

REPORT OF THE INFORMATION COMMONS PROJECT GROUP

March 17, 1998.

The following report is submitted by the Information Commons Project group. The members of the group are Russell Born (Computer Lab Coordinator), Richard Griffin (Library Automation Coordinator), Ross Jackson (Administrative Systems Trainer), David Johnson (Reference Librarian), Loretta Rielly (Sponsor, Reference, Instruction and Training) and Ron Stewart (Technology Access Specialist). Shane Young (Student Supervisor, Classroom and Labs.) also worked with the group at various times during the project. This document expands upon the earlier equipment requirements list published in October 1997 and the AWhite Paper@ report from representatives of this group and the Customer Support Center group. The original equipment requirements list remains largely unchanged and should be read in combination with this report.

Before the October report was written, representative samples of the student and faculty populations were surveyed concerning anticipated needs and desires for services to be offered in the new Information Commons. Since that time, additional departmental representatives were surveyed, especially among those departments which often have less access to some of the high-tech tools needed for today=s research environment. In addition, representatives of the Corvallis school system were questioned about typical technical skills, which could be expected of high school graduates coming to OSU¹.

The Information Commons is intended to offer access to tools beyond those offered by the productivity software offered in the Milne Lab and the two facilities together will present an impressive opportunity for the OSU community to access technological tools and services. In order to address concerns that some of the suggested services to be offered in the Information Commons would be duplications of services, which are already generally available on campus, a summary of services offered by the various departmental labs was completed and is attached as an appendix to this document.

To a great extent, the conclusions of the earlier report were confirmed. The departmental surveys yielded similar requests to those of the earlier survey. The survey of campus computer labs showed that, although many specialized, high end services are offered at various labs on campus, they are often restricted to members of certain university departments.

The Information Commons will serve many purposes and accommodate the traditional, the innovative and the experimental. The Project Group identified the following uses and facilities to fulfill that goal and the needs of the University community:

¹A list of people and departments contacted is attached as an appendix

Individual and Group Study

- , The furniture of the Information Commons area will be arranged to facilitate individual study and also group study. The group study areas will offer space for groups of 4 - 20 students and will offer various combinations of computers, network outlets, whiteboards (checkout the pens at the circ. counter), tables and lounge seating. Priority over individual students would be given to groups in these areas.
- , Additional chairs/stools should be made available to move to any workstation for two or three people to work together.
- , It is noted that rooms will also be available on other floors, but not with 24-hour access or with the same equipment.

Viewing Video, Film and TV

- , Areas will be available for individuals and groups. There will be 12 (?) video monitors with VCRs, some of them with multi-format capabilities.
- , There will also be 2 reservable preview rooms with VCRs, 16mm film viewer and audio recording facilities and a reservable classroom for large groups.

Research

- , The Information Commons can be the first step in accessing the comprehensive print collection of the Library, offering print and electronic indexes and reference materials as well as access to skilled reference librarians.
- , The Information Commons can be the link between library information and the facilities needed to work with that information.
- , There will be a number of computer workstations dedicated to accessing information from the library catalog, local databases, CD-ROMs, and the Web. Use of these workstations beyond searching for data and storing it for later study will be limited.
- , Local databases, including an image or sound database, can be developed and made available at a later time.

Electronic Communication

- , Workstations at a stand-up@ tables offering limited access time will be dedicated to e-mail use. E-mail workstations are used for both a quick check and for course work. They should be located close to public telephones if possible.
- , Collaborative groupware will be offered on some machines at a later date.

Multimedia Publication

The need for students and faculty to create multimedia publications is increasing. The Information Commons will help to enable students to work with multimedia by offering the following facilities in both group study and individual study areas:

- , scanners, including large format, high resolution scanners suitable for maps and other large documents
- , VCRs
- , video digitizing equipment
- , color printers
- , CD burners
- , Jazz and Zip drives
- , MIDI keyboards
- , access to preview rooms
- , digital cameras for checkout

Multimedia Presentation

There is a need for students to be able to practice multimedia presentations and to be able to review their work in advance of the actual presentation. To enable this, the Information Commons will offer not only appropriate equipment, such as video cameras, projectors and presentation software (Powerpoint, etc.), but will offer a reservable classroom where students may rehearse in a large room in front of a video camera which can be reviewed afterwards. It will be necessary to have assistance available to show how to use some of this equipment.

