



IS

News about information systems throughout



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What Will Be: A Look at Life in the Information Age

Lee Ridgway

In his wide-ranging book, *What Will Be: How the New World of Information Will Change Our Lives* (HarperEdge), Michael Dertouzos weighs in with his views on the twenty-first-century Information Age. Dertouzos looks at the future from a special vantage point: as Director of MIT's Laboratory for Computer Science, he has been present at the creation of many of the technology developments that have brought us to where we are today, as well as those that may take us beyond 2001.

Dertouzos, a good storyteller, builds his narrative on whatever resources he needs to establish context, make his points, and keep the reader interested. This means that we get not only predictions, but also history, philosophy, and anecdotes. Given Dertouzos' role at the forefront of computer research, education, and policy-making, many of his stories are autobiographical. It is this personal experience that lends credence to even the most far-out of Dertouzos' visions, for he has witnessed technological fantasy become reality in his labs.

The bulk of *What Will Be* presents new and often fantastic technology, its application to human lives, and our interactions with it. Examples include auto-cooks, Guardian Angel software that contains a person's complete medi-

cal history from birth, and the ability to experience a remote concert "live" from the comfort of your own living room. Automatization, which Dertouzos refers to frequently, will occur "when interconnected computers 'understand' enough about one another to work together." One example of automatization is electronic forms (e-forms). These will depend on industry consensus on terms - so that, for example, you could query any airline's reservation system and book a flight in a matter of seconds.

While provocative, and presented in scenarios that readers can relate to, many of these developments will be familiar to those who keep up with technological visionaries (for example, William Mitchell in *City of Bits* and Mark Stefik in *Internet Dreams*). What sets Dertouzos apart in this book is that he takes a realistic look at where we are and what may be possible. He also points out what is hype or unlikely to happen for decades.

The Information Marketplace

Dertouzos sees information technology exerting such a profound socioeconomic change on the world that it will equal in scale and impact the Industrial Revolutions of the mid-eighteenth and late-nineteenth centuries. The Industrial Revolution made possible the off-loading of muscle work onto machines. Similarly, the Information Revolution will off-load a considerable amount of brain work onto machines.

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WHAT WILL BE

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In Dertouzos' view, the centerpiece of the twenty-first century will be the Information Marketplace, where people and computers buy, sell, and freely exchange information and information services. In this marketplace, just about anything can be classified as information. Dertouzos uses clever examples to define what information is and how it can be thought of as a noun (e.g., a memo or database) or verb (e.g., an accountant's work on a tax return). The latter, which Dertouzos also calls "information work," is equivalent to physical labor during the Industrial Revolution – and he sees no fundamental difference between the economic value of physical and information work.

Accepting the possibility that huge numbers of physical things, events, and actions can be described as information leads to Dertouzos' Five Pillars of the Information Age. These Pillars, expanded upon in the book's Appendix, are his way of explaining in minimal terms what the new technologies of information are all about.

1. Numbers are used to represent all information.

2. These numbers are expressed with 1s and 0s.
3. Computers transform information by doing arithmetic on these numbers.
4. Communications systems move information around by moving these numbers.
5. Computer and communications systems combine to form computer networks. These are the basis of tomorrow's information infrastructures, which in turn are the basis for the Information Marketplace.

A Human Context

Dertouzos often discusses technology at great length before addressing its broader social and cultural implications. Many of the developments envisioned by Dertouzos have to do with very intimate, physical, and exotic interfaces and processes between human and machine. Such interactions raise serious ethical and moral questions. Dertouzos recognizes this, but does not probe these issues as fully as he examines the technology itself. Thorough discussion of these topics could fill another book.

One of Dertouzos' aims in *What Will Be*, very much related to his consideration of the human context for technology, is to reconcile what he sees as the

polarized views of technologists and humanists – what he calls the humie-techie split. The origins of the split are in the Enlightenment, when the pursuit of reason, scientific thinking, and technology became separated from the concerns of faith, morality, and the arts. This split became more pronounced during the Industrial Revolution and into the twentieth century. This polarization could be aggravated further by information technology, with its disregard for people's physical proximity and its disembodiment of reality into virtuality.

