Six were used as replacements in MA 168 which is used by several campus departments. Two will be used to replace old computers for the Box Office reservation system.

Finally, we took the best of these older computers and replaced non-Y2K compliant computers. Four are going to the Write Site, one went to Art to work as a FAX machine

and we are keeping a few 486 computers to use when 486 computers in CB 212 crash.

MNSTATE.EDU

Over a year ago, the Computer Center registered the domain name MNSTATE.EDU expecting a campus name change. When President Barden announced the change this fall, we were ready with our new domain. We configured our routers and domain name servers to accept either mnstate.edu or moorhead.msus.edu as our domain.

This means that mhd1 mail users may now start using the new domain in their e-mail address. Les Bakke's address is now either bakke@mnstate.edu or bakke@mhd1.moorhead.msus.edu. Our web page may now be accessed by www.mnstate.edu also. We will continue to support the two domains until all computer address have been changed to the new domain. We expect that to happen by Fall, 2000.

Frick 255 Remodeling

Over Christmas break, the Physical Plant remodeled the computer lab in FR 255. The floor was repaired, new carpet installed and new computer connections installed. We also reloaded software on all the lab computers.

Data General Shut Down

The Data General (DG) computer used by many administrative offices was shut down for the last time on January 7, 2000. Ron Sonnenberg reformatted all data drives the same day. We plan on selling the computer to a salvage company therefore the data had to be removed. This week, we will be removing the computer to make room for a new MnSCU regional computer.

On-line Directory Update

MSU's on-line directory found at <http://www.moorhead.msus.edu/home/directory/index.htm> now has MNSTATE.EDU as the new address domain. Over the weekend, the Computer Center updated all directory e-mail addresses. If any employee or student had an e-mail address with mhd1.moorhead.msus.edu as the domain, we changed it to mnstate.edu. You may want to check your own address in the on-line directory and verify that it worked for you. A number of employees and students use e-mail addresses other than mhd1. Those should all be still listed. If you had an e-mail address based on a Novell server such as mhdow or mhdho, you should contact the Computer Center or Human Resources to have it changed. You can check your current directory e-mail address at the on-line site listed above.

New Business Cards

Related to the new e-mail domain, many employees have asked for new business cards. MSU has a committee working on a new logo for Minnesota State University Moorhead.

They expect to have their work done during Spring term. Until the new logo is approved and announced, please do NOT request new business cards unless the current one has errors or you have no cards left. Once the new logo is available, we will start printing cards with the new logo and new address.

Address Book Changes

We've been asked about changing address book entries in Netscape to reflect the new e-mail address domain. We are attempting to find a easy method to make these changes. If we find an easy method we will notify the campus via e-mail. However, if you would like to make the changes now, you can open your address book and make the e-mail change for each individual.

New Dial-up Service

Last Friday, January 14, 2000 Onvoy (formerly MRNet) was on campus making the final installation of phone lines for a new dial-up service. The Computer Center is currently testing the service. We expect to have an announcement next week on how individuals may sign-up for the service. This is not a free service but it very competitive with other ISP (Internet Service Provider) services in the community. The service will include e-mail and web services.

Slow Internet and Web Service

As many of you already know, we are experiencing very slow Internet and web service outside of Moorhead. We have 50% service at the present time. The Computer Center is working with Intertec in resolving the problem. We have identified one T1 circuit as the problem. US West is also assisting in resolving the problem. We hope to have full service restored today, January 19, 2000.

On Wednesday, January 19, US West found and fixed the problem with our DS3 line to St. Paul. Normal Internet speed was restored by mid-afternoon. The problem was finally traced to a small piece of plastic on the US West fiber connection. Although we don't know how long the plastic was on the fiber connector, we do know that on Monday it caused the fiber to go dark.

