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Information Technology

Newsletter

So Many Reasons...

Techmart: your UM technical marketplace

Low prices, wide selection, convenience and special promotions to the University community — all these are reasons to visit Techmart and buy the computer stuff you need and want from the vendors listed there.

- Apple ● AT&T@Home ● Dell
- Gateway ● GoldenGate ● PC Connection
- Unique Software ● Reason Computer
- University Computer Services

Featuring Reason Computer

In August Reason Computer, a Minnesota-based company that provides a six year limited warranty on parts and labor on most of its corporate computer systems, was added to Techmart. Reason Computer has been around since 1986, and they've also been on the University-wide contracts' list (departments can use these contracts which are awarded by Purchasing Services for routine goods and services).

Reason Computer sells personal computers/workstations, notebooks and servers custom built to your individual requirements. Reason's support people live here in Minnesota; the company is based in Lino Lakes.

Reason Computer provides a 60-day money back guarantee on all of its computer systems sold to retail customers; you can call them for a written copy of the warranty.

**Hardware
Software
Services**

**and
High speed
Access**

From Reason Computer's "About Us" Web page:

"Reason is a leading manufacturer of PC compatibles founded in 1986 by president Craig Stout.

2001 marks the 54th anniversary in the high technology/computer business in Minnesota for the Stout family. Reason follows this grand tradition by serving a diverse group of industries in the United States and throughout Europe. This includes Fortune 500 companies, large institutions, K-12 school districts, state/technical colleges, universities nationwide, OEMs, public institutions, and the health care industry."

Sample configurations

As you create your order you can configure the systems to meet your needs, such as adding a monitor, more memory or different drives. Changing the configuration usually changes the price, too.



At press time their most affordable configuration was \$499.

- Most affordable: Savvi V 800 AMD Duron Micro, 3-year warranty

The standard configuration includes:

- Processor: AMD Duron 800MHz
- Memory/RAM: 64MB SDRAM (upgradable to up to 512MB)
- Hard drive: 10GB
- Floppy drive: 1.44MB 3.5-inch
- Operating System: Windows 98
- CD-ROM (this feature is downgradable and upgradable)
- Keyboard, mouse, integrated video, integrated sound card and Reason OEM Standard Intel chipset

These components are not included in that \$499 price: monitor, modem, network card, backup media, office software, speakers.



At press time their best value advanced system was \$819.

- Best value: 815 Mid (Square 6), 6-year warranty

The standard configuration includes:

- Processor: starting at 933MHz
- Memory/RAM: 128MB (upgradable to up to 512MB)
- Cache: 256K
- Hard drive: 20GB 7200 rpm ATA/100
- CD-ROM/DVD: 48X CD
- Floppy drive: 1.44MB 3.5-inch
- Network card: Integrated Intel 10/100 NIC
- Operating System: Windows 98
- Keyboard, Intellimouse, integrated video, integrated sound card and Reason OEM Standard Intel chipset

These components are not included in that \$819 price: monitor, modem, backup media, office software, speakers.



And parts, too

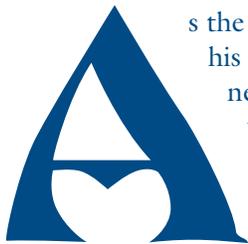
Reason offers a parts catalog that lists over 180,000 items. You can search items by manufacturer, part number or category to find products from companies such as CISCO, 3COM, HP, Palm, Microsoft — all at discounted prices. Departments can obtain login access by e-mailing Reason's sales department at salesteam@reasoncomputer.com.

- Tips from the Technology Helpline

Helping Students in their Transition to University Research

Nancy K. Herther, University Libraries, <http://www.lib.umn.edu>

“But I got this from an ‘academic’ database,” the student complains, showing me his bibliography from a paper he had written for a class. His instructor had trashed the paper and the student needed to start over.



As the story unravels, the student reveals his research was conducted at his nearby public library branch. Not the best choice for advanced undergraduate research, but endearingly popular with many of our students.

We can all remember our experiences with public libraries; mine was an old Carnegie building in St. Paul and with the staff and collections we found there.

Public libraries are wonderful institutions. They serve diverse needs for information and education as well as the recreational interests of their communities. All libraries are changing, growing, developing. But can the average public library of today adequately meet our students’ needs for advanced research?

Can the average public library of today adequately meet our students’ needs for advanced research?

While sitting with this student, I was able to help him create a bibliography of article citations in the database of choice (Sociological Abstracts) on his topic in less than five minutes; we created it at a terminal here in Wilson that required no waiting. Two of the articles listed were available full-text in the index itself. A quick check (under 10 minutes) in MNCAT found that five other articles were in journals on the shelves of Wilson. So, in under 30 minutes he was off to get his journals and start in on the research — again.