In the closing section of the book, "The Age of Unification," Dertouzos discusses the need to resolve the humie-techie split. In so doing, he reveals the roles faith and reason play in his own thinking about technology and life. He makes a strong case for how they can strengthen our thinking and actions if we learn to use them in concert. The humie-techie balance Dertouzos seeks in his own life needs to be extended to the larger world, where technological and social issues have become increasingly intertwined. In an optimistic, closing flourish, Dertouzos sees technology and humanity reunited and paving the way for greater understanding of ourselves. ☺

Connect to MITnet Information and Services via the Web

MITnet, the campus computer network, has transformed the way we work and study at MIT. Web access, e-mail, file transfer, access to library catalogs, and remote login all depend on its sturdy spine. ECAT, the Online Directory, and SAP documentation are just a few of the online services that MITnet makes possible.

Even so, MITnet isn't something most members of the community think about – after all, it's infrastructure. There are occasions, though, when you may need to deal with MITnet as a physical entity – for example, when requesting a network drop or host name, determining configuration settings, or checking network status. For these types of tasks, take advantage of the Web page at

<http://web.mit.edu/is/help/network/>

This page offers assorted information under the headings:

- IP Addresses and Host Names
- Ethernet Installations
- Network Status and Troubleshooting Tools
- Other Useful Information

Documents range from glossaries to rate information to troubleshooting guides. There are also several useful forms, including ones that let you:

- Check for a host name on MITnet
- Request one or more host names
- Request an MITnet Ethernet installation
- Get appropriate configurations for Eudora

Network Answers

The MITnet Web page is provided as a resource. You may still want to talk directly with a consultant about network-related issues. To do so, call the Computing Help Desk at x3-1104. ☺



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Eudora 3.0.2 Delivers a Parcel of New Features

Phyllis Galt

Eudora Pro, the e-mail program that runs on Macintoshes and PCs, has been available to the MIT community for about a year under a site license agreement with QUALCOMM, Inc. QUALCOMM recently released a new version, Eudora Pro 3.0.2.

This article highlights some of Eudora's new features and discusses installation issues at MIT. (For now, IS supports Eudora 3.0.2 only on the Macintosh; an installer for Windows is under development.)

What's New

Eudora Pro 3.0.2 has several new features that can help you manage your e-mail more effectively:

- **Active URL links.** If you receive e-mail that includes a URL for a Web site, Eudora automatically turns it into a link. Double-clicking on the link starts up your Web browser and opens the associated Web page. (The first time you do this, Eudora asks you to select a browser.)
- **A customizable toolbar.** Eudora's new toolbar lets you access frequently used commands with ease. You can choose from a set of icon styles, move the toolbar, and turn it off. You can also add and delete commands from the toolbar.
- **An Fcc option.** If you liked the Fcc (File carbon copy) option in Tech-Mail, you'll be happy to know that Eudora now has an equivalent option. When you create or respond to a message, you can turn the Transfer menu into an Fcc menu by clicking once in the Bcc field. You can then choose a mailbox in which to file a copy of your message.
- **Stationery files.** Eudora lets you save files as templates (Stationery) for later use. This is helpful if you send the same messages repeatedly. To create a Stationery file, use the Stationery option under the Save As... command while saving the text of an outgoing message. To access a Stationery file, use the New Message With command under the Message menu.



Eudora's toolbar gives you easy access to frequently used commands.

- **Interactive sorting.** If you've selected a sort criterion for a mailbox, new messages added to the mailbox are sorted dynamically. A new Group Subjects option under the Sort command lets you group messages in a mailbox that have the same subject.
- **Multiple signatures.** You can now create as many signatures as you like by choosing the New option under the Signatures command.
- **The ability to edit incoming messages.** If you need to add notes to an incoming message, you can do so by clicking on the pencil icon in the icon bar at the top of the message.
- **Address book.** The Nicknames feature has been expanded into an address book, where you can store postal addresses and phone and fax numbers, as well as e-mail addresses.
- **A Print One Copy command.** This command bypasses the usual Print dialog box and prints a single copy of an e-mail message.

New Mailbox Format

In addition to these new features, Eudora 3.0.2 has a more efficient mailbox format. In earlier versions, each mailbox had an associated table of contents (.toc) file. In Eudora 3.0.2, a mailbox and its associated table of contents are treated as one file.

If you're upgrading from an earlier version of Eudora, the Use old style ".toc" files setting, under Miscellaneous in the Settings... command, is turned on by default. Your mailboxes remain in the old format until you turn off this setting. Once you turn it off, each mailbox is converted the first time you use it. If you think you'll need to access your mailboxes with older versions of Eudora, leave this setting on; otherwise, turn it off and use the new, more efficient mailbox format.