View and Try Cutting Edge Hardware and Software

- , Vendors of new hardware and software will be invited to demonstrate their products in classroom presentations.
- , An area will be designated to showcase these products and allow for users to experiment with it.
- , A coordinator will be designated to contact vendors

Other Issues

Since access to non-specialized software, such as word processors and spreadsheets, is readily available elsewhere on campus, such as in the Milne Lab, the use of such software in the Information Commons will be limited. The Information Commons facilities will be developed around the concept of the Ascholarly workstation@. A possible configuration for the workstations would be that only 30% of the computers would be fully loaded with software to include library software, productivity software and Internet access, while 50% would be limited to access for library databases and Internet access. The remaining 20% would be for e-mail

access or specialized multimedia applications. The actual apportionment will be easily varied to suit needs, as the workstation hardware will be the same for all workstations except the multimedia equipment. In addition, the Help Desk software will eventually be available at most workstations via the Web.

The Information Commons will be a center for the University community to find expert assistance in many areas of technology and information retrieval. Only minimal support for basic productivity applications would be offered, since that is available in the Milne Lab and other labs on campus. Information Services staff will offer the services of reference librarians, Information Commons assistants (probably student workers), and, by appointment, CMC experts. Initial contacts with various departments suggest that there is a considerable amount of enthusiasm for a plan to have departmental GRAs on hand in the Information Commons within certain office hours or to have a Ahot line@ set up for contacting them by phone. For some very specialized software or applications, it would not be practical for Information Commons staff to offer assistance, but departmental advisers would be able to give demonstrations in the group study areas and classroom or just be available for individual consultation.

The Information Commons will be a center for using software supporting the OSU curriculum and Web-based classes. This will be particularly useful if used in conjunction with departmental GRA assistance. Such software may include ICPSR, Home Economics design programs and databases, Discover (career resources), social science statistics, and a graphics and sound library. Multilingual software and assistance, particularly directed at Spanish speakers, can be added to the Information Commons facilities. Such software may include a networked Spanish encyclopedia and dictionary, as well as Spanish language operating systems and network browsers.

Staffing, Use and Access

The Information Commons facility will be open 24 hours per day during the academic term, except Friday and Saturday nights between 10:00 p.m. and 10:00 a.m. It will be staffed with librarians during the same hours as the current library reference desk. In addition, two paraprofessionals from Reference and/or Circulation will be available at all times. Three to six (depending on the time of day) student Information Commons assistants will also be available. An Information Commons Manager will have overall responsibility for the facility. An Information and Referral desk will be staffed during normal business hours. Staff at this desk will offer general information and directional assistance. Eventually, the proposed Help Desk software will enable this desk to become a central IS contact point.

An Information Commons Use Policy will be developed from a combination of existing library access and lab access policies. The general principle of this policy will be that the information access machines will be available to everyone as licensing policy allows, but the specialized equipment, such as the multimedia machines and classroom equipment, will be limited to use by the University community only. A simple system requiring the use of a University ID to access this equipment will be developed. Some facilities will be reservable, perhaps using the Help Desk software.

Implementation

Limited resources will make it impractical to implement this entire plan as soon as the Information Commons becomes operational. However, the Project Group recommends that the initial implementation should be limited in scale, rather than services. That is to say that all the recommended services should be implemented at the initial implementation. The number of workstations may need to be limited at first, however.

Unresolved issues

- , An implementation group consisting of some sponsors and service point managers should be appointed as soon as possible. Possible members of the group are: Loretta Rielly, Richard Griffin, Lorraine Borchers, Cherie Rusk, Jon Dillon, Tammy Barr and Russ Born.
- , Public access computer equipment on other floors could consist of existing equipment and offer access to databases, including Oasis, and e-mail.
- , Which equipment should be available for checkout and how would this be handled?
- , Who will be responsible for general oversight of the Information Commons?
- , The details of access, reservations, software licensing and security have yet to be resolved.

The project is obviously substantial. Implementation must begin as soon as possible if services are to be offered at the planned opening date in February 1999. The Group looks forward to the exciting possibilities of this new facility and at this time would like to pass this proposal on for approval and then to the implementation group for final implementation of the recommendations.

APPENDIX A

The following is a list of contacts made during the requirements study of the Information Commons:

Benchmarking

Florida International University
 Mesa Community College
 University of Iowa
 University of North Carolina at Charlotte
 University of Oregon
 University of Southern California

OSU Department and Programs

Information Services Sponsors Team
 Information Services Access Team
 Information Services Reference and Research Consulting Team
 College of Business Computer Lab
 Information Services Information Technology
 Hovland Computer labs
 Telecommunication Services
 Anthropology
 Art
 Career Resources
 Center for Learning and Writing
 Computer Engineering
 Computer Science
 Equal Opportunity Program
 Education
 English
 Foreign Languages
 Forestry
 Geosciences
 History
 Honors College
 Minority Education
 Music
 Philosophy
 Political Science
 Psychology
 Sociology
 Speech

Corvallis Public High School