Benchmarks Online

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Campus Computing News

This month, Sandy Burke, Manager of the Computing Center Helpdesk, tells you how to keep up with computer system outages.

Spring Break Hours

Read this article to find out what is open and what isn't over Spring Break.

Update on SmartForce CBT

"**W**hen can we upgrade our browsers and still use SmartForce?" the people cried. Click on the title above to find out the answer.

Lab-of-the-Month: The Boxed Set

This article is a recap of some of the most important General Access Lab issues covered in this series and information on how the University community can keep current on the lab system. Read all about it!

Today's Cartoon

Click on the title above for an information age laugh.

Don't forget to check out our monthly columns. This month's topics:

- **RSS Matters** -- "Spring Break Reading" The Research and Statistical Support guys are taking a break from writing this month. You can catch up on your reading by reviewing some recent "RSS Matters" columns.

- **SAS Corner** -- Back for another month, "Learn SAS....for free" The title says it all. Details inside.

- **The Network Connection** -- "Back to the Basics: E-mail" Dr. Baczewski answers the question, "What exactly is E-mail?" in this informative article.

- **Link of the Month** -- "UNT Student Recreation Center" Check out the new UNT Student Recreation Center page.

- **WWW@UNT.EDU** -- "Getting Started with ColdFusion at UNT" This article recaps some resources available to you here at UNT to get you started using ColdFusion.

- **Short Courses** -- The Academic Computing Services (ACS) short courses for the spring are still going on. Two ColdFusion classes have been added.

- **IRC News** -- Minutes of the Information Resources Council are printed here when they are available. The February minutes are contained in this issue.

- **Staff Activities** -- New employees, people who are no longer employed at the Computing Center, awards and recognitions and other items of interest featured here.

Research and Statistical Support
University of North Texas

RSS Matters

Spring Break Reading

By Claudia Lynch, *Benchmarks Online* Editor

The Research and Statistical Support guys are taking a break from writing this month. You can catch up on your reading by reviewing some recent "RSS Matters: columns. Here are some columns from the recent past:

- July, 2001: An Introduction to Robust Measures of Location Using GNU S-Plus
- August, 2001: An Introduction to the Percentile Bootstrap Using GNU S
- September, 2001: The Calculation of Statistical Power Using the Percentile Bootstrap and Robust Estimation
- October, 2001: Using the Bootstrap with Small Data Sets: The Smoothed Bootstrap
- December, 2001: Dealing with Outliers in Bivariate Data: Robust Correlation
- January, 2002: What's New in Spring '02?
- February, 2002: ICPSR Direct

Research and Statistical Support
University of North Texas

SAS Corner

Karl is taking a break from writing this month. This is a re-run of last month's column. Perhaps you will take advantage of some of these SAS tutorials during Spring Break. - Ed.

By Dr. Karl Ho, Research and Statistical Support Services Manager

Learn SAS....for free

Do you ever have a New Year's Resolution like learning a new programming language or an application? Well, I do, every year. If only I have the resolve and resources every year for me to make my resolution list shorter. By reading this article, you will find out how to make your effort lighter while realizing the wish of learning SAS, at a really affordable cost: free. Opportunities to learn SAS abound, thanks to the Internet. In this article I will list all available channels via which you can learn SAS programming by yourself. After all, it is free.

ACS Short Courses

First and most effectively, in my opinion, are the Short Courses. Academic Computing Services (ACS) offers Short Courses on SAS programming in every semester. The nine-hour, three-part training program is designed to provide a thorough training from novice to intermediate SAS programmers. The major factor is the hands-on exercises in each class in which students apply what have been learned in programming and debugging techniques. Consult with the ACS on-line schedule or contact the ACS documentation manager Claudia Lynch (lynch@unt.edu or 565-4068) for information on the SAS series.

In case you can't attend the courses due to schedule conflicts, check my class notes at the RSS web site. Note that I update the notes very often in order to incorporate the latest update and new features.

SAS OnlineTutor

When I was a graduate student, I was eager to learn a new statistical package other than SPSS. I learned that SAS is a real charm so I came to Panu (who was in my current position then) for help. I later found I couldn't buy a copy of the software like other packages. Even if I can, I need to get a box of 30 3.5" floppy diskettes, just to install SAS/Base! Thanks to our new agreement with the company, UNT students can buy a full version copy at the UNT Bookstore at just $25. Well, the nice thing is you can load the software and start learning from the well-designed OnlineTutor software.   Fire off the software and choose Help and Books and Training. Select OnlineTutor and you will be prompted an HTML version of the SAS Programming tutorial:

Figure 1: SAS OnlineTutor: Table of Contents

The tutorial will walk you through the basics of the SAS system and SAS programming rudiments. You will have to take a quiz at the end, which is kind of fun to me. The OnlineTutor focuses on SAS/Base only. That said, training resources for other modules can be accessible in other sources.

OnlineDoc

To save more trees, SAS packs hundreds of hard-copy manuals into HTML-based CD-ROMs now. Also, you may look up any syntax and sample programs at SAS' publicly accessible site. The latest OnlineDoc for version 8 that carries almost all SAS manuals is available at the SAS Website You would need to register at:

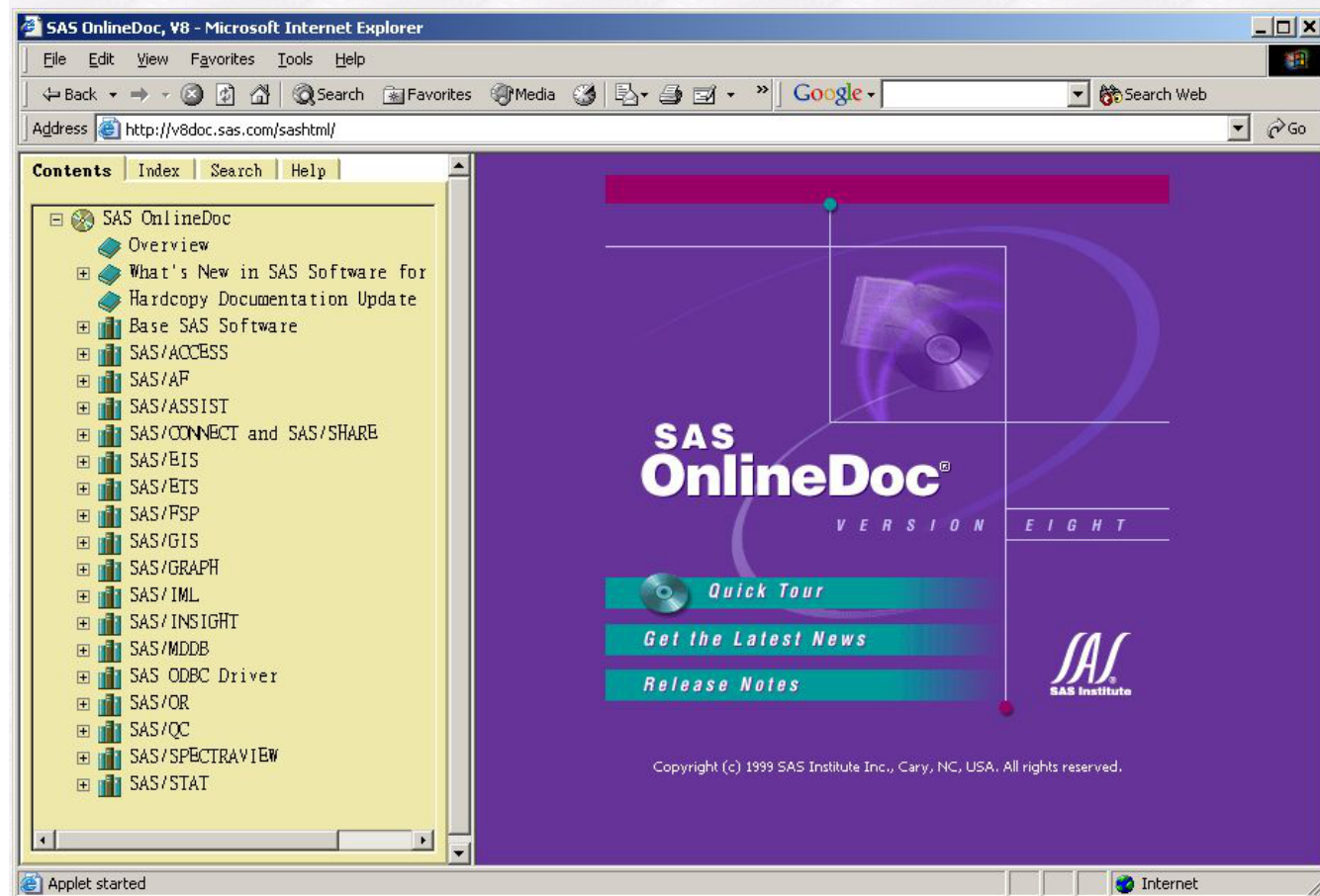http://v8doc.sas.com/sod_register.html

to access the contents.

**Figure 2. SAS OnlineDoc on SAS web site**

Free online tutorials

One more source for learning SAS is undoubtedly the SAS Website. Recently, the company offers some free online tutorials which were once part of their sales items:

http://www.sas.com/service/edu/courses/tutorials.html

Some of the tutorials I would recommend are:

SAS/Base

This is a must read for all beginners or those who want to have a quick brush up on the SAS basics. It has topics ranging from how to manage the SAS data and library to creating a surface plot and analyzing data using SAS/Analyst. It is a very practical and great starter.
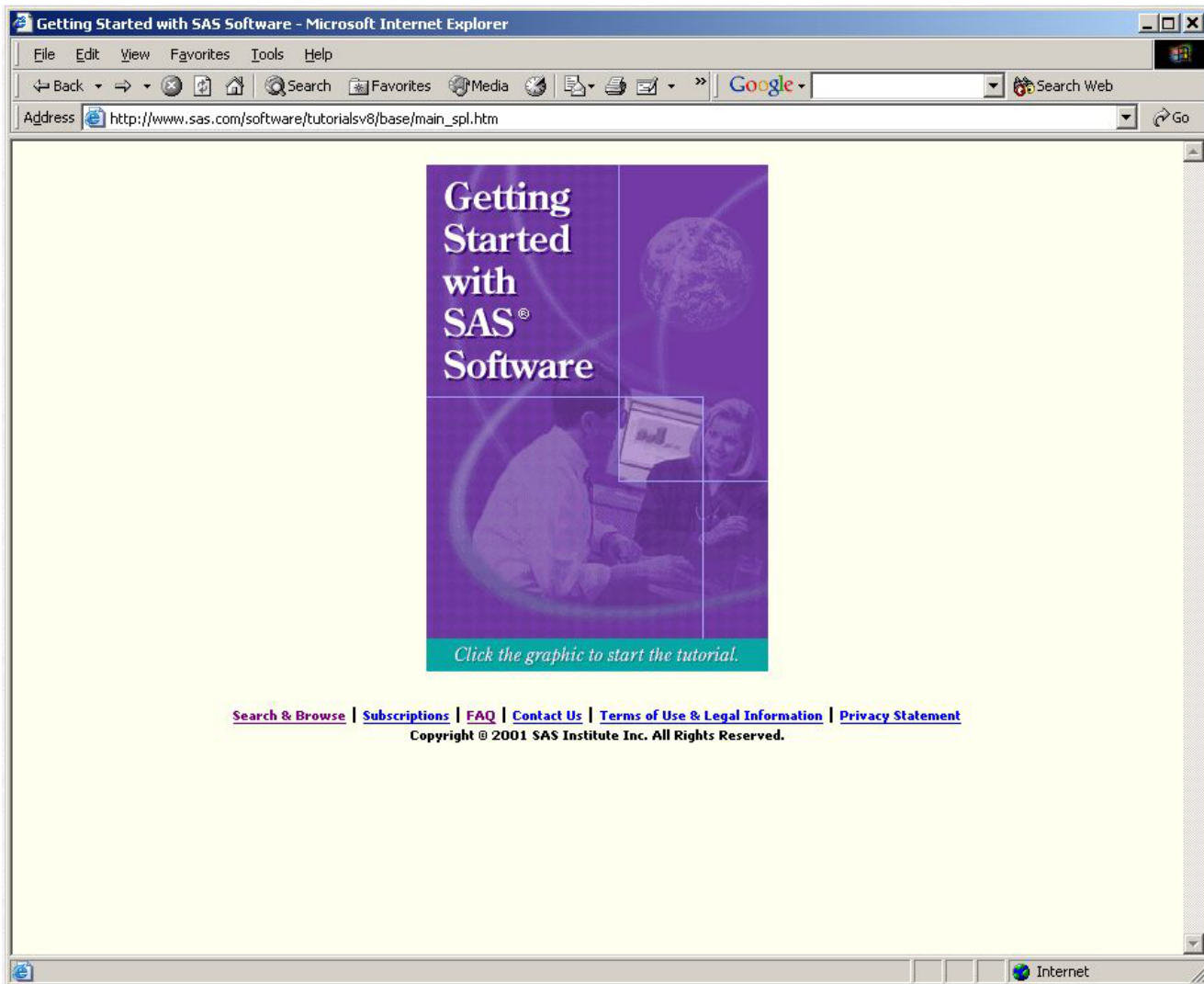
[SAS/GIS (Geographic Information System)](#)