How to Get Eudora 3.0.2

You can download the Eudora 3.0.2 installer and instructions for the Macintosh from the Web page at

<http://web.mit.edu/is/help/eudora/>

Unlike the installer for Eudora 2.1, this installer does not contain the actual files to be installed. Rather, during the installation process, it goes to the software distribution server, net-dist.mit.edu, and gets each of the files. If you are installing Eudora at home via Tether, make sure you have Tether running before and during installation. The process takes 25 to 30 minutes with a 28.8 Kbps modem and 50 to 55 minutes with a 14.4 Kbps modem.

If you're upgrading from an earlier version of Eudora, the installer finds and uses your existing settings. If the installation on your machine is for multiple users, the installer upgrades each user's settings file.

If you are installing Eudora for the first time, the installer steps you through a set of questions to customize Eudora for your use at MIT. It also lets you set up Eudora for multiple users.

Changes in Default Settings

Two default settings in Eudora 3.0.2 differ from those in version 2.1. Eudora 3.0.2 supports Hesiod, which automatically determines which post office (POP) server stores your incoming mail. With version 2.1, you had to find out which post office server stored your incoming mail and indicate it in the POP account setting.

The SMTP (Simple Mail Transfer Protocol) setting in Hosts under the Settings... command has been changed from "mit.edu" to "outgoing.mit.edu." This was done to prepare for possible changes in how MIT provides outgoing mail support to the community.

Getting Help

The Eudora installation includes a comprehensive *User Manual* in Portable Document Format. To view it, you need Acrobat Reader 3, which you can download for free from net-dist.mit.edu. It's in the directory /mit/macos7/web/acrobat-reader/current/.

Eudora also has extensive online help. If you have questions about Eudora 3.0.2 for the Macintosh, contact the Computing Help Desk at x3-1101 or <mac-help@mit.edu>. ☺

IS Recommends Open Transport/PPP for Macintosh Dialup

Albert Willis

If you use a Macintosh and connect to a network via dialup, it may be time to upgrade a related software component – your PPP (Point-to-Point Protocol) client. IS recommends that you use Open Transport/PPP 1.0 with MIT's Tether dialup service.

OT/PPP lets you connect your computer to remote TCP/IP networks such as MITnet and the Internet using a modem and the telephone system. It takes advantage of Apple's Open Transport networking architecture, and lets you use AppleScript to automate connecting and disconnecting.

Two New Control Panels

From the user perspective, OT/PPP consists of two new control panels: Modem and PPP.

The Modem control panel is a model of simplicity: you select the port to which the modem is connected (or, in the case of a laptop, the PC Card slot) and the modem model. OT/PPP uses what Apple is now calling modem scripts to handle the specifics of each modem. Apple Remote Access (ARA) users will recognize these as Communication Control Language (CCL) files. In fact, ARA 2.1 and OT/PPP 1.0 use the same CCLs. Unlike older versions of ARA, OT/PPP stores the CCLs in a folder called Modem Scripts, which resides in the Extensions folder in the System Folder.

The use of CCLs makes configuring a modem very easy: you select your modem from a pop-up menu in the Modem control panel. The associated CCL handles the details of making the connection, such as connection speed, initialization string, and whether to enable error correction. OT/PPP comes with CCLs for 38 different modems and ISDN adapters, including ones for the Motorola Power 28.8 and the Global Village Silver, Gold, and Mercury modems. If you are trying to use a modem for which OT/PPP doesn't have a CCL, check with the manufacturer. For the adventurous, Apple offers an unsupported utility for creating CCLs, called the Modem Script Generator.

The PPP control panel is where you enter your username, password, and dialup number for connecting to a PPP service. You can set options to get reminders that you are still connected and to start a PPP connection when an application such as Eudora or Netscape is launched.

You can also access OT/PPP's activity log from the PPP control panel. The log is useful if you want to know what goes on behind the scenes during a PPP connection. It also contains information that can help diagnose connection problems, should they arise.

System Requirements

To use OT/PPP 1.0 you need:

- A Macintosh with a 68030, 68040, or PowerPC processor
- Mac OS 7.5.3 or later
- At least 8MB of RAM
- Open Transport 1.1.1 or later

While IS recommends using OT/PPP 1.0 for connecting to Tether, it will continue to support MacPPP for machines that can't use Open Transport.

