Information Technology
Newsletter

Performance Team Faces Huge Challenge

PeopleSoft and its Web Front-end

The job of the new Office of Information Technology (OIT) Performance Team is to improve the performance of PeopleSoft and its front-end web registration system. And it's going to be far from easy. The complexity of the system makes it difficult to isolate possible "suspects" of poor performance, and any "fixes" must be made carefully lest they create problems in another panel or process.

Performance is Unacceptable — By any Measure

Tim Fitzpatrick, Enterprise Production and Technical Support, says PeopleSoft performance is a "culture shock" for University staff used to the sub-second response of the mainframe system. While the client/server technology of the PeopleSoft system is not designed to match mainframe response (its big benefit is desktop convenience and flexibility), Fitzpatrick says:

> "performance is unacceptable — by any measure. PeopleSoft performance has deteriorated. At worst, panels can take minutes to load. It's not good enough to get the job done."

Huge Challenge

Detective Work

"Bottlenecks" are the root cause of slow response time — some mix of application workload overwhelms some matching infrastructure (hardware, e.g., network, server, CPU) capacity. The team needs to find the overloaded infrastructure component, and then trace it back to the application program(s). The solution involves adjustments to the hardware or, more likely, fixing the offending application program.

The Team has specific goals and will regularly issue a "report card" on their progress:

- Reduce web response times at peak periods to 10 seconds average.
- Reduce PeopleSoft panel response at peak periods to 10 seconds average.
- Schedule all batch jobs to complete overnight.

PeopleSoft is Working with Us

A group of PeopleSoft vice presidents and managers visited campus in early December and heard a day-long litany of performance problems from several University groups they met with. In response, a PeopleSoft "fact-finding" technical team visited campus two weeks later to gather information on specific areas of performance, which they will analyze.

Fitzpatrick says that the Performance Team can find and fix many of the causes of slow response, "but it will take PeopleSoft working with us to have the big impact."

Areas of activity and the person responsible include:
- Project manager and Team Lead: Nick Choban, Production and Technical Services (PTS)
- Technical infrastructure: Lois Stark, PTS
- Web applications: Tim Stevens, Web Development
- PeopleSoft on-line applications: Jim Salentine, Student 2000 Project
- PeopleSoft batch applications: Dick Jungers, PTS
- Performance measurement: Kari Branjord, Web Development
- Others include: Clark Johnson, PTS; Kim Laabs, PTS; Al Pierce, PTS; Jim Colten, PTS; and Jim Hall, Web Development

No Silver Bullet

Tim Fitzpatrick expects performance to show incremental, slow improvement, as staff shave a second off response time by fixing one thing and two more seconds by fixing another. "Unfortunately, there's no silver bullet," Fitzpatrick said. "Instead it's a day-in-day-out find-it-and-fix-it strategy."

For more information on the Performance Team, send email to: jposeley@umn.edu

■ Jude Poseley, Office of Information Technology

Update to TEL Seminar Series

The 1999-2000 Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) Seminar Series resumes Spring semester. The presentations are free and open to all members of the University community.

Scheduled to present on **January 25** from noon to 1:30 p.m. in 140 Nolte Center, East Bank are:

■ John Butler (U Libraries), Danielle Mahlum (English, College of Liberal Arts), and Kate Rattenborg (U Libraries), "A Collaboration to Provide Library and Writing Center Support to Writing Intensive Courses"

■ Frederick Asher (Art History, College of Liberal Arts), "Visual Resources Digitization Project"

Spring Semester's second session will be on **February 8**, also from noon to 1:30 p.m. in 140 Nolte Center, East Bank:

■ Donna Forbes and Arlen Severson (Colleagues from the School of Medicine in Duluth, Anatomy and Cell Biology) will present "NeuroView: A Computer Based Learning Tool for Neuroanatomy"
■ Pat Kinney and Doug Robertson (General College) will present "Developmental Mathematics via the Internet"

The TEL Seminar Series features presentations by award-winning University faculty, recipients of this year's TEL Innovation Awards and TEL Small Grants. The series is led by the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost, organized by Academic and Distributed Computing Services and the Digital Media Center (DMC), and co-sponsored by the Office of Information Technology and collegiate units.

For more information, call the DMC at 612-625-5055 or visit their website at: http://www.umn.edu /dmc/initiatives ■ Kathy Confer, Academic and Distributed Computing Services

Enhanced Access to Core Research Databases

Provided by The University Libraries, Nancy K. Herther, http://www.lib.umn.edu

The University Libraries continue to provide the best, most affordable access possible to the widest array of research tools available today. In the past month, three key databases, once only available on CD-ROMs either for in-library use or for more limited on-line access, became available for all current students, staff and faculty of the University to use. The three new LUMINA resources are:

America History and Life, Historical Abstracts and Criminal Justice Abstracts.