This GIS tutorial goes through some basics in spatial data and spatial analysis. Great for those who want to take advantage of the mapping capability of SAS system. Remember that the map data sets are sizeable and may eat up hard disk space very fast. This tutorial comes with a TIGER data set for demonstrating the GIS features.

[SAS/ACCESS (Accessing DBMS Data Using SAS)](#)

This tutorial is a bit lengthy. SAS recommends an hour and I think it is well worth the time for beefing up your understanding of database management system in SAS and some useful tips on multidimensional database. It opens my eyes in understanding database system.

[SAS/EIS (Enterprise Information System)](#)

EIS is a big field and one of the hottest in the corporate job market. Enhance your knowledge of a corporate-wide information delivery system with this tutorial. It gives concisely some basics on creating and managing an EIS in SAS or other systems.

Conclusion

Well, I can't say these free resources cover everything you need to learn about SAS. But for me, they are really helpful immediate resources, especially when I need some help in completing certain jobs (including writing the SAS Corner). If you need more comprehensive and intensive training, I recommend the courses offered by the company. SAS' Dallas headquarter offers training courses on a regular basis. Consult the [Dallas Website](#) for scheduling and pricing.

Despite all these goodies, one caveat is do not harbor the thought that SAS is cheap and easy. According to my experience, it is the contrary. The learning curve is steep at the beginning and most beginners will give up at the very first stage complaining "SAS is not SPSS." It takes time and lots of practice to handle this big system and make it serve your purpose. Therefore, my point is back to square one: attend the ACS Short Courses. Happy learning.

Network Connection

By **Dr. Philip Baczewski, Associate Director of Academic Computing**

Back to the Basics: E-mail

What exactly is E-mail? It is, of course, a convenient shortening of "electronic mail." In searching for a definition, however, I found that there isn't a very good definition of E-mail published on the Web. Take, for example, the definition of E-mail provided by the "Computer User High-Tech Dictionary" :

> "A service that sends messages on computers via local or global networks."

This is an awfully broad definition, which could include Web pages, instant messaging, and practically any other activity supported by the Internet. So perhaps Merriam-Webster's online dictionary will do better:

> 1 : a means or system for transmitting messages electronically (as between terminals linked by telephone lines or microwave relays).

That's a little more specific, but still not too helpful. In both definitions, the word "message" does not help narrow the meaning of E-mail, since a message can be spoken, written, symbolically represented, or even drawn. Still, if you take "terminal" in this context to mean a computer-connected console used to enter text and commands to a computer interface, then perhaps we're getting a bit closer to a more specific definition of E-mail.

This leads us to Philip Baczewski's definition of E-mail, a definition I think I'm qualified to make since I have been using, implementing, and supporting E-mail services for the last 20 years or so:

> E-mail: written messages automatically transmitted via computer systems and computer networks in a standardized format allowing communication between disparate systems and diverse locations in geography and time.

An even more specific definition of E-mail can be understood by examining the key parts of the above.

Written messages

E-mail systems were designed and developed to transmit text. Text, in computer jargon, is representations of alpha-numeric characters like the ones that form the words you are now reading. Because characters take only small amounts of computer space to represent, text is still one of the fastest and most efficient ways of transmitting information and ideas via computer networks. Text is also still one of the most efficient ways to transmit human ideas and information. While E-mail can include various kinds of attachments, the message portion is text, even if that text includes HTML commands to make the words look pretty in Web-based E-mail interfaces. In fact, treating E-mail as something other than text can lead to problems such as the transmission of viruses or security breaches on a personal computer.

In recent years, the term E-mail virus has come into the jargon as the result of incidents such

as the "[Melissa](#)" Virus. The Melissa virus would more accurately be characterized as a Microsoft virus, since it's method of propagation exploited features of Microsoft's software. The transmission was via E-mail, but the activation was caused by opening an E-mail attachment. The E-mail attachment would then execute computer commands via the MS Word program and replicate itself by using Microsoft's E-mail implementation which was (and still is) tightly integrated with it's office applications. Those using Microsoft's E-mail program were more prone to accept and propagate the virus, because that program would, by default, automatically open and display the attachment and execute its program commands without an explicit action by the person receiving the E-mail.

By going beyond the simple task of displaying the E-mail text message, Microsoft's software create a situation which allowed surreptitious control over a remote (maybe your) PC. This remains true if your E-mail program interprets the text content as commands to be acted upon. For example, using a Web browser as an E-mail program or even a Web-based E-mail program and allowing incoming messages to be interpreted as HTML content opens you up to anything that can be done via HTML. This could be just annoying behavior like displaying pop-up ads, but could be as sinister as using Web scripting to change settings or capture information in your browser. Treating E-mail as something other than a written message is just not a good idea.