Getting OT and OT/PPP

You can download OT/PPP 1.0 and the latest version of Open Transport (1.1.2) from

<http://web.mit.edu/is/help/macos/>

(You can also download Macintosh system software from this site). If you have Mac OS 7.5.3 or 7.5.5, you should update to Open Transport 1.1.2 and then install OT/PPP 1.0. The installer for Mac OS 7.6 and 7.6.1 includes the option to install OT/PPP; if you have done this, all you need to do is download and install Open Transport 1.1.2.

An OT/PPP manual is available in Portable Document Format from

<http://web.mit.edu/is/help/macos/otppp.html>

Viewing this document requires the Acrobat Reader, which you can download for free from net-dist.mit.edu. In addition, Balloon Help and Apple Guide are well implemented in OT/PPP 1.0.

Questions?

If you have questions about installing or using OT/PPP, call the Computing Help Desk at x3-1101 or send e-mail to mac-help@mit.edu. ☺



This column presents news and tips from the consultants who staff the Computing Help Desk, x3-1104. Check out their Web home page at <http://web.mit.edu/helpdesk/>

Q I understand that MIT has a site license for the Macintosh operating system, including Mac OS 7.6. What does this latest version offer?

A Mac OS 7.6 (currently at version 7.6.1) is faster and more stable than its predecessors, and it combines several software components into a single installation. Key components include Open Transport 1.1.1, Open Transport PPP 1.0, Apple Remote Access 2.1, LaserWriter 8.4.1, and QuickTime 2.5.

Mac OS 7.6 also comes with an improved Extensions Manager and DataViz's MacLinkPlus program for translating between Macintosh and PC file formats.

To download Mac OS 7.6, go to <http://web.mit.edu/is/help/macos/>. For a list of Mac OS 7.6 features, check <http://support.info.apple.com/support/7.6.html>

Q I run Windows NT 4.0 on my PC. Can I put program shortcuts that I use frequently at the top of the Start menu where it's easier to find them?

A Yes, you can do this in both Windows NT 4.0 and Windows 95. By numbering these shortcuts (1-9), you can also launch them with a couple of keystrokes. Here's how.

Right-click on the Start button and select Open. Hold down the Shift key and double-click on the Programs folder. Copy frequently used program shortcuts to the Start menu by right-clicking and dragging them onto the Start menu folder in the left window, letting go, and selecting copy.

After copying the shortcuts, open the Start menu folder and rename each one by placing a number in front of its current name (e.g., 1 Eudora Pro). Close the window and open the Start menu by pressing the Windows key (or Ctrl+Esc). The programs you copied should appear at the top of your Start Menu in numerical order. Press a number to launch that item. ☺



Recommended Models for End-of-Year Purchases

Joanne Hallisey

June is a busy month at the MIT Computer Connection (MCC), as the end of the fiscal year draws near. In order to guarantee billing for FY 97 (June 21, 1997), departmental orders must be received at the MCC no later than June 10 for in-stock items.

If you are thinking of buying a new computer at this time, keep in mind that IS has selected a set of Macintosh and Dell desktop systems as recommended models for administrative work at MIT. These are listed to the right. You can upgrade the memory or display on any of these systems for an additional charge.

These same models are appropriate for student use. Graduating seniors in the market for a new computer are eligible to make purchases at the MCC through August 1997.

IS has also selected a set of recommended laptops, Ethernet adapters, and modems. While laptops are not equivalent to recommended desktop models for administrative work, they can approach the standard desktop system with additional memory and other upgrading.

Why Recommendations?

Many applications require significant power and graphics capabilities. Administrative machines should have at least 32MB of memory in order to support current versions of operating systems and simultaneously run several software applications such as Microsoft Word and Excel.

When you buy a recommended system, you can take full advantage of new administrative applications and work more compatibly with other desktop users at MIT. Recommendations also clarify buying decisions, hold down training and support costs, and help in planning equipment renewal cycles.

All of the recommended systems are fully compatible with MITnet and MIT's supported network applications, such as e-mail and remote access. In addition, the Computing Help Desk is familiar with these models and can help you with post-sales support.