Criminal Justice Abstracts

Criminal Justice Abstracts, a bibliographic database from SilverPlatter Information, is now available on-line over the web with quarterly updates. The database contains approximately 65,000 detailed abstracts from 350 U.S. and non U.S. journals.

The database includes abstracts of journal articles, books, dissertations and governmental and non-governmental reports on virtually any topic in criminal justice published worldwide in several languages since the mid-1960s. Topics include crime, the offender and the victim; juvenile justice and delinquency; police; courts and the legal process; adult corrections; and crime prevention and control strategies.

Willow Tree Press, Inc. produces the print database in cooperation with the Criminal Justice Collection of the Rutgers University Library. Updates include abstracts of new records as well as additional archival records that have never appeared in print.

America: History and Life

America: History and Life is a complete bibliographic reference to the history of the United States and Canada from prehistory to the present. Published since 1964, the database comprises almost 400,000 bibliographic entries. The database is updated monthly.

This extensive database covers over 2,000 journals published worldwide. In addition to covering all key English-language historical journals, *America: History and Life* coverage includes selected historical journals from major countries, state and local history journals, and a targeted selection of hundreds of journals in the social sciences and humanities. Over 90 percent of the articles included are published in English-language journals. The articles are abstracted by an experienced group of abstracters, most of whom are historians and librarians who are experts in the content of the journals they cover.

In addition to articles, each year *America: History and Life* includes approximately 6,000 citations of book and media reviews from a selection of over one hundred key journals in United States and Canadian history and related fields. The database also includes citations to abstracts of dissertations published in these areas. Every year approximately 16,000 new entries are added to the database.

Historical Abstracts

Historical Abstracts cover the history of the world from 1450 to the present (excluding the United States and Canada, which are covered in *America: History and Life)*. This database currently consists of over half a million entries and is updated each month.

! LUMINA is the on-line computer system of the University of Minnesota Libraries–Twin Cities, and includes MNCAT, the catalog of most of the books and periodicals in the Libraries' collections. Access to MNCAT is available free of charge with no password. Due to contracts with commercial vendors, many of the other databases available through LUMINA may be accessed only by University of Minnesota faculty, staff, and students; this restricted access also requires a campus e-mail username (ID) and password.

Spring 2000: Many Changes in On-line Library Access

▼ Redesigned University Libraries LUMINA Web Page

The University Libraries will soon unveil a new and improved WWW web site. Since the spring of 1999 the Libraries' Web Design Team has worked diligently on redesigning the current web site, including the look and feel of the site as well as the overall structure. The Web Design Team has also sought extensive assistance and feedback from our primary user population through focus groups, surveys, and usability testing concerning our proposed redesign. The result of this effort is a fresh and exciting new home page which we hope will be easier to use for the faculty, staff and students of the University of Minnesota.

■ Shane Nackerud, snackeru@tc.umn.edu
University Libraries Web Coordinator
180 Wilson Library, 612-625-7880

▼ Improved Performance

The University Libraries have recently begun installing new server hardware and upgrading server software to create a new, more flexible and more stable server configuration. The changes will result in a significant improvement in performance for all users, whether accessing LUMINA resources remotely or using the Libraries' in-house workstations.

▼ New Web Interfaces for Most LUMINA Resources

New WWW interfaces for many of the online indexes and databases offered through LUMINA will be implemented during the Spring of 2000. The new interfaces being introduced by the various providers recommend or require users to be running Netscape 4.0 or Internet Explorer 4.0 or higher. In addition, the new interfaces employ Java script functions and will display best at 600x800 resolution.

More information about the new interfaces will be shared in upcoming issues of the *OIT Newsletter.*

Published since 1954, *Historical Abstracts* has long been recognized as the leading bibliography for historical study in the world. Currently over 2,000 journals published throughout the world are covered. In addition to including the key historical journals from virtually every major country, *Historical Abstracts* includes a targeted selection of hundreds of journals in the social sciences and humanities that are of special interest to researchers and students of history.

An advisory board of respected historians and librarians assists with the overall selection of the journals covered. These articles are then abstracted by an experienced group of abstracters, most of whom are historians and librarians who are experts in the content of the journals they cover.

In addition to articles, each year *Historical Abstracts* includes approximately 3,000 citations to useful historical books as reviewed by the most prestigious journals in the field and citations to abstracts of dissertations completed worldwide of particular interest for historical research. Every year over 20,000 new citations are added to the database.