E-mail Problems on mhd1 Fixed

We had a tape drive go bad on mhd1, our e-mail server. We have a maintenance contract which paid for the replacement tape drive. The tape drive was given an ID number the same as one of the disk drives, causing the disk drive to malfunction. We requested a replacement disk drive and were planning on restore data from tape backups. However when installing the new disk drive, we found the ID problem. After giving the tape drive a different ID, the disk drive came back on-line with all the data still available.

~ No longer needed in front of account names.

Last March a major web server update was completed on WWW. New Web software made it so that ~ (tildes) were no longer needed in front of account names. We did make it so that if a ~ was used it would still go to the correct site with a warning that this redirect would not be permanent. In March, WWW web users were notified to start changing their web addresses on business cards, publications, and links so that the ~ was no longer shown. Over Christmas break, the temporary redirection of the ~ accounts was removed. Most users were prepared for this transition so there were no major problems. If anyone is still experience problems with ~ accounts, please contact the web master in the Computer Center.

New Web Name

We will debut a new web site for Minnesota State University Moorhead over Spring break 2000. Along with the name change, we will also be giving the web site a new look and we will be switching to the new domain name, www.mnstate.edu. After the new web site is available, users of WWW will be asked to make sure all of the links on their pages reflect the new domain name.

MNSCU1 Upgrade

MnSCU has developed a plan for upgrading the regional computer. Some of the tasks have already been completed, all should be finished by July 1, 2000. The overall objective is to replace the current server with a super-fast computer with a code name of 'Wildfire'. The current MNSCU1 is a Alpha 4100.

In January, a new Direct Access Storage Device (DASD) subsystem was installed. This installation allowed us to better distribute the load for all of the regional databases. Also delivered and installed was a GS140 computer. The GS140 is being leased until Wildfire is installed. The GS140 approximately doubles the processing speed of MNSCU1. The GS 140 is clustered with the older 4100. Also delivered but not yet connected is a new UPS system for the MnSCU computers. We expect the UPS to be installed in February, 2000.

When Wildfire arrives and is installed, it will become the regional server. The 4100 will become the replicated database server. The GS140 will be returned to Compaq/Digital. The VAX 4700 which is the current replicated server will be disconnected.

We will also be installing a Rdb Hot Standby feature to the region. Hot Standby will update the replicated database within a fraction of a second of when the production database is updated. This will allow us to run real-time reports from the replicated server. Only processes that update or change data will run on the production server.

You can read more about Wildfire at <http://www.digital.com/alphaserver/news/idc>

Web Based Instruction

In February, MnSCU will release a RFP (Request for Proposal) for software that will assist

faculty to create and manage web course content. A typical package would have chat sessions, e-mail connection, testing, grade book functions and course development tools. MnSCU expects to receive several proposals. After evaluation, MnSCU expects to recommend a few for MnSCU web-based course instruction. MnSCU, working with the vendor, will develop an interface between the recommended package(s) and student data. As soon as the RFP is released, we will add information to this site.

Scheduling Software

MnSCU has purchased Universal Algorithms Series 25 software. The software contains two applications; class room scheduling (Schedule 25) and event scheduling (Resource 25). Currently MSU uses the MnSCU class room scheduling software. Last summer, MSU purchased EMS scheduling. We also reviewed Resource 25 and found it lacking in a couple areas. MSU computer staff, working with campus scheduling personnel will review Resource 25 to see if we want to change. The advantage of Resource 25 is that MnSCU will be writing an interface between it and MnSCU software.

Software License Agreements - MnSCU

MnSCU will be renewing software agreements with major vendors. Software license renewals include Microsoft, NETg and Novell. MSU uses all three of these agreements to purchase campus software.

Electronic Data Interchange (EDI)

EDI is scheduled to be used by multiple areas within MnSCU. The first area will be the electronic transmission of transfer students transcripts between and among MnSCU and other Minnesota educational institutions. The second application will be to process electronically financial business (purchasing, ordering, and invoicing). MnSCU's goal is to have this in place by the end of summer, 2000.

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Questions or problems regarding this web site should be directed to bakke@mnstate.edu.

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