Recommended Macintosh Desktop Models and Display

- *Power Macintosh 7300/200*
200MHz 604e processor, 32MB RAM, 2GB hard drive, 12x CD-ROM drive, Apple Design keyboard
M5543 MIT \$2443
 - *Power Macintosh 7300/180**
180MHz 604e processor, 16MB RAM, 2GB hard drive, 12x CD-ROM drive, Apple Design keyboard
M4946 MIT \$2082
- *Minimum of 32MB RAM recommended
- *Apple Multiple Scan 1710 Display*
17" Trinitron color display
M3322 MIT \$775

Recommended Macintosh PowerBooks

- *PowerBook 3400/200*
200MHz 603e processor, 16MB RAM, 2GB hard drive, 6x CD-ROM, 12.1" active-matrix SVGA color display
M4595 MIT \$5048
- *PowerBook 3400/180*
180MHz 603e processor, 16MB RAM, 1.3GB hard drive, 6x CD-ROM, 12.1" active-matrix SVGA color display
M4597 MIT \$4588
- *PowerBook 1400c/133*
133MHz 603e processor, 16MB RAM, 1GB hard drive, 6x CD-ROM, 11.3" SVGA color display
M5576 MIT \$3001

- *PowerBook 1400cs/117*
117MHz 603e processor, 12MB RAM, 750MB hard drive, 6x CD-ROM, 11.3" SVGA color display
M5292 MIT \$1932

Recommended Dell Desktop Models

- *Dell Optiplex GX Pro200*
200MHz P6 processor, 32MB RAM, 2GB hard drive, 8x CD-ROM, 15" Dell 800 HS color display, Space-saver keyboard, Windows NT 4.0
MIT \$2625
- *Dell Optiplex 5200 GXIM MMX*
200MHz Pentium processor, 32MB RAM, 3GB hard drive, 8x CD-ROM, 17" Dell 1000 HS color display, Space-saver keyboard, Windows NT 4.0
MIT \$2785
- *Dell Optiplex 5166 GXIM MMX*
166MHz Pentium processor, 32MB RAM, 2GB hard drive, 8x CD-ROM, 15" Dell 800 HS color display, Space-saver keyboard, Windows NT 4.0
MIT \$2175

Recommended Dell Laptop

- *Dell Latitude GX XPIP150 Bundle*
150MHz Pentium processor, 32MB RAM, 1MB VRAM, 2.1GB hard drive, 6x CD-ROM drive, 12.1" active-matrix SVGA color display
MIT \$4150

More Information

Check the Web pages listed below for more extensive product information. For details about configurations and accessories, contact the MCC at <mcc@mit.edu> or x3-7686, or visit their Web page at

<http://www-mcc.mit.edu/>

Information on the Web about Recommended Products

Recommended Macintosh Computers for Administrative Staff and Students

<http://web.mit.edu/desktop/mac97q4.html>

Macintosh Upgrade Recommendations for MIT Administrative Staff

<http://web.mit.edu/is/pubs/mc-14/>

Recommended PCs for Administrative Staff and Students

<http://web.mit.edu/desktop/pc97q4.html>

Recommended Ethernet Adapters

<http://web.mit.edu/desktop/ether.html>

Modems Suggested for Use at MIT

<http://web.mit.edu/desktop/modems.html>

Training Services to Offer Free Introductory Computer Courses

Jeanne Cavanaugh

As of July 1, IS Training Services will offer many of its previously fee-based introductory hands-on courses at no charge. This change in policy is the culmination of many years' work on the part of Training Services to bring more free training opportunities to the MIT community.

Free introductory courses include those on:

- Macintosh and Windows operating systems
- IS-recommended word processing, spreadsheet, and database applications – i.e., Introductions to Microsoft Word, Excel, and FileMaker
- Browsing the Web with Netscape

Registration will still be required for all free hands-on courses.

Meeting Demand

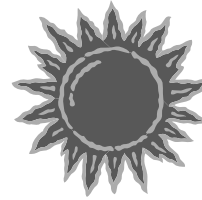
Training Services anticipates that this new “no-charge” policy will result in additional demand for introductory

courses. If you are interested in taking any of these courses, sign up early. Training Services may not be able to meet the increased demand for these courses during the next few quarters, although it will add extra sections for oversubscribed classes as resources allow.

Training Services still needs to charge for intermediate and advanced courses on Microsoft Word, Excel, and FileMaker, as well as on topics such as desktop and HTML publishing, presentation graphics, and non-supported products like Microsoft Access. These fees are used to help recover Training Lab expenses and instructor fees.

