

PRENTICE COMPUTER CENTRE

UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND, ST. LUCIA, QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA. 4067.



NEWSLETTER

N-315

September 1987

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Authorized by the Director of the Computer Centre

Phone Numbers for Enquiries

External users may dial direct by prefixing these extension numbers with 377.

Management	Extension
Director – <i>Mr Alan Coulter</i>	2189
Deputy Director – <i>Mr John Noad</i>	3017
Manager, Applications Development – <i>Ms Sarah Barry</i>	4281
Manager, Distributed Computing – <i>Mr Anthony Bird</i>	3391
Manager, Engineering and Communications Services – <i>Mr Graham Rees</i>	3288
Manager, Finance and Administration – <i>Mr Denis Antonellie</i>	3963
Manager, Large Systems Software – <i>Mr Allan Woodland</i>	4017
Manager, Operations – <i>Mr Ian Armstrong</i>	3471
Manager, User Liaison – <i>Mr Geoffrey Dengate</i>	3944

Central Services HELP Desk (0830-1630) CCHELP for electronic mail 3025

General Enquiries & Course Enrolments 3018

Principal Service Centres

Personal Computer Support Group	4233
Contract Programming & Feasibility Studies – <i>Ms Sarah Barry</i>	4281
System Status Automatic Answering	3101
Central Systems Accounts (0830-1630) – <i>Ms Lyndal Hill</i>	2188
Program Librarian – <i>Mr David Molloy</i>	3025
Operations	3212
Data Entry – <i>Ms Ngaire Brown</i>	3967
Dial-up moden numbers	(300 bps) 377 2977
	(2400 and 1200 bps) 377 2922
	(1200/75 bps) 377 2655

Hardware Problem Reporting	Extension
PC Repairs and Maintenance	3938*
Communications Fault Reporting	3938*
Terminal and PDP-11 Fault Reporting	3938*

Griffith University

External users may dial direct by prefixing these extension numbers with 275.

Director, Centre for Information Technology – <i>Mr Mike Steel</i>	7125
Computing Services Manager – <i>Mr Ian Robertson</i>	7561
General Enquiries – <i>Ms Annabel Tyler</i>	7745
PCC Mainframe Consulting (Tuesday)	7560
Computing Services Area – Science 2	7560

*NOTE: After 4.45 pm and at weekends, X3938 is serviced by a message recorder. Users wishing to report PC, terminal, communications and other hardware faults can leave their name, number and fault details.

1. Newsletter Summary

- Some important staff changes in the Centre are brought to your attention.
- Some comments are provided on the new IBM PS/2 range of Personal Computers and the new OS/2 operating system, with some advice for ensuring OS/2 compatibility.
- The Personal Computing Support Group has established an electronic Bulletin Board System. Details are provided.
- Indicative costs of using SPEARNET (The South Pacific Educational And Research NETWORK) are provided.
- Details of the new AUSTPAC charges are provided.
- A list of the Public Data networks accessible from Australia is provided.
- Details of our increased emphasis in the typesetting service is provided. Documents prepared on a Personal Computer can be typeset through the Centre.
- Details of PC and mainframe courses are provided.

Geoffrey Dengate
ext. 3944

2. PCC Organisation Changes

A number of Senior staff changes were made in the Centre effective from September 1987.

Mr Ian Armstrong has been appointed Operations Manager to replace Ms Sandra Campbell who resigned earlier this year. Ian has considerable experience in the computer industry holding the positions of Operations Manager at the Papua New Guinea National Computer Centre in Port Moresby and more recently at the Queensland Institute of Technology. Ian can be contacted on extension 3471.

Mr Geoffrey Dengate has been working on special projects during 1987 and in particular visiting departments to discuss their problems and needs and to redress when possible the issues raised. I consider this role an important one and Geoff will continue in this capacity as Manager User Liaison. Users who are having difficulties in dealing with the Centre or who have suggestions that could be incorporated in the planning process are advised to contact Geoff on extension 3944. In addition Geoff now has overall responsibility for Operations and User Education with both the Operations Manager (Ian Armstrong) and Senior Computing Education Officer (Mr Barry Maher) reporting to him.

