1996

UA8 Information Technology Update

WKU Information Technology

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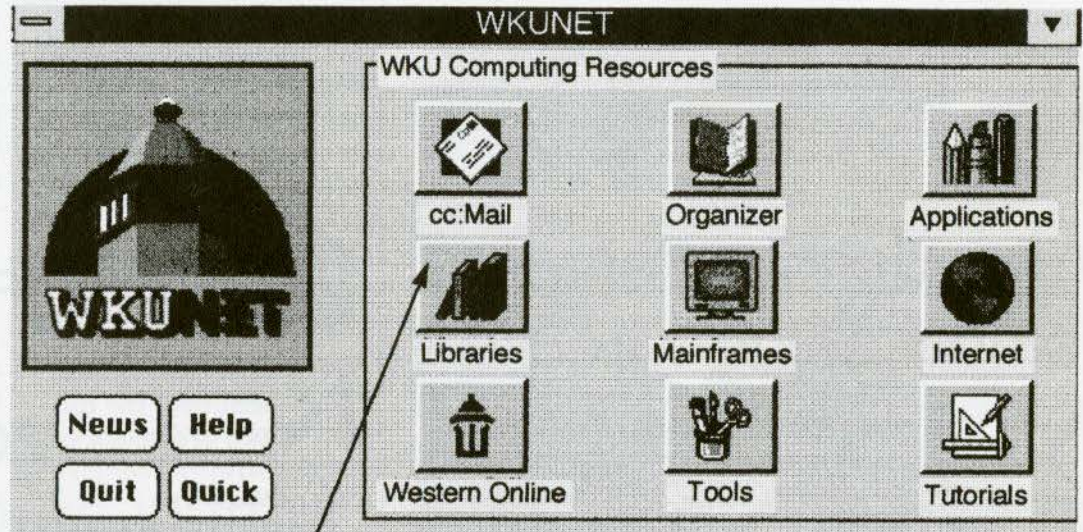
Introducing WKUNET

Western's campus-wide computer network, WKUNET, is now in use by over 700 faculty and staff members, some 200 student computer lab work stations, and over 100 students connected from their residence hall rooms.

The network is expected to grow to over 1,200 faculty and staff as the campus wiring is completed. WKUNET is an aggregation of all campus computing resources, Internet, e-mail, the library, and main frame services, through an easy-to-use graphical front end. Graphical interfaces have also been developed for Windows users for the library, financial and student information systems and for CD-ROM access.

Senior programmer analyst, Kerry Moorman, has written the WKUNET interfaces providing much of the convenience inherent in the network.

"The key is what you deliver and how you can access those services," said Dr. Charles Anderson.

Users can access most services by using a mouse

WKUNET

WKU Computing Resources

cc:Mail | Organizer | Applications

Libraries | Mainframes | Internet

Western Online | Tools | Tutorials

News | Help

Quit | Quick

Guide to icons:

■ cc:Mail - communicate and share information using electronic mail
■ Organizer - manage appointments, addresses and other personal information
■ Applications - productivity software, Word Perfect and Lotus Smart Suite
■ Libraries - search library catalogs such as TOPCAT, Library of Congress, access CD-ROMs
■ Mainframes - access campus mainframe host computers such as VAX and the IBM for FRS. and SIS.
■ Internet - direct access to a world-wide network of computers providing hypermedia, programs and data
■ Western Online - access schedule bulletin, phonebooks, campus news and the College Heights Herald
■ Tutorials - learn to use campus standard software

Computer courses

For those people who aren't sure if they're ready to drive on the superhighway of Internet, or those who need more information about Lotus 123 spreadsheets — never fear, computer training is near.

The following classes for faculty and staff will be offered by the Microcomputing Support Center. All classes begin at 1 p.m. in Room 313 WAB; call 745-5382 to reserve a seat.

Beginning Level

Introduction to WKUNET - 3 hours. Nov. 3, 10, 17, 21. An introductory course that covers the usage of the WKUNET interface with strong emphasis on cc:Mail, and the Internet. Designed to have new users fully trained in one session.

Advanced Level

1. *Lotus 123* - 2 hours. Nov. 1, 2. Designed to offer experienced Lotus users tips and techniques for WKU office applications.

2. *Internet* 1.5 hours. Nov. 6, 7, 8, 9. Making the most of features available in Netscape for Internet usage.

3. *World Wide Web* - 2 hours. Nov. 13, 14, 15, 16. Learn to create professional HTML documents compatible with campus standards. Assumes some word processing experience.