With remote access (using your University Internet ID and password), you can do this much of the research from a cozy chair in your home, office or campus computer lab. So, why would someone choose another library?

To get a better understanding myself, I visited some of the various public libraries and private college libraries in the area. All libraries have their own personalities and individualized collections and services based on the needs and interests of their users.

Could our students do as well elsewhere?

The University Libraries is the 17th largest research library in North America.

Checking out the “competition”

Here at the University of Minnesota, we have access to information and services unmatched elsewhere in the state. Housed in five major facilities and eleven branch sites, the University Libraries have over 5.7 million print volumes, 45,000 serial subscriptions, 5.7 million microforms, 2.6 million government documents and 400,000 maps, making us the 17th largest research library in North America.

In order to see why students so often choose other spots as their first place to do class-related research, I went to a variety of public and college libraries locally with a reasonable (but bogus) research question. My task was to find three peer-reviewed/scholarly articles on some topic using one of four research databases: Psychological Abstracts, Sociological Abstracts, Biological Abstracts or COMPENDEX.

College libraries tend to be reasonable places for college study. Although none of the local colleges have anywhere near the number of books, journals, databases, ejournals, etc., that we have here at the U, they may provide enough information to help undergrads

with their papers. These libraries, obviously, are run to serve their own students, which should be a factor for our students in selecting the best place to do their research.

Public libraries, although very popular spots (and, like McDonald's, there's bound to be one in your neighborhood), are not able to provide access to the collections, indexes or other materials needed for in-depth undergraduate research.

I stopped in at the Ridgedale Library, which is a part of the Hennepin County Library System, and the Roseville Public Library, a part of the Ramsey County system. Both had good general collections and very approachable staffs. Both also had long lines and limited sign-ups to use Internet terminals and no research-level indexes such as Psychological Abstracts, Sociological Abstracts, Biological Abstracts or COMPENDEX. When asked which research database they would suggest, all librarians that I consulted suggested Expanded Academic Index, not a great choice for research-level projects.

Visiting the downtown Minneapolis Public Library was perhaps the closest public library experience I had to a research-level library. However, the library does *not* offer public access to the majority of the research-level indexes that would be available to University students. As with other public libraries, they **do** have limited access to online vendors of databases that they do *not* have available through their libraries. Librarians offered to do a search for me if I did not find the information in their databases (again, Expanded Academic Index was mentioned). Twice while there, I had to queue up to use a computer terminal in order to use the databases available through their Website.

Comparison shopping

Librarians at these libraries, once approached, expressed some frustration with University students who often come into their libraries expecting the same level of service or information that we have here at the U. Public libraries serve very diverse audiences — speaking different languages, being anywhere from a few months old to the aged and needing information for virtually any conceivable purpose.

Library space in all libraries is limited and at most public libraries, in particular, quiet study space and Internet access are difficult to guarantee without a wait.

In many smaller public libraries the only way they could get the student three scholarly articles would be through a search in a fee-based database and the search would have to be done by a librarian. Many of the articles cited would not be available on-site. You would have to wait for either a faxed photocopy to be sent from another library in the system or fill out a form for an interlibrary loan.

Some libraries are just nice to be in, I'll admit.

Our family enjoys the Roseville Library and uses it a lot. After all, you can get a cup of java from Dunn's onsite and the children's room is unparalleled in friendly service and resources. However, as a place to do serious research, the library is very limited. Only people with registered library cards can get access to the Internet from their terminals, and access is limited to 30 minutes a day. Collections are great for leisure reading but weak for serious research. This is not a criticism, but a statement of the comparative strengths of all local libraries.

The types of research required at the University require resources that are beyond that which you can reasonably expect to find at local public libraries.

Getting adjusted

In talking with the student who had preferred to use the public library earlier, he revealed that he knew that the public library would have limits; but he'd gone there all his life, it was *his* library. No one can deny the attraction of the familiar or the convenience of something so near.

The types of research required at the University require resources that are beyond that which you can reasonably expect to find at local public libraries. All libraries work to use their resources to support the needs of their own users. Just as we don't worry about the recreational needs of K-12 students, public libraries are not able to respond to the needs of University-level research. We each have a job to do and a unique mission.

Turn it around

Just as students learn to become adjusted to a new campus, new instructors and new coursework, a part of their transition to University life is an introduction to the University Libraries. We are big, but we are still personal. We are complex, yet accessible at the click of your computer mouse. We have library buildings across campus; however, students can also access many of our services and collections from anywhere on the planet — all they need is Internet access and their University Internet ID and password.