Mr Allan Woodland is now Manager for Large Systems Software and will concentrate on further building the role and expertise of that group.

Director
ext. 4166

3. Distributed Computing – Tony Bird, ext. 3391

3.1 Advice on OS/2 Compatibility

Staff at the Centre are frequently asked to endorse already determined equipment purchases or to speculate on future developments in the computer industry. The problem is that the desired specific advice may cloak unwarranted bias whilst more balanced advice may prove so bland as to be useless. The new range in the IBM personal computer line is a case in point and, at the risk of generating more heat than light, is the basis of this article.

The new IBM PS/2 range of personal computers announced in April has surely been around long enough for everyone to have had some degree of exposure to the claims and counter claims made on their behalf by various interested parties and publications. However, for those happy few who have yet to have discourse with an earnest, blue-suited person who wants to be your partner, the product line goes something like this.

Entry level is the Model 30 (\$3,000), which is essentially a marginally faster, smaller, better-equipped version of the original PC and the range extends up to the Model 80 (\$22,000) which uses the Intel 80386 chip, the new Micro-Channel bus and supports hard disk drive options up to 115 megabytes. Between these two extremes are the models 50 and 60 say \$7,5000 to \$11,000 which have the older Intel 80286 chip.

All the new models sport the 3.5 inch diskette as distinct from the perhaps more familiar 5.25 inch floppy used on the original PC and its myriad clones.

Opinion seems divided on whether using the Intel 80286 is a step forward or the computing equivalent of a sideways arabesque, i.e., the illusion of going forward whilst actually moving a greater distance to the side. Certainly another manufacturer pre-empted the whole development by putting the faster more advanced 80386 chip in a clone last January. And don't overlook our orchardist friend's (APPLE) use of the Motorola 68020, another true blue 32 bit chip, in their current top of the range item.

On the software side things are lagging a bit. IBM have retained Microsoft to produce a new operating system to replace PC/MSDOS, with startling originality it's to be called OS/2. It will be a single user, multi-tasking operating system which overcomes the old 640K limitation, and incorporates a user interface called the "Presentation Manager".

But here's the rub – it won't run on the cheaper Model 30 at all and, for the 50's, 60's and 80's, isn't due for shipment, according to IBM, until first quarter 1988. Some people thought at the time that the lack of software actually written for the 80386 and capable of exploiting its full potential would slow sales of 386 based equipment, this doesn't seem to be happening, people are buying and just running their old PC/MSDOS applications considerably faster in the interim; but will or ought the same measure of confidence hold for this new system?

So what should the conscientious user do? Well first thing is to remember the golden rule; "The battle is not always to the strong, nor the race to the swift: but that's the way to bet!" IBM have announced their new standard for the personal computing world, and that has to mean something, perhaps everything, but unfortunately it's arrival is to be somewhat delayed. In the meantime the alternative standard the Macintosh is already offering those promised benefits now, albeit at a price. PC/MSDOS is not going to vanish overnight, there has to be several good years in it yet. That interesting newcomer to the Campus the "Amiga" seems to be winning friends, and the clones get cheaper by the minute.

The advantages of the promised overthrow of the 640K constraint seem so marked; bigger programs, spreadsheets, graphics etc, as to eclipse the potential claims made for the Micro-channel, and better use of already existing chips; so why not wait for OS/2?

Perhaps the soundest approach, provided your heart isn't set on Apple or Amiga, is to ensure that above all else, the system purchased (for other than immediate short term or specialised requirements) possesses the minimum potential compatibility to run OS/2. The majority of 80286- and 80386-based machines available on the market today will be able to support OS/2, e.g. the IBM-AT and AT-clones.