WKU is driving on the superhighway

Western Kentucky University alumni, friends and off-campus students in Barren, Daviess, Hardin and Warren counties are now able to navigate the Internet by subscribing to a new service that MCI Communications offers.

Through Western On-Line, subscribers can navigate the vast Internet to thousands of information destinations such as NASA, the Library of Congress, the White House and WKU. The service is also available in several other counties where MCI has established locations.

The service is competitively priced at $12.00 per month for 15 hours of access for students, faculty, staff, and alumni and .75 per hour thereafter. Friends of WKU will be charged $17.00, according to MCI representative John O'Bryan.

MCI will underwrite the entire cost of establishing the service, provide subscribers the necessary software and a support line. Subscribers must furnish their own modem (14.4 kbps or greater) and will need to have a windows-based PC or Macintosh.

As Western On-Line is established, the university's own destination on the Internet's World Wide Web, the popular graphical-based service, will substantially expand to include access to the university's library catalog, information about most departments, schedule bulletins, the University catalog, an event calendar, a virtual tour and many other services.

Western OnLine has been expanded to include the WKU Catalog, Factbook, and home pages of several departments including Biology and Geography and Geology, according to MCS Director Margaret Cline.

After delays, campus is now being wired

Yes, we planned to have the campus networking complete by the beginning of the fall semester. That goal was announced two years ago, and we expect the networking to be substantially complete during the fall semester of 1995.

A contract was awarded to Johnson Controls in May to wire six buildings by September 1. They projected the completion of some of the buildings by July 1. Not one building was complete by the deadline.

However, as of this writing, three contractors are at work on completion of the networking project. In addition to the Johnson Controls project, Pomeroy Computer Resources, Inc. is completing the fiber and coaxial backbone, and a contract has been awarded to the Fishel Company to wire the eight remaining buildings — L.T. Smith, Diddle, Tate Page, Science and Technology Hall, Helm, Cravens, the Kentucky Building, and Jones Jaggers. Those buildings will be wired in that order with WKUNET connections established for faculty and staff as soon as individual buildings are finished.

By designing the network ourselves, we have realized substantial savings, avoiding engineering fees and the time required to get a firm assigned by the state.

Dave Beckley, Data Communications Supervisor, has been responsible for much of the design work with the assistance of television chief engineer Jeff Martin on the video component. University Architect Paul Morgan has had overall responsibility for the design and supervision of the project for the University.

INTRODUCING... Robert August

Robert August has assumed the duties of director of Administrative Computing at Western.

August, who started at WKU in July, is responsible for all administrative computing applications, including student, human resources, financial aid and other information systems, as well as the university-wide networking group.

"Bob August brings a strong combination of experience in university computing and academic credentials to the position," said Dr. Charles Anderson, assistant vice president for Finance and Administration.

August has been director of Computer Services at Salisbury State University in Salisbury, Md.; director of Computer and Information Services at Armstrong State College in Savannah, Ga.; and deputy director for Plans and Programs in the Computer Center at Vanderbilt University.

He holds bachelors degrees in business management and computer science from the University of Maryland; a master's degree in management and supervision from Central Michigan University; and MBA in information systems from Regis University.

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Interactive television expands this fall

The university's interactive television network has expanded to a total of 11 classrooms this fall.

Three new university owned and operated rooms are available at Glasgow, Owensboro, and Russellville.

As a result of partnerships between the university and the Taylor County Board of Education (Taylor County High School), the Russell County Board of Education (Russell County High School), and the Elizabethtown Independent School System (Elizabethtown High School) three additional classrooms are available.

The new rooms include teach-back capabilities which permit faculty to originate their classes from the remote locations. Each classroom also includes four networked computers.

A total of 23 classes are offered this fall, with 747 off-campus enrollments, which clearly places Western in the lead of all Kentucky institutions in its use of interactive television for the delivery of extended campus instruction.

Students log in over 800,000 hours in labs

A $10 student computing fee was instituted in August, 1990.

What have the students received for their money? Eight computer laboratories with a total of 220 student computers, carrels and chairs, local area networks, printers, and software operated by Academic Computing and Research Services.

In addition, fee dollars supported operations costs including maintenance on hardware, software updates, supplies and salaries for student workers who kept these facilities open for over 60,000 hours since 1991.

Less than one-half of the total cost of supporting student microcomputing is covered by the fee, the rest comes out of the Academic Computing budget, said Dr. Jay Sloan, Academic Computing and Research Services director.