Automatically Transmitted

The transmission of E-mail happens behind the scenes. You don't have to provide your E-mail program with instructions on how to deliver your message. You just supply the address and various computer systems between you and the destination take care of the routing. Furthermore, the process is automated. There isn't some great room where E-mail is sorted and nudged into different cubbyholes by human workers. Instead, the routing methodology is defined by entries in Domain Name Services (DNS) tables which tell what computer is able to accept mail for a particular address.

For example, you might send E-mail to fred@somedomain.edu. Your E-mail program will usually use a local relay host computer, usually refereed to as your outgoing mail server. That computer will use DNS to find out what Internet address accepts mail for "somedomain.edu" and will use Internet SMTP (Simple Mail Transfer Protocol) to communicate with the remote system and transfer your message. Once "somedomain.edu's" mail server accepts your message it will usually forward it to a destination mail server such as "imap.somedomain.edu" which will deliver that message to "Fred's" mailbox. All of that activity is done by computer programs which operate usually without human intervention.

The downside to automation is that there is not guarantee that E-mail will be able to be delivered. OK, just in case you didn't hear that I said, **THERE IS NO GUARANTEE THAT E-MAIL WILL BE ABLE TO BE DELIVERED!** E-mail server programs actually try pretty hard to deliver mail. They will hold a message if communication can't be established with the remote server. They will retry for hours and sometime days to establish a connection with the remote server. If all else fails, however, the message is returned to the sender with an indication of what kind of condition or error prevented delivery.

Another side-effect of automation is that unscrupulous individuals can take advantage of the E-mail network to send unsolicited E-mail that advertises some business (or scam) without revealing who the actual sender was. In case you don't recognize the description we usually call such unsolicited E-mail "spam." Because spammers are trying to hide their identity, they often make use of E-mail servers which are not registered in DNS or not fully registered in DNS. In order to guard against spam, most current E-mail delivery programs will refuse

connections from Internet addresses that cannot be definitively identified via DNS. Once again, we see that E-mail delivery is not guaranteed, although in this case the blame can be laid at the feet of those who would abuse the openness of the Internet for their own selfish interests.

Computer Systems and Computer Networks

Many people don't realize that E-mail existed before computer networks were standard and world-wide. Back in the days when most computers were large-scale multi-user systems, E-mail was used to communicate with others who had login accounts on the same computer. As computers were able to communicate over networks, E-mail routing was extended to be able to travel over those networks. Still, most people using E-mail were doing so on those large multi-user systems.

Fifteen years ago, a large volume of E-mail (and almost all mail between colleges and universities) was carried on a network called BITNET which linked primarily IBM Mainframes and DEC VAX systems. DEC (Digital Equipment Corporation) is extinct, having been absorbed by Compaq which itself is trying to be absorbed by Hewlett-Packard. IBM mainframes are almost extinct, although some old systems still find obscure habitat in places such as university psychology departments.

Today's Internet ingenues think that E-mail is the entirely the province of Web pages. Hotmail, Yahoo, and even EagleMail make their presence felt in the browser window, turning the Web browser into the universal Internet tool for the present generation of Internet habitues. Anyone who's been around the Internet for more than 10 years or so remembers that it wasn't always so. In the brief paleosilicate history of the Internet, we can define an epochal separation laid out around the pre- or post-mosaic dividing line (that's the Netscape progenitor, if you didn't know).

E-mail is now mostly viewed on personal computers, but soon will be just as common on PDAs and cellular phones. PDAs and cell phones are just small computer systems that can be connected via electronic networks. What will remain constant with E-mail is that the message, no matter on what computer system or what network it is transmitted, will still primarily consist of text. If you don't believe that, then ask yourself why companies are scrambling to be able to deliver E-mail to cell phones when cell phones already have the capability to deliver v-mail.

Standardized Format -- Disparate Systems

E-mail works because the whole world has agreed upon some standards. The computer representation of text characters is an accepted standard. The way an E-mail addressing header is created is an accepted standard. The manner in which Internet mail transfer programs talk to each other is a standard. The way information travels across the Internet is a standard. These standards were not imposed by some grand inventor of the Internet. Instead they developed over time through a process of proposal, testing and evaluation, adoption of the useful ones, and the discontinuation of the less useful ones. The Internet is definitely a study in evolution.

Because there are accepted standards, any computer system can participate as long as it can implement those standards. That means you can send an E-mail from a PC to a Macintosh or from a PDA to a mainframe. E-mail is useful because the text and, more importantly, the ideas that the text represents can be transmitted and received on the most disparate collection of computer systems we've ever seen.

Diverse Locations in Geography and Time

As electronic networks become increasingly extended, the reach of E-mail throughout the world and in space increases. Did I say "space?" Yes, indeed. NASA Shuttle astronauts receive E-mail on laptops that travel with them to orbit. The reach of E-mail may be now greater than postal mail ever has been. We readily accept that geographical distance is no barrier to E-mail.

Locations in time are a bit trickier. E-mail is and always will be "out of time" communication. That doesn't mean that you only send it when your are out of time and can't write a letter (Webster: letter 2 a : a direct or personal written or printed message addressed to a person or organization). No, instead it means that E-mail communication occurs outside a specific context of time. In spite of the fact that there are occasional delivery problems, we've come to expect that E-mail delivery will be fast if not instantaneous. However, as the sender of E-mail, you have no control over when the recipient will read it. This is why you cannot rely on E-mail for broadcast messages of an urgent nature.

Some might see the lack of a time context for E-mail as a weakness, however, it is actually a strength of E-mail. By releasing the communication process from the constraints of two or more individuals being available at the same time (not to mention the same place), the communication process can be made more efficient by allowing those involved to participate when their own schedules allow. While it is polite to promptly answer E-mail directed to you personally, it is not always possible. In most cases the communication time frame will allow for a schedule that is not predetermined. By the way, if you do have a time-critical communication requirement, I suggest picking up the phone.

E-mail defined?

The one word implicit in the above discussion but not explicitly discussed is communication. E-mail, if nothing else, enables communication in an automated and, for the most part, efficient manner that could not be achieved via a human-delivered paper-based communication process. E-mail is written communication. If we develop a different paradigm in the future which does not use written communication, then it won't be E-mail. Somehow, I don't think that the power of thousands of years of written communication will be easily replaced soon. Have we finally defined E-mail? I think we're getting closer.