Every year we spend over a million dollars on our online databases, a figure that cannot be matched elsewhere in the state.

Instructors are critical in helping students make the transition to University-level research.

Instructors are critical in helping students make the transition to University-level research. You can help your students in their transition in many ways:

□ Find ways to introduce the basics

of information literacy and library access into introductory classes; have a librarian give an overview talk to your class, create a base-level assignment that gets students into some databases and into the libraries to find an article or book.

For more ideas check out this Website:
<http://wilson.lib.umn.edu/reference/amerind.html>

□ Encourage students to attend

one of the free workshops we offer each term on the basics of using our indexes and resources. We can even give students certificates of attendance if you would want to make these mandatory or as an 'extra-credit' option.

Check out our current list of workshops at this site: <http://www.lib.umn.edu/registration/>

- **Add links to your course pages** and syllabi to such important resources as the Libraries' QuickStudy: A Library Research Guide. This self-paced tutorial covers the research process at the University of Minnesota Libraries. It starts with selecting a topic for a paper and ends at citing sources for a bibliography.

Check it out at: <http://tutorial.lib.umn.edu/>

- **Work with a librarian** to create a CourseLib bibliography tailored to the needs of your classes. The resources and services on these pages are created collaboratively by faculty and librarians and have been selected specifically for use with particular courses.

Check out some samples at this address:
<http://courses.lib.umn.edu/>

- **Learn the name of** the subject specialist for your areas of research. If you don't know these experts, how will your students?

Check out this list to find your primary library contact: <http://www.lib.umn.edu/about/selector.phtml>

Every Fall, library staff speak to thousands of students in orientation sessions across campus. However, that cannot do the job by itself. We need the active help and partnership of the faculty to help students make that important transition to research here on campus.

Try us. You'll like us.

The University Libraries are huge but approachable. We have long hours of reference service and offer many of our services over the Web 24x7. We all want our students to succeed in their experiences here. Please remember to include our Libraries as *your* partner in the academic program for students. We will all benefit, but none more so than our students!

■ 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.

Web Annoyances: 404 Not Found

A common annoyance

Encounters with brusque “404 Not Found” errors are a common annoyance to Web users. These errors are produced when no Web page is available at the URL requested by the Web browser.

Apache Web server software (which runs on OIT’s Web Hotel, Personal Web Space and many other Web servers here at the University of Minnesota) may allow you to provide your audience with a more useful alternative to the terse “404 Not Found” message.

What’s more useful?

A good alternative page provides a way for your audience to find what they are looking for on your site; and it often includes a site map, a search engine or other tools to assist those who have found their way to your Website.

To use an alternative error page, create an Apache configuration file with this name:

`.htaccess`

This file affects the directory where it resides and any subdirectories. The `.htaccess` file needs permissions similar to those of your Web pages; that is, the Web server must have permission to read the file. The file permissions are very important. If you create an `.htaccess` file that the Web server does not have permission to read, you could inadvertently deny everyone access to your Website.

Recipe for an alternative to “404 Not Found”

- Create an `.html` file with whatever text and look you want for your new, friendly “404 Not-Found” Web page and verify that it functions correctly.
- Create a separate plain text file named `.htaccess`. (Remember it must have the same permissions as your Web pages.)
- The `.htaccess` file only needs one line. The line must use the Apache directive `ErrorDocument` that routes “404 Not Found” errors to another Web page. The Apache directive is case-sensitive, and the syntax of the directive is:

```
ErrorDocument 404 URL
```

For example, the following line in a `.htaccess` file placed in our `/oit/newsletter` directory will redirect “404 Not Found” errors in that directory to this document: `notfound404.html`

```
ErrorDocument 404 http://www.umn.edu/oit/newsletter/notfound404.html
```

■ Curt Squires, Academic and Distributed Computing Services

Enhanced 404 Not Found Example



Want to learn more?

Sign up for a class. In our Web Development category you will find many hands-on classes, such as Web Server: Basics; that basics class includes information about using the Apache Web server software that is run on Web Hotel.

Our Winter training schedule will be posted soon. Look at it online at: <http://training.micro.umn.edu/ShortCourses/>

Don't throw it away!