Other Free Offerings

Training Services will continue to offer a full complement of free Quick Start demo classes on topics such as Eudora, Word, Excel, and FileMaker. The free Technology Orientation for New Employees is also open to seasoned employees who have just started to use computers in their jobs. The Orientation session provides very basic information about the campus computing environment and related resources.



Redesigned Training Catalog

Each quarter, Training Services publishes a course catalog that is mailed to all MIT faculty and staff. The

Summer 97 Computer Training Catalog should arrive in campus mail the week of June 16.

Starting with the *Summer 97 Catalog*, courses will no longer be broken out by platform, but rather by software category (i.e., operating system, word processing programs, databases, and so on). Training Services welcomes your comments on this new organization; you can send them to Jeanne Cavanaugh at <cavan@mit.edu>.

Descriptions and scheduled dates for all IS hands-on courses, Quick Start demos, user group meetings, and other scheduled computer events are also available online at

<http://web.mit.edu/is/training>

Links from this page give detailed information on IS courses and allow you to register and pay (where applicable) electronically. ☺

IS Team Assesses Year 2000 Issues at MIT

Tim McGovern

You may have heard about the Year 2000 problem – now less than 1000 days away. This problem, which has to do with date compliance in computer programs, has become the focus of a great deal of attention and concern at institutions and companies around the world.

The problem is easy to describe. The date format that's in common use (in which 6/21/56 means June 21, 1956) won't be viable in the next century. Once we cross the 2000 mark, will 6/21/56 refer to 1956 or 2056?

One solution is to use four digits for the year. While this seems simple, the scope of reprogramming involved is enormous. All computers could potentially be affected – from desktop machines to major systems that MIT bought or implemented before the early 1990's. Some software will need

to be fixed, and all systems will require some degree of testing.

What's Happening at MIT

Some people at MIT have already begun work on their systems. Others have been assured by vendors that the software they use is Year 2000 compliant – although in most cases, no one has verified these vendor claims through testing.

IS has begun a project to measure MIT's exposure to the Year 2000 problem. Working in concert with the MIT community, project members will develop strategies and issue recommendations for bringing all of MIT's information technology (I/T) assets into compliance.

The results of the first planning phase are online at

<http://mitvma.mit.edu/mity2k/planning.html>

IS plans to complete an inventory phase by the end of the summer. This phase will produce an inventory of MIT I/T assets, organized by Year 2000

status – compliant, non-compliant, or unknown. For each non-compliant system, IS hopes to provide a rough estimate of how much time, effort, and money will be needed to bring the system into compliance.

Updates and Further Information

IS will report on this project in future issues of *i/s* and will send out updates via the MIT Year 2000 e-mail list, <mity2k@mitvma.mit.edu>. To join this discussion and news list, send e-mail to <listserv@mitvma.mit.edu> and type the following in the body of the message:

```
subscribe mity2k YourFirstName  
YourLastName
```

All of the news posted to the e-mail list will also be available via the MIT Year 2000 Web site at

<http://mitvma.mit.edu/mity2k/>

If you would like to get in touch with the Year 2000 project team to discuss your situation, send e-mail to <y2kteam@mitvma.mit.edu> or call Karen Fortoul at x3-5555. ☺

Good-bye Lobby 10, Hello Online Pre-Registration

Lee Ridgway

Habitues of the Infinite Corridor will recognize the scenario: about a month before the end of a term, the Registrar's Office staff sets up shop in Lobby 10 for two days, surrounded by boxes of forms and pallets stacked with class schedule booklets. Staff from other offices hand out course guides and other materials. It's pre-registration time again.

You may not have noticed, but this May, Lobby 10 looked considerably less crowded. Pre-registration has gone electronic! Starting with the Fall '97 term, all continuing students pre-register through a new Web-based system.

WebSIS

Electronic pre-registration is part of WebSIS, the new Web interface to the online Student Information System. It works in combination with the Registrar's Integrated Subject Listings & Schedule (ISLS).

The process is straightforward: from the WebSIS home page, students obtain Netscape certificates (for security), open the Registrar's Office Web page, log onto the pre-registration system, select subjects, confirm the selections, and send them off to the Registrar. Sounds simple enough, and it is, but there's more.

WebSIS runs on a secure Web server that requires students to get certificates to ensure that they are accessing an authentic server, and that they are authorized to access the system. Once students log on, they create their own database entry – the pre-registration form. Moving far beyond Lobby 10, students can now pre-register from anywhere in the world, as long as they can connect to the Internet.