Link of the Month

Each month we highlight an Internet, USENET Special Interest Group (SIG), or similar mailing list(s) or Website(s).

UNT STUDENT RECREATION CENTER

Surf over to http://www.unt.edu/reccenter/ and check out all that is going on with the new UNT Student Recreation Center. You can:

- Watch the construction from a live Webcam at the construction site.

- Find out more about the the center by examining in-depth drawings, information and floor plans.

- View the timeline for the construction project.

WWW@UNT.EDU

Getting Started with ColdFusion at UNT

By Claudia Lynch, *Benchmarks Online* Editor

There seems to be quite a bit of interest in ColdFusion these days so, since the Web folks are taking a break from writing this month, I thought I would recap some resources available to you here at UNT to get you started using ColdFusion. Shannon Peevey, in UNT Central Web Support, started a series of articles called "Getting Started With ColdFusion at UNT" in September of 2001. You can read the series here:

1. Getting Started With ColdFusion at UNT

2. Your First ColdFusion Application

3. Using ColdFusion: Making a Connection to a Database

Shannon also teaches a Short Course called "Introduction to Macromedia ColdFusion." There are two classes left this semester, both in April. Please consult the ACS Short Course page for more information. The ColdFusion classes are listed at the bottom of the page. It is recommended that you have some knowledge of SQL before taking this class. Computer-based training on SQL is available via the UNT SmartForce Server.

Short Courses

By Claudia Lynch, *Benchmarks Online* **Editor**

There are still some Short Courses available for the spring semester. Please consult the Short Courses page to see the schedule. We have added two ColdFusion classes in April. Please note also the other training opportunities listed below.

Customized Short Courses

Faculty members can request customized short courses from ACS, geared to their class needs. Other groups can request special courses also. Contact ACS for more information (ISB 119, 565-4068, lynch@unt.edu).

Especially for Faculty and Staff Members

In addition to the ACS Short Courses, which are available to students, faculty and staff, staff and faculty members can take courses offered through the Human Resources Department, the Center for Distributed Learning, and the UNT Libraries' Multimedia Development Lab. Additionally, the Center for Continuing Education and Conference Management has a new program for interdepartmental training in business computer literacy. These classes are offered for a fee but discounts are given to those associated with UNT, and Inter-departmental Orders are accepted.

GroupWise Training

If would like to have a Basic GroupWise seminar for your area, please contact Jason Gutierrez, Campus Wide Networks, jasong@unt.edu . Seminar Topics: Basic GroupWise, HTML Messages, FAQ. Next classes:

1. March 28, 2002 10 a.m. - 11:50 a.m.
2. April 25, 2002 10 a.m. - 11:50 a.m.

All seminars are in ESSC Room 152. For signup information, go to http://www.unt.edu/hr/training/treg.htm or E-mail Bhavna Vaswani at bvaswani@unt.edu

ProDirections Instructor-led Training

UNT has formed a partnership with ProDirections to offer instructor-led computer training on Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and Access. Classes are $135.00 per person, book included.

Upcoming workshops:

Basic/Intermediate Excel
Thursday, April 4, 2002
9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. (lunch provided)

Advanced Excel
Thursday, April 11, 2002
9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. (lunch provided)

Basic/Intermediate Access
Tuesday, April 16, 2002
1:00-5:00 p.m.

Advanced Access
Tuesday, April 23, 2002
1:00-5:00 p.m.

Basic/Intermediate Word
Thursday, May 2, 2002
1:00-5:00 p.m.

Basic/Intermediate PowerPoint
Thursday, May 9, 2002
9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. (lunch provided)

To register, send E-mail to Bhavna Vaswani at bvaswani@unt.edu or call Human Resources at x4246. Payments can be made by either a check request or with a Purchasing Card and should go directly to ProDirections. Cancellations must be done 2 days prior to the workshop date to receive a refund.

For a description of each class please go to http://www.prodirections.com/ and click on "Corporate Workshops"

Center for Distributed Learning

The Center for Distributed Learning offers courses especially for Faculty Members. A list of topics and further information can be found at http://www.unt.edu/cdl/training_events/index.htm The center also offers a "Brown Bag" series which meets for lunch the first Thursday of each month at Noon in ISB 204. The purpose of this group is to bring faculty members together to share their experiences with distributed learning. One demonstration will be made at each meeting by a faculty member with experience in distributed learning. More information on these activities can be found at the Center for Distributed Learning Website.

UNT Libraries'

The UNT Libraries' Multimedia Development Lab has also offered free training to all University of North Texas faculty and staff in the basics of FrontPage and information architecture in the past. For more information see http://www.library.unt.edu/media/services.htm#Distributed.

Technical Training

Technical Training for campus network managers is available, from time to time, through the Campus-Wide Networks division of the Computing Center. Check the CWN site to see if and when they are offering any training.

UNT Mini-Courses

These are a variety of courses offered, for a fee, to UNT faculty, staff and students as well as the general public. For additional information surf over to http://www.unt.edu/ccecm/cont_ed/Minicourse/Courses/UNT_Minicourse_Page.htm .

Alternate Forms of Training

Many of the General Access Labs around campus have tutorials installed on their computers. For example, the College of Education recently acquired some Macromedia Tutorials for Dreamweaver 4.0, Flash 5.0 and Fireworks 4.0.

The Training Web site has all sorts of information about alternate forms of training. Training tapes, Computer Based Training (CBT) and Web-based training are some of the alternatives offered. Of particular interest are courses available via SmartForce (formerly CBT Systems). See http://www.unt.edu/smartforce/ for more information.