Tony Bird
ext. 3391

3.2 PlatOpus – Electronic Bulletin Board System

There are thousands of computer bulletin board systems in use throughout the world. Australia, too, has its fair share of these systems, easily accessible by anyone with a PC and a modem. But what are these systems, and what use can they be to you?

The basic idea of a bulletin board system (BBS) is a computer based analogy to a real bulletin board, which is common to find around the University. Everyone is able to peruse any of the messages posted on the board. If you find anything of interest, you can follow up the information, or place a reply on the bulletin board. If you desire, a new message may be placed on the board, for all to see. And often the board is divided into several sections, each related to a different topic.

A computer BBS offers similar services. You can scan through the list of messages on the BBS. If you want to, you can post a reply to a message. Or, you can enter your own message, which then becomes available for everyone to read, and make their replies to. The BBS also has different message areas, each devoted to a different topic of discussion, or a common interest. The topics are often related to particular PC types, humour, possibly a “buy and sell”, or maybe special interest groups, such as graphics, CAL, etc.

Many people on campus have expressed interest in a University supported BBS. Prompted by this, the Prentice Computer Centre now has a BBS running. Anyone is welcome to access it, and there is no cost involved for usage of the BBS. It is intended to be available 24 hours a day, except for Friday mornings, when system maintenance will be performed.

The BBS uses the popular OPUS software, which runs on five other BBSs that we know of in the Brisbane area. We have now got the latest release, V1.0. The hardware is an IBM PC/XT, with a 30MB hard disk.

If you can connect to the MICOM circuit switcher at 2400 baud, then you are able to connect to our BBS. Just select host PLATOPUS when the MICOM prompts you, and you're away! The BBS is fairly easy to use, as it is menu based. Help is available by typing a question mark. The full text of how to use the BBS is available on File Area #1, which you can read on-line, or copy to your own PC. To finish using the BBS, the “G” (Goodbye) command is used.

Both normal terminals and PCs can use the BBS, as long as they can connect to the MICOM at 2400 baud. (The MICOM is the machine that prompts you with the **Welcome to the 'UQNET' MICOM Circuit Switch** message.) The 2400 baud restriction is unavoidable for the time being. More work will be forthcoming to try to overcome this restriction. Don't forget that you can also dial up the MICOM on 377 2922, if you have a 2400 baud modem.

A limitation of the BBS is that it can support only one caller at a time. In the eventuality that someone else is accessing the BBS when you call, the MICOM will respond with the message

BUSY, QUEUE POSITION: 001 WAIT (Y/N)?

This will occur only if the system is receiving a lot of use.

In addition to the messaging facilities already mentioned, the BBS also serves as a source of public domain software. Some public domain software – typically those things which people have asked us for – have already been loaded onto the system. This can easily be down-loaded from the BBS to your PC. You can then use the software on your own PC. The BBS understands the file transfer protocols of KERMIT, MODEM7, XMODEM, YMODEM, ZMODEM, and SEALINK.

If you need any assistance or if you have any complaints, suggestions, problems or requests, feel free to contact us on ext. 4233. If you want to contact us outside the hours of 9a.m. to 5p.m., try leaving a message to “The Sysop” when you are about to log off the BBS – it will ask you if you would like to do this.

Mark Williams (Wilber)
ext. 4288

4. Engineering and Communications Services – Graham Rees, ext. 3288

4.1 The costs of using SPEARNET

A previous newsletter (N-313) announced the existence of SPEARNET and listed the sites belonging to SPEARNET. This article is written to give an indication of the costs of using SPEARNET. The costs quoted here should be understood to be "likely costs", since the actual costs will depend on a variety of factors outside the control of the user (and indeed outside the control of the Prentice Computer Centre). These factors include things such as whether the other machine participating in the transaction is on-line, how busy it is, the speed of the communications line between it and the network and so on.

The following indicative figures are taken from system logs of electronic mail transfers I have recently performed.