**It's free! Call 612-624-4800.
Visit: <http://www.umn.edu/ucs>**

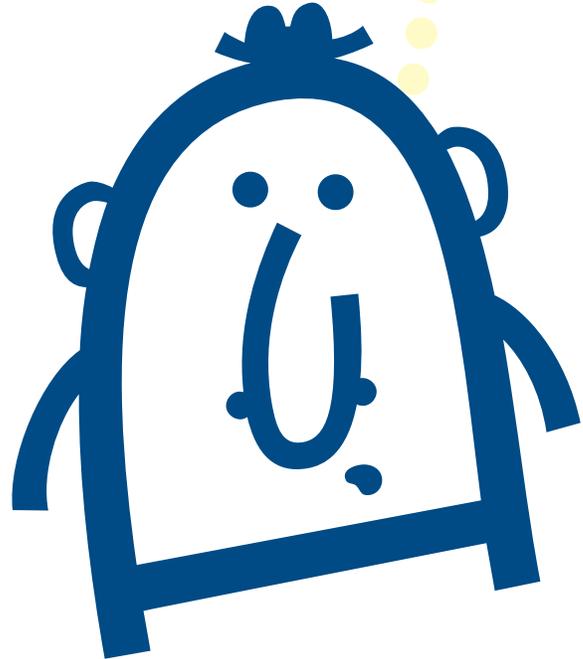
UCS offers a free used computer pickup service for TC campus departments.

University Computer Services (UCS) will pick up departmental computer products (CPU, monitor, keyboard, mouse, other hardware) located on the Twin Cities campus free of charge and recycle or dispose of them properly according to the University recycling policies.

This is an alternative option to “throwing it away” that may benefit others in the University community, as well as the environment.

Schedule a pick-up appointment

Call UCS at 612-624-4800 to schedule a pick-up appointment.



Information Technology Newsletter Subscription Request

Add to paper copy mailing list.

(You can also email this information to: oitnsltr@umn.edu)

Name _____

If University of Minnesota Twin Cities Campus Mail:

■ Use your departmental mailing address. Do not use your personal office address.

■ *Optional:* Include Campus Mail Code: <http://umn.edu/lookup>

Department _____

Department Mailing Address _____

If U. S. Postal Service:

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

You can **FAX** the coupon to 612-625-6817.

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For alternate subscription information, see: <http://www.umn.edu/oit/newsletter/subscription.html>

▼ 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@umn.edu

1-HELP •24/7 unless otherwise noted 612-301-4357

Dial 1-HELP. Listen to the voice menu list of options.

Press the number of your desired option.

- Technology Help: http://www.umn.edu/adcs/help

■ Passwords: new and forgotten ones

■ CCO Central systems, PeopleSoft

- by email: x-help@umn.edu

■ Internet, Email, Microcomputers

- call-in Monday–Thursday • 8 am–11 pm
- call-in Friday • 8 am–5 pm
- call-in Saturday • noon–5 pm
- call-in Sunday • 5 pm–11 pm

• walk-in 8 am–5 pm, M–F:

152 Shepherd Labs; 93 Blegen Hall; 50 Coffey Hall

- by email: help@umn.edu

■ Networking and Telecommunications Services: NTS

- by email: help@umn.edu

▼ Dial-in Computer Access

Internet/PPP/SLIP: up to 53kps if v.90 612-627-4250
(56k K-flex, Flex56, X.2 protocols are unsupported)

▼ Quick Guide

Modem Usage (current activity on your account)

http://www.nts.umn.edu/services/modemusage.html

Internet/Email account management/validation

http://www.umn.edu/validate

MNCAT/LUMINA (Library) – http://www.lib.umn.edu

Office of Information Technology

http://www.umn.edu/oit

Onestop Services – http://onestop.umn.edu

Techmart – http://www.techmart.umn.edu

Technology Training Center

http://www.umn.edu/adcs/info/training.html

UM News Servers – news.tc.umn.edu, news.umn.edu

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Threats, UM Police Department 911 on campus

- off campus 624-3550

Computer Accommodation Program – voice/tty... 626-0365

U Computer Services/Computer Repair Serv 624-4800

Statistical Software Support:

- including SAS and SPSS 624-3330

Associate Vice President and

Chief Information Officer, Steve Cawley 612-625-8855

Newsletter subscription information and archives at http://www.umn.edu/oit/newsletter

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Twin Cities campus address label trivia: the 2nd number after the Rec# is the Campus Mail delivery code, http://umn.edu/lookup

Dec. 2001 r2 [pantone295,1205]

Delete/Cancel

Change Name

Change Address

Change Other

Add

If you cancel or change a campus address, please tell us the Rec#. Just tear off the end page and send the entire mailing label to us. Or send email to: oitns1tr@umn.edu

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Minneapolis, MN
Permit No. 155