There are also handouts for computer training on the following topics:

- GroupWise 5.2 Handout for Win95/NT
- FAQ for GroupWise 5.2
- Computers - Back to the Basics
- Introduction to Windows 95 /98/NT
- Introduction to Word 97
- Advanced Word 97 - MailMerge It Together
- Introduction to PowerPoint 97 (Creating a Slide Show)
- Introduction to Remedy (THE Call-Tracking Program)
- AND, the award winning Introduction to Excel 97

Adobe Acrobat Reader Format only for the following:

- Introduction to Microsoft Word 2000
- Introduction to Microsoft Excel 2000
- Creating a Slide Show with PowerPoint 2000
- Using Netscape Communicator & the UNT Home Page

Use the Internet to search for answers to Microsoft Office problems. See http://www.zdnet.com/zdhelp/filters/office/ December 1999's "List of the Month" offers links to free Microsoft Word and Excel information also.

IRC News

Minutes provided by Sue Ellen Richey, Recording Secretary

IRC Regular and Ex-officio Voting Members: Judith Adkison, College of Education; Ginny Anderson, Fiscal Affairs; Donna Asher, Administrative Affairs; Craig Berry, School of Visual Arts; Cengiz Capan, College of Business, GALC; Bobby Carter, UNT Health Science Center; Christy Crutsinger, Faculty Senate; Jim Curry, Academic Administration; VACANT, Student Association; Duncan Engler, University Planning Council; Don Grose, Libraries; Jenny Jopling, Instruction Program Group; Joneel Harris, EIS Project Group; Elizabeth Hinkle-Turner, Standards and Cooperation Program Group; Abraham John, Student Affairs; Christine Mitchamore, Graduate Student Council; Ramu Muthiah, School of Community Services; Jon Nelson, College of Music; Robert Nimocks, Director, Information Technology, UNTHSC; Patrick Pluscht, Distributed Learning Team; Mark Rorvig, Research Program Group (Acting Chair); Paul Schlieve, Communications Program Group; Kathleen Swigger, College of Arts and Sciences; Philip Turner, School of Library and Information Science and University Planning Council (Chair, IRC); Virginia Wheeless, Chancellor for Planning. *IRC Ex-officio Nonvoting Members:* VACANT, Telecommunications; Charles Andrews, GALMAC; Bill Buntain, Computing Center Networking; Jim Curry, Microcomputer Maintenance Shop; Richard Harris, Computing Center and University Planning Council; Coy Hoggard, Computing Center/Administrative; VACANT, UNT Health Science Center; Maurice Leatherbury, Computing Center/Academic; Sue Ellen Richey, Computing Center (Recording Secretary). [As of 9/2001]

February 19, 2002

VOTING MEMBERS PRESENT: PHILIP TURNER, Chair, DON GROSE, ELIZABETH HINKLE-TURNER, DUNCAN ENGLER, JONEEL HARRIS, CRISTINE MITCHAMORE, JENNY JOPLING, LOU ANN BRADLEY, JON NELSON, VIRGINIA WHEELESS, CHRISTY CRUTSINGER, JIM CURRY, JUDITH ADKISON, ARMIN MIKLER (for KATHLEEN SWIGGER), SEAN HIATT

NON-VOTING MEMBERS PRESENT: RICHARD HARRIS, PATRICK PLUSCHT, MAURICE LEATHERBURY, COY HOGGARD, KENN MOFFITT, CHARLES ANDREWS, SUE ELLEN RICHEY (Recording Secretary)

MEMBERS ABSENT: DOUG MAINS, RAMU MUTHIAH, ROBERT NIMOCKS, BOBBY CARTER, CRAIG BERRY, JOHN PRICE, MARK RORVIG, DONNA ASHER, ABRAHAM JOHN, GINNY ANDERSON, BILL BUNTAIN, CENGIZ CAPAN

Correction

Richard Harris pointed out that he had been present at the January meeting, although the minutes showed him as absent. The Recording Secretary duly noted that error, and the minutes were then approved with that one correction.

IR Steering Committee

Dr. Turner and Richard Harris both noted that at the most recent IR Steering Committee meeting, there had been no IRC items for discussion. Richard reported that the Security Policy approval is still pending because it is under review by the University Attorney.

DCSMT

Maurice Leatherbury reported for the DCSMT that they continue their evaluation of Office XP, and to date have found no major problems with it. The group discussed the Computing Center providing 2nd level Unix Linux support to departments who want to run Linux on desktop machines. Maurice explained that 2nd level support is higher level problem-solving support after the user has unsuccessfully sought help for a problem from their own distributed support group.

Instruction Planning Group

Jenny Jopling reported for the Instruction Planning Group and distributed a proposal for System Status reporting. Basically the proposal is to use the existing Remedy trouble ticket system, which is configured to record and post system outage status from the Computing Resources and Support web page through a link entitled, "List of Current Campus System Outages Reported on Remedy." The suggested procedure would be for the distributed and/or central support representative take the following steps immediately upon notification that their system is down, *before* actual work is initiated for solution of the problem:

1. Enter an online trouble ticket stating that the system is down.

2. Call the Computing Center Help Desk at 940/565-2324 to advise that the system is down. If this call is made after Help Desk hours, the call should still be made and the caller should opt to be transferred through the answering system to the after-hours Operator in the GAB as an alternate route for notification.

3. Upon restoration of active system status, the distributed and/or central support representative will close the online trouble ticket to prevent posting of false information that might mislead users experiencing other difficulties with their system.

Jenny explained that the stated procedure is currently in operation. Kenn Moffitt offered to put an announcement of an extended outage on the main UNT web page if the responsible party will notify him when the outage occurs, and when it has been remedied. Jenny will take the suggestions back to the committee and present a revised proposal for a vote at the March IRC meeting.

Communications Planning Group

Lou Ann Bradley reported for the Communications Planning Group that they had prepared a proposal for a new campus-wide policy regarding the addition of devices to the UNT network, copies of which she distributed. According to the proposed policy, "the policy is intended to define a procedure that will insure optimal secure continuous network services to all campus units through a review of Communications Devices and High-Bandwidth Servers prior to their deployment on UNT-NET." The proposal also included a blank form which is to be used when requesting to attach a new device. Lou Ann stated that the proposal has been brought before the DCSMT and they had no objections to it. During the discussion that followed, it was explained that if approved, this policy would appear in the Computing Resources section of the University policy manual. Richard Harris suggested that the Communications Planning Group should have the authority to review the requests to add devices and recommend to some authoritative position the approval or denial of the requests, explaining that IRC Planning Groups really don't have authority to enforce policy. Lou Ann agreed to take that suggestion by to the committee and a revised draft will be presented for a

vote at the March IRC meeting.