A message of 24 lines (this would fill a typical display terminal screen) would probably be between 1.5 and 1.8 kbytes long (depending on the length of each line). The costs are proportionally higher for small transfers because the fixed overhead of starting up the transfer is shared across fewer characters.

Transfers in AUSTRALIA:

1.2kbytes, 16 secs transfer time, 5c
5.8kbytes, 25 secs transfer time, 14c
12.6kbytes, 46 secs transfer time, 27c

Transfers overseas:

0.8kbytes, 24 secs transfer time, 39c
5.8kbytes, 37 secs transfer time, \$1.31
12.6kbytes, 62 secs transfer time, \$2.57

Note that the transmission costs are significantly cheaper than the costs of using the postal system.

Arthur Hartwig
ext. 4079

4.2 Increased charges for AUSTPAC use

AUSTPAC charges increased by about 5% on 1st September 1987. The new charges will be \$1.16 per kilo-segment and \$0.38 per hour connect time, but calls from dial-up pads will incur a connect time charge of \$4.20 per hour.

The charges rates levied by the Computer Centre's AUSTPAC gateway were increased on 1st September 1987 to reflect these new charges.

Arthur Hartwig
ext. 4079

4.3 International Packet switching networks accessible from Australia

I am sometimes asked what countries and public data networks are accessible from Australia. To answer such questions I am publishing a list of countries and networks which I obtained from Telecom recently.

Country	Network
Australia	AUSTPAC, MIDAS, TELETEX, PSTN(*)
Austria	RADIO-AUSTRIA, DATEX-P
Belgium	DCS
Bermuda	IDAS, DCS (PSTN – Dial-out)
Brazil	INTERDATA, RENPAC
Canada	TELEGLOBE, DATAPAC, TELEGLOBE INFOGRAM, INFOSWITCH
Denmark	DATAPAK, NATIONAL PACKET NETWORK
Finland	DATAPAK
France	TRANSPAC, NTI, TELETEX (*)
French Carribean	DOMPAC
Reunion	DOMPAC
French Guyana	DOMPAC
W Germany	DATEX-P
Hong Kong	IDAS, DATAPAK
Hungary	NEDEX
Indonesia	SKDP
Ireland	IREPAK
Israel	ISRANET
Italy	DARDO, ITAPAC
Japan	DDX-P, VENUS-P
Korea Rep.	DACOM-NET (DNS)
Luxembourg	LUXPAC
Malaysia	MAYPAC
Netherlands	DATANET, DATANE (PSTN Dial-out), DABAS
New Zealand	PACNET
Norway	DATAPAK, NORPAK
Singapore	TELEPAC
South Africa	SAPONET
Sweden	TELEPAK, NEW TELEPAK
Switzerland	TELEPAC, DATALINK
Taiwan	PACNET
Thailand	IDAR (To Australia only)
United Kingdom	IPSS, PSS, TELETEX (*)
U.S.A.	UDTS (ITT), DBS (WUI), TYMNET, TELENET, LSDS (RCA), DATAPAK (TRT), AUTONET, ALASKANET, COMPUSERVE, CONN-NET, MARKNET (GEISCO)

* Not yet available, but should be in the near future.

Arthur Hartwig
ext. 4079

5. Applications Development – Sarah Barry, ext. 4281

5.1 Extended Typesetting Service

The Centre has recently employed a full-time compositor, Mr Miguel Peirano, to assist clients with their typesetting requirements. Whereas in the past our operations were restricted (both in terms of turnaround and volume) by staff limitations, the appointment of Miguel now allows us to expand and improve this service.

We are able to handle jobs in all stages of production. Thus, clients may choose any of the following options regarding the supply of copy to be typeset:

- copy in manuscript form ... the Centre will arrange all facets of the job, from design (if necessary) through data-entry to camera-ready copy.
- copy already entered as a file on any one of the central mainframes, or a Personal Computer (character files are preferred to formatted files).