Innovations in Course Reserves

The University Libraries are continuing to expand electronic reserve operations, which makes course readings and other course-related materials available through the web. During Fall Semester, we have scanned and mounted over 130 articles/documents for four courses. During Spring Semester, the Libraries will provide e-reserve support for up to 15 distance learning or on-line courses. Faculty may place a wide variety of material on e-reserve, including journal articles, book chapters, course syllabi, lecture notes, presentations, practice exams, exercises, etc. You may take a look at the "E-Reserves" interface at: http://reserve.lib.umn.edu

For additional information about electronic reserves and participation in this project, the following sites may be of interest:

Need to upgrade your web browser? You can download software from the Academic and Distributed Computing Services website: http://www.umn.edu/adcs

○ Electronic Reserve Project:
http://www.lib.umn.edu/dist/faculty/eres.html
○ Electronic Reserve FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions): http://www.lib.umn.edu/dist/students/eres-FAQ.html

If you are interested in participating or receiving more information, please contact: John Butler, Libraries Distance Learning Development Project, j-butl@tc.umn.edu

Enhancements to the FirstSearch Interface

Several new features have been added to the FirstSearch interface. All databases from FirstSearch will have these new features:

○ **French and Spanish User Interfaces:**
The user interface of the new service will be available in both French and Spanish. In the future, French and Spanish versions of help for the user interface and multilingual versions of the administrative module and its "Help" will be added in the future.

○ **Search On-line Help:**
To quickly locate needed information, a feature or a database, users will be able to search within the on-line help. The "Find Help Topics" search box will be located at the bottom of the help screen.

New Features and Changes to Francis Database

On November 5, 1999, the Research Libraries Group, Inc. (RLG) reloaded the entire Francis Citation Resources file. The file now contains over one million records and offers improved searching features. RLG standardized the form and genre descriptors and the source limits. Both limit features are available in English and French. With the increased database size, the standardized limit features will provide enhanced capability for refining your searches. In addition, some records now contain additional related title information to broaden the scope of your search inquiry.

More Changes, Better Services, Enhanced Access

Information resources today are very dynamic, and changes take place daily in our resources. If you have any questions about any of our resources or services, please let us know. Stop at one of our reference desks; contact one of our specialists; or call me and I'll be happy to help you find the answers.

◼ Communications about this column should be addressed to: Nancy K. Herther, Social Sciences Bibliographer, 170b Wilson Library, West Bank, 612-624-2020, n-hert@umn.edu

More Resources in LUMINA

○ **Biography and Genealogy Master Index:**
Comprehensive index to nearly 12 million biographical sketches in more than 2700 volumes and editions of current and retrospective reference books, covering both contemporary and historical figures throughout the world.

• Location in LUMINA: REFERENCE SOURCES/ BIOGRAPHY; also a direct link from MNCAT record.

○ **Grove Art Encyclopedia:**
Comprehensive full-text encyclopedia of the visual arts from prehistory to the present day.

• Location in LUMINA: REFERENCE SOURCES/ENCYCLOPEDIAS; also direct link from MNCAT record.

◼ Charles G. Spetland, Humanities and Social Sciences Reference Services, 180 Wilson Library, West Bank, 612-626-7960, c-spet@tc.umn.edu

Host Explorer Update

TCP3270 Software for Windows

The November issue of the OIT Newsletter had a brief announcement about Host Explorer, the upgrade for the TCP3270 software the University has offered for several years. Host Explorer provides a link to business information from the enterprise desktop for TN3270E, TN5250E and Telnet applications. At the University of Minnesota its most common use is to access the mainframe systems managed by Central Computing Operations (CCO).

This article corrects some errors in that announcement and provides additional information about Host Explorer and 3270 software.

Correction and Solution

The November announcement originally stated that a site license was available for the Macintosh OS; that is not correct. Host Explorer is available only for the Windows 95/98/NT and Windows 3.x platforms.

The article also implied that all TN3270 users should get this upgrade; that is not necessary. Only those who used TCP3270 need to switch.

Although Host Explorer is available only for the Windows 3.x and the Windows 95/98/NT platforms, this should not be cause for concern. The TN3270 software that was written at Brown University — and which we've been distributing for some time — should continue to work properly with our mainframe systems for people who need to access those systems on a Macintosh.

In addition, other 3270 terminal emulation software for Windows — such as TN3270, QWS3270 and others — that people have used for years should continue to work! If users of these programs wish to switch to Host Explorer, they are welcome to do so; but it may be unnecessary.

The on-line version of the November newsletter announcement has been changed to incorporate these corrections and to not mislead other readers.