EIS Planning Group

Joneel Harris reported that the EIS Planning Group has completed vendor demonstrations and presentations. At this point, no vendors have been excluded from the RFP bid process. The group has recently heard presentations by Bob Woelfel of HSC on a Best of Breed versus Single Vendor solution, and by John Hooper on the Technical Advantages and Disadvantages of each vendor. John Hooper's presentation is available on the EIS web site and they will try to get Bob Woelfel's presentation on there as well. Further, the Software Family leaders are in the process of documenting the advantages and disadvantages of the functional elements of each vendor's offering. In addition, a site visit has been scheduled at TCU as a user of the PeopleSoft product, as well as a site visit to the University of Houston, another PeopleSoft user. No site visits have yet been scheduled to institutions using SCT.

The Core Project Team will meet on February 28th to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the functional elements. Several members of the group will be attending the Edutex conference later this week where they will be able to discuss this type of implementation with other university representatives. The Planning Group hopes to have a recommendation before the next Board of Regents meeting and will be inviting all three vendors to make a best and final offer. Joneel also pointed out that PeopleSoft has announced that they have a relationship with WebCT.

Standards & Policy Planning Group

Ken Moffitt, the new Chair of the Standards & Policy Planning Group, reported that they are working on a new Web and Sensibility Policy.

Distributed Learning Team

Patrick Pluscht reported for the Distributed Learning Team that the WebCT server had been successfully upgraded over the weekend. He invited any interested persons to attend a WebDAV demonstration at 11:00 a.m., Thursday, February 21, in ISB 201. Austin Laird will present a demo that will cover internet working protocol, security, web authoring, and authentication. Patrick also announced that the Texas Distance Learning Annual Conference will be held on April 2-4, 2002, and everyone is welcome. It will be held in the Westin Beechwood Hotel near the Texas Motor Speedway.

Maurice Leatherbury announced that UNT will be beta testing the new release of WebCT this summer. It is hoped that the new release will solve some of the scalability and performance problems that have been experienced.

Student Computing Planning Group

Elizabeth Hinkle-Turner announced that she is the chair of the new Student Computing Planning Group, and current members are: Cengiz Capan, Charles Andrews, Sean Hiatt, Shawn Adams, and Cristine Mitchamore.

EIS Planning Group

Joneel added a note to her previous report of the EIS Planning Group. The group has begun review of vendors who responded to the RFP for professional services in the implementation of the EIS project. Higher Education Advisors Consultant, Bob Walling, is assisting with the

evaluation of the responses to this RFP.

Teaching With Technology Grant

Maurice Leatherbury reported that the Teaching With Technology Grant review process is underway, having received 26 grant proposals totaling $356,644. He noted that only $150,000 has been allocated for these grants so the decision making process will be very difficult.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:40 p.m.

IRC Meeting Schedule

The IRC generally meets on the third Tuesday of each month, from 2-4 p.m., in the Administration Building Board Room. From time to time there are planned exceptions to this schedule. This fiscal year, the December meeting was changed to December 11th, and the May meeting to May 7th. All meetings of the IRC, its program groups, and other committees, are open to all faculty, staff, and students.

Staff Activities

Transitions

No transitions to report this month.

Changes

Lek Thananvibulpol has changed his name to **Pahtsapong Tanaawibuonpoan**.

Awards, Recognition

The *Human Resources Newsletter* (March, 2002) recognized these Computing Center employees as Soaring Eagles: They will receive awards at the President's Staff Sack lunch on May 21.

- **Philip Baczewski**, Associate Director of Academic Computing, **Sandy Burke**, Helpdesk Manager, and **Mohammad Alsadka, Eanen Cohn, Rachel Johnson, Panayiotis Russos,** and **Richard Sanzone** - all Helpdesk Consultants, where recognized for their support of the new Web Registration system. "In one day the helpdesk fielded 572 phone calls!"

- **Shannon Leach**, Production Control Specialist, was recognized for helping SAUCS with problems with a report they needed.

- **Mike Maner**, Communication Systems Manager, **Chris Nelson**, Data Communications Assistant, and **Rory Rivoire**, Communications System Manager, soar for "working all night to make sure the new cable was installed and operational for users in Wooten Hall."

Campus Computing News

By **Sandy Burke, Manager, Support Services HelpDesk**

Keeping up with computer system outages

In an attempt to keep you better informed about campus computing outages, we have a site available on the Web to show what Remedy (a campus-wide trouble call tracking system for computer support problems) tickets have been filed for system outages on campus. You may want to bookmark this page http://arsweb.unt.edu/shell/campuswide.pl

You can also get there by going to our main Website - http://www.unt.edu - and click on "Computing Resources" or simply go to http://www.unt.edu/computingresources.htm and click on "List of Current Campus System Outages Reported on Remedy." Addionally, this information is available from the Computing Center Helpdesk page, http://www.unt.edu/helpdesk/ , by clicking on "UNT CampusWide System Outage Status."

This will show what campus system outages have been reported on Remedy for campus-wide systems, as well as 20+ people out of service.

The page is divided into four groups of information.

1. The first group is unplanned Campus-wide Systems down.

2. The second group is unplanned 20+ people out of service.

3. The third group is Planned outages (Change Requests) for Campus-wide or 20+ People.

4. The fourth group is Recently Resolved cases.

To see the contents of the ticket, you will need to click on the Entry ID ticket number and login to Remedy.

To learn more about Remedy at UNT, visit http://arsweb.unt.edu/HELPDESK/

Spring Break Hours

By [Claudia Lynch](#), Benchmarks Online Editor

Following are the hours for Computing Center-managed facilities for the Winter Break. All staff offices will be closed Monday, March 18 to Monday, March 25, 2002. The [Helpdesk](#), ACS General Access Lab and Mainframe Print Services will maintain some services during that period, however.

- **Print Services** will be open from 10 a.m. - 10 p..m. Sunday, March 17-Saturday, March 23. Normal hours will resume at that time.