All classes of work are handled – larger-scale documents (books, journals, Conference Proceedings, etc), brochures, newsletters, wall posters, office stationery, etc.

For more information on this service, contact either Miguel (ext. 4169) or myself.

See the flyer enclosed with this Newsletter.

Sarah Barry
ext. 4281

6. User Liaison – Geoffrey Dengate, ext. 3944

6.1 Information Concerning Courses

Enrolments for all courses may be made by phoning extension 3018.

The following courses will be offered during the period September 21–December 17, 1987:

September

- Introduction to SQL September 21–25
5 half-days 9–12am each day
- ‡Introduction to WORDPERFECT September 21–24
4 half-days 1–4pm each day
- Text Facilities on IBM3083E September 23–24
2 half-days 1–4pm each day
- ‡Introduction to DBASE III September 29–October 1
3 half-days 9–12am each day
- Introduction to IBM3083E September 29–October 2
4 half-days 9–12am each day

October

- ‡Introduction to WORDPERFECT October 5–8
4 half-days 1–4pm each day
- ‡Introduction to MS/PCDOS October 7–9
3 half-days 9–12am each day
- ‡“Desk-Top Publishing” Overview October 14
1 half-day 9–12am
- †•General Plotting October 20–23
4 half-days 9–12am each day
- ‡Introduction to DBASE III October 21–23
3 half-days 9–12am each day
- †RUNOFF October 26–30
5 half-days 1–4pm each day

November

- Introduction to IBM3083E November 2–5
4 half-days 1–4pm each day
- ‡Introduction to WORDPERFECT November 2–5
4 half-days 1–4pm each day

‡Introduction to MS/PCDOS	November 3-5 3 half-days 9-12am each day
•Introduction to SQL	November 9-13 5 half-days 1-4pm each day
‡Introduction to DBASE III	November 10-12 3 half-days 9-12am each day
‡PC-to-Mainframe Communications	November 16 1 half-day 9-12am
†Introduction to VAX	November 17-19 3 half-days 9-12am each day
‡PC Overview	November 18 1 half-day 9-12am
†•Introduction to SPSS-X	November 23-27 5 half-days 1-4pm each day
‡"Desk-Top Publishing" Overview	November 25 1 half-day 9-12am
‡Introduction to Programming in BASIC	November 30-December 4 5 half-days 9-12am each day
•Introduction to SAS	November 30-December 4 5 half-days 1-4pm each day
‡Introduction to WORDPERFECT	November 30-December 3 4 half-days 1-4pm each day
December	
Typesetting (on KL-10)	December 7-11 5 half-days 9-12am each day
‡Introduction to MS/PCDOS	December 8-10 3 half-days 9-12am each day
†•Introduction to Programming in FORTRAN	December 14-18 5 full days 9-12am + 1-4pm each day
‡Introduction to DBASE III	December 15-17 3 half-days 9-12am each day

• denotes IBM course

† denotes VAX course

If marked † please indicate when enrolling whether you would prefer your course account to be established on the VAX or IBM machine.

‡ denotes PC course

General Notes:

1. It is expected that users attending courses on specific packages (SQL, SAS, SPSS-X, DBASE III, etc) will be familiar with terminal-usage, file-management and editing on the relevant machine (IBM, VAX or PC). Attendance at such short courses without this background provides many problems, as all courses are hands-on. Introductory courses are given frequently to allow familiarity with the fundamentals *before* attending courses on particular application packages.
2. All courses will be held in the Centre's teaching rooms near the Physics Annexe - the mainframe courses in Course Room 1 and the micro-computer courses in Course Room 2.
3. Staff, post-graduate students and kit-owners are admitted free to courses. The charge is \$10.00 per half-day session for other internal users; \$17.00 per half-day session for affiliated users; and \$37.00 per half-day session for external users.
4. Enrolments for all courses may be made by phoning ext. 3018.

Barry Maher/Nick Evans
ext. 3021