The true measure of value is in student use. Since 1991, students have put in 827,000 hours of use on these computers.

Student lab use totalled 217,890 hours in 1995 (up 10%) with 778,960 pages of free laser printing. Further improvement of student computing services is expected as a result of the assignment of full time supervisors to the Thompson and Grise Hall labs.

Microcomputing Support increases support by 44%

During 1994-95, requests for support from the Microcomputing Support Center increased by 44 percent to a total of 17,971 support events. Sixty seven percent of these requests came from faculty and academic departments.

Training was provided for 748 people during the year on the use of WKUNET and other resources. Training classes will increase significantly during 1995.

Margaret Cline, MCS Director, has led the effort of connecting new users to WKUNET, and meeting their support and training needs.

Photo by Linda S. Morris

These "students" learned new computer skills this summer during classes offered by the Microcomputing Support Center: (L to R) Steve Owens, Pat Vincent, Anna Jo Johnson, Marsha Skipworth and Jeff Jones, instructor.

Radio, TV: One director

Dave Wilkinson was appointed to the position of Director of Public Broadcasting and Educational Television Services effective July 1, 1995. He has managed the Public Radio Service since 1980, and had served for the past year as Interim Director of Educational Television.

"By combining the overall management of the two services, we can continue to maximize economies of scale and synergies between these two groups" said Dr. Charles Anderson, Assistant Vice President for Finance and Administration. "This is all the more appropriate in view of impending cuts in public broadcasting funding."

Jane Moore has been promoted to Assistant Director for Public Radio and Jerry Barnaby has been named as Interim Assistant Director for Educational Television.

Public radio celebrates 15 years

Western's public radio service is celebrating 15 years of broadcasting this year.

The flagship station, WKYU-FM, went on the air in November, 1980. Since then the university has added three transmitters: WDCL-FM in Somerset signed on in 1985, and in 1990,

WKPB-FM in Henderson and WKUE-FM in Elizabethtown began broadcasting. These four stations now cover almost 60% of Kentucky and portions of Tennessee and Indiana.

Collectively known as Western's Public Radio, this "network" provides listeners with programming not found on com-

mercial stations — classical music, in-depth news and public affairs, jazz and Kentucky's own bluegrass music.

The news department annually receives state and national awards for excellence in reporting. One reason it has been so successful is its access to faculty and staff here at Western.

TOPLINE helps with registration

By pressing keys on a touch-tone telephone from any location, students can now register for classes or drop/add classes.

A pilot touch-tone registration program, called TOPLINE, was implemented in mid-October for advance registration for the spring '96 semester. This involves about 25% of the student population.

"This is a popular form of registration around the country," said Registrar Freda Eggleston.

The primary goal of telephone registration is to provide convenience to students. Students will not be restricted to regular office hours, nor endure long lines to register or to drop/add courses.

When a student dials in, he or she will be prompted to enter data at specific times; therefore, no training is needed. Complete instructions are included in the schedule bulletin. The system uses data in the Student Information System (SIS) to determine who is eligible to register.

The system will permit eligible students to register on their assigned day or thereafter. Students with hold flags will not be permitted to register until the holds are cleared.

Future enhancements will include:

■ Payment fees by credit card

■ Bulletin board service

■ Ability to access grades at the end of the semester.

WKUNET: Use mouse to point, click

to point to a graphic and click without having to type a long series of commands.

WKUNET is unique in that the system was designed in-house from the ground up.

WKUNET supports both Microsoft Windows and Macintosh platforms. The interface programs were written at Western so they could be completely customized.

"The interface is dynamic — it will change from time to time to

offer new features," said Margaret Cline, Microcomputing Support Director.

On-campus users can use the WKUNET as a way of "surfing" the Internet. They can also access, with the proper clearances, data stored on Western's mainframe computers, such as budget information and student records. Electronic mail, or e-mail, allows users to communicate with others on campus as well as anyone in the world with an e-mail address.

Other services available on the WKUNET include event calendars, class schedule bulletins, the College Heights Herald student newspaper, telephone directories, a campus tour, weather forecasts and other campus information.

Faculty, staff and students with a computer connection in their offices or residence hall rooms can now plug their computers into WKUNET. Western provides the necessary software and network connection.

Keeping Connected

Linda Johnson, Finance and CIS Assistant Professor, uses the WKUNET connection in her office.

Photo by Amethel Parel-Sewell