TCP3270

TCP3270 is a Telnet client that's available for the Windows and Macintosh operating systems; that software was used by many Universities. Hummingbird of Ontario acquired the software, developed at McGill University, and now markets it as Host Explorer: http://www.hummingbird.com/products/nc/he/index.html

For information on the sale and more background on TCP3270, look at this archival issue of *The McGill Reporter*: http://blizzard.cc.mcgill.ca/uro/Rep/r2909/humming.html

A Variety of 3270 Software

To understand the role of this software a little explanation of what Host Explorer and other 3270 programs really do is useful. For years, applications that run on IBM mainframe systems have required use of what is known as an IBM 3270 terminal.

> You use a different terminal to work with applications that ran on other mainframes with operating system such as UNIX and VMS. To learn a little more about terminals, you can read the "What's a Terminal" sidebar.

There are different flavors of the 3270 terminal, but they all have "smarts" built in for performing specialized functions, such as:

- positioning the cursor in a given field
- changing the colors of text
- formatting the screen with a template
- and many other things that make it easier to use the software that's running on the mainframe system

The various systems in use at the University of Minnesota have required this kind of functionality for a long time. The 3270 emulation software makes it possible for microcomputer users to use the mainframe systems without needing a bulky IBM 3270 terminal as well as their microcomputer.

Host Explorer and Y2K

Host Explorer is an upgrade for TCP3270; it is TCP3270 that has been tagged by Hummingbird, the vendor, as not being year 2000 compliant. We do not know for certain where the non-compliance exists, but the scripting language that is included with the software is a likely suspect. Most TCP3270 users simply use the software as a terminal entry point into the mainframe systems at the University of Minnesota; we do not believe anyone uses the scripting language (for example, to start a process from within TCP3270 at a given date and time).

If you need to get a copy of the Host Explorer software, please contact Phil Kachelmyer via email: phk@tc.umn.edu

He will send you instructions on how to obtain the Host Explorer software. If you have questions about any of the 3270 emulation software, contact Phil as well.

■ Philip H. Kachelmyer, Academic and Distributed Computing Services

What's a Terminal?

Terminals are dedicated, dumb devices. Their sole purpose is to communicate with smart computers, frequently called hosts or mainframe computers.

Besides an interface that connects the terminal to its host, today's terminals have a keyboard, a display screen and even a mouse. The commands you type in depend on what operating system the host computer uses; UNIX is one widely used operating system.

Mainframe hosts (sometimes called Central Systems) only know how to communicate with certain types of terminals, for example VT100, 3270 or Tektronix graphics. You can obtain microcomputer software that will emulate those and other terminals.

The job of microcomputer-to-mainframe communications software is to turn your computer into a specific type of terminal. Until your computer assumes this new identity, the mainframe hosts will not talk or listen to your computer.

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▼ Help — Phone: Area Code = 612

Computer Misuse or Abuse (also see Procedure 2.8.1.1)
- Emergency Network Help Line 625-0006
- Non-emergency, e.g., spamming: abuse@tc.umn.edu

1 Help← 7/24/365, unless otherwise noted 301-4357

■ CCO: central systems, Enterprise PeopleSoft . 301-4357
- web: http://www.umn.edu/cco
- by email: x-help@cafe.tc.umn.edu

■ Internet, E-mail and
Microcomputers and Distributed Systems 301-4357
- call-in: 8 am–11 pm ← Monday–Thursday
- call-in: 8 am–5 pm ← Friday
- call-in: noon–5 pm ← Saturday
- call-in: 5–11 pm ← Sunday
- walk-in 152 Shepherd Labs: 8 am–5 pm, M–F
- walk-in 50 Coffey Hall, St. Paul: 8 am–5 pm, M–F
- walk-in 50 HHH, West Bank: 1-5 pm, M-F
- web: http://www.umn.edu/adcs/
- by e-mail for U of M: help@tc.umn.edu

Password: Forgot it?.. 301-4357

■ NTS-TAC: Technical Assistance Center........... 301-4357
- web: http://www.nts.umn.edu

▼ Dial-in Computer Access

Internet/SLIP: up to 53kps if v.90 .... 612 627-4250
(56k K-flex, Flex56, X.2 protocols are unsupported)
Internet/SLIP: ADI & ITE (with MKO) 623-0291
SecurID Access HiSpeed (v.32) 19200-N81 626-1061
2400-N81(no parity/8 data bits/1 stop bit) 626-7770

▼ Web and Internet Addresses — Quick Guide

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http://www.umn.edu/oit/newsletter

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http://www.nts.umn.edu/services/modemusage.html
Internet/E-mail account management/validation
http://www.umn.edu/validate
LUMINA (Library) – http://www.lib.umn.edu
via Telnet/TN3270: admin.ais.umn.edu
OIT – http://www.umn.edu/oit
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