From the WebSIS site, students can also get to personal financial and academic information, including grades, financial aid statements, and bursar's bills. They can also change their address records.



Filling out the Form

The pre-registration form is simple, with succinct instructions. You enter a subject number and the rest of the information about that subject is filled in automatically, including number of units, title, and status. Should you make a typing error, enter a subject number that has changed, or select a subject that is related to one of the lotteries, such as HASS-D or the Sloan School, the system issues a warning message. These messages, as well as comments related to courses, also serve as links to Web pages with further details.

One handy feature of electronic pre-registration is that a student can specify reserved time (such as for meals, work, or extracurricular activities). If you select a subject whose schedule conflicts with another of your selections, a notice appears and you can take appropriate action. You can add or delete subjects and make other changes at any time. When you consider the selection of courses final, you click on the Finished button and receive confirmation that your selections are recorded. You can print the form from the Web at any point in the process.

Integrated Subject Listings & Schedule (ISLS)

Most students will probably begin their pre-registration by selecting subjects from the Integrated Subject Listings & Schedule. The ISLS, also Web based, was developed a couple of years ago and modified to work with online pre-registration. In the ISLS you can search for subjects in several ways: by subject number, name, or keyword, or by requirements, time, or professor. As you select subjects, a schedule chart fills in so that you can see what a typical week would look like in the next term. You are warned if you make selections that result in schedule conflicts. You can make changes or print the schedule at any time. When you are satisfied, you can submit your selections directly to the pre-registration system and complete the process there.

There's nothing more to do until Registration Day itself which, for now, remains unchanged. Students will still pick up registration forms and get their advisors' approvals and signatures in person. However, online registration, with electronic advisor signatures, is



probably on its way in the next eighteen months or so.

Development and Implications

The development and implications of electronic pre-registration were discussed recently by Mary Callahan, Associate Registrar for Facilities & Scheduling, and Joanne Stevenson, Senior Analyst Programmer in Student Information Systems.

Development began in the spring of 1996, with a pilot in the fall. In December, students in the departments of Earth, Atmospheric, and Planetary Sciences; Mathematics; and the Sloan School tested the system by doing live pre-registration for the Spring '97 term.

The test was a success, but as always, there were a few surprises. The pre-registration Web pages include e-mail links to the Registrar's Office, which many of the test students used for questions about the system and pre-registration. Under the old process, students seldom asked questions. Also under the old process, graduate students seldom pre-registered for classes – they just turned in blank forms. With online pre-registration, graduate students did select subjects.

In an effort to provide both students and administrators with more up-to-date information around subject selections, students will be able to change their initial pre-registrations for Fall '97 right up until August 19. This later deadline also means that subject offerings and schedules will be more final, and that more accurate enrollment figures can be given to the departments.

The Registrar's Office, in conjunction with the Adaptive Technology for Information and Computing (ATIC) Lab, will provide support for students needing help with the system, such as those who are visually or physically impaired; these will be handled on a case-by-case basis. ☺



Getting Help

If you don't know where to get help for your computer, network, or telephone problems, dial one of the help lines listed to the right.

If you prefer to use e-mail, you can send your questions to the corresponding addresses on the far right. (When logged into Athena, you can also use the `olc` command to send questions to Athena's online consultants.)

For a complete list of services offered by Information Systems, see the Web page at

<http://web.mit.edu/is/>

For help with...	Dial...	Or send a message to...
Athena Computing Environment	3-4435	olc@mit.edu
Athena hardware repairs	3-1410	hotline@athena.mit.edu
Computer and printer repairs	3-0815	pcservice@mit.edu
Computer sales	3-7686	mcc@mit.edu
Disabilities and computing	3-7808	atic@mit.edu
IS mainframe (VM server)	3-1104	mithelp@mit.edu
Macintosh computers	3-1101	mac-help@mit.edu
Networks/Other	3-1104	computing-help@mit.edu
PC computers	3-1102	pc-help@mit.edu
Telephone repairs	3-4357	5help@mit.edu
UNIX/VMS (by subscription)	3-1103	unix-vms-help@mit.edu
Voice mail	3-3677	vmail@mit.edu



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NS-53	Setting Up Your Macintosh to Connect to MITnet via Ethernet or Tether (Open Transport 1.1.x, Fetch, Netscape Navigator, Eudora) Installation Instructions for Eudora (v3.0.2) for the Macintosh http://web.mit.edu/is/help/eudora/install-mac.html



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