- The **Helpdesk** will maintain its regular schedule: Monday through Thursday 8 a.m. to midnight, Friday 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., Saturday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Sunday 1 p.m. to midnight.

- The **ACS General Access Lab** ([ISB 110](#)) :

  Saturday, March 16-Sunday March 17 - **Closed**
  Monday, March 18-Friday March 22: Lab is open 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
  Saturday, March 23 - **Closed**
  On Sunday March 24, resume normal semester hours (Sundays -- 1:00 p.m. - 11:45 p.m.; Mondays -- Thursdays -- 8:00 a.m. - 11:45 p.m.; Fridays -- 8:00 a.m. - 8:45 p.m.; Saturdays -- 9:00 a.m. - 8:45 p.m.)

Hours for Other Campus Facilities

The University is [officially](#) closed for Spring Break Monday, March 18 through Friday, March 22, 2002.

General Access Labs

- [WILLIS](#):

  Sunday March 17 - **Closed**
  Monday, March 18-Friday March 22: Lab is open 8:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m.
  Saturday, March 23 - **Closed**
  Sunday, March 24 - Starting at 1 p.m normal 24 hr. schedule resumes

- [SLIS](#):

  Saturday, March 16 - Sunday, March 24 **Closed**
  Reopen Monday, March 25 at 8 a.m., resume normal hours

- [MUSIC](#):

  Saturday, March 16 - Saturday, March 23 **Closed**
  Reopen Sunday, March 24 at regular hours (1:00 - midnight).

- [SCS](#):

Saturday, March 16 - Sunday, March 24 **Closed**
Reopen Monday, March 25 at 8 a.m., resume normal hours

- [SOVA]():

  Saturday, March 16 - Sunday, March 24 **Closed**
  Reopen Monday, March 25 at 8 a.m., resume normal hours

- [COE]():

  Saturday, March 16 - Sunday, March 24 **Closed**
  Reopen Monday, March 25 at 7 a.m., resume normal hours

- [COBA]():

  Saturday, March 16 8am - 5pm
  Sunday, March 17 - Friday, March 22 **Closed**
  Saturday, March 23 8 a.m. - 8 p.m
  Sunday, March 24 noon - midnight

- [CAS]():

  All CAS labs - GAB 330, GAB 550, Terrill Hall 220, Wooten Hall 120 - will be **closed** until Monday, March 25th at 8 a.m.

Update on SmartForce CBT

By **Dr. Elizabeth Hinkle-Turner**, **Student Computing Services Manager**

"I suddenly felt a disturbance in the Force...."

"...it was as if thousands of voices cried out.....'When can we upgrade our browsers and still use SmartForce...?'"! (hopefully *Star Wars* fans will catch the reference?) Well folks, this should be just around the corner. The SmartForce techs have mailed me a new plugin that is supposed to work with the latest Internet Explorer and Netscape browsers. I will be sending a message to all network managers when this plugin is in place for university community use. In the meantime please remember that SmartForce CBT does not work with any Internet Explorer version above 5.0. SmartForce works with all versions of Netscape but does not install correctly in Netscape 6.2.1. However, we have created a handy little batch file to fix the 6.2.1 problem and you are welcome to E-mail me for it if needed.

An analysis of course use and University needs was conducted early in the semester with the idea of changing some selections to better fit the training priorities of faculty, staff, and students. In many cases the SmartForce company is still developing courses for the newest software and operating systems. However, a full suite of Office XP courses is available and has been shipped to me. These courses will be installed after Spring Break and once again, I will make a general announcement about their availability. In exchange for these new classes, we have retired some older ones dealing with outdated applications and operating systems. Office2000 training will also remain in place since this is the suite used currently by the university.

Other courses that will be forthcoming once development is complete include updated Linux training; modules dealing with Macromedia's Flash, Cold Fusion, and Dreamweaver applications; and offerings in Oracle9i and Solaris8. These will be installed as soon as they are received and older versions of the training will be dropped. Once again, I will be creating subject-based CDs on these new topics for ease-of-use at home. All of these course updates will be announced after their implementation.

I refer everyone to the UNT SmartForce Website for account information, server contents, tutorials, and FAQs about the system. Specific inquiries can also be sent to me via E-mail.

Lab-of-the-Month: The Boxed Set

By Dr. Elizabeth Hinkle-Turner, Student Computing Services Manager

I concluded my Lab-of-the-Month series with the feature on the Willis 24-Hour General Access Lab found in the last issue of *Benchmarks Online*. Here is a recap of some of the most important General Access Lab issues covered in this series and information on how the university community can keep current on the lab system.

The General Access Lab System

The UNT General Access Lab System is somewhat unique in that it accommodates both the needs of individual colleges and schools within the university while also providing a standard set of computing resources and applications in every one of the the system's fourteen facilities. This means, for example, that a musician can find all the specialized hardware and software he or she needs for major-specific study, projects, and research in the College of Music Lab while also having complete access to the types of Office applications, internet resources, and email utilities needed for more general work. The same is true of artists, computer scientists, statisticians... just about any area of study that has specific computing needs. Additionally, the non-college and school affiliated labs (Willis 24-Hour, System Center Dallas, and Academic Computing Services) exist to provide exceptional service to those who simply need to do web research, paper-typing, and spread-sheet creation.

The majority of the labs also have specific areas and workstations devoted to accommodating special needs patrons with applications such as Zoomtext and JAWS and ergonomically designed furniture for easy access. However, the lab system does also provide a facility exclusively for special needs. The Adaptive Lab located conveniently on the first floor of Chilton Hall contains state-of-the-art furniture, equipment, hardware, and software for just about any special need.

With very few exceptions, students can also have access to lab services during the holidays, though usually on a limited basis. The Willis 24-Hour Lab and the Academic Computing Services Lab are always open during the breaks and usually have quite a few grateful customers during that time. Be sure to check individual lab sites for details about their holiday hours. Holiday hours are also always posted here in *Benchmarks*

Events on the Horizon

Some exciting events are on the horizon for the lab system, most of which will be implemented this summer. A storage-area-network (SAN) will be put into place for centralized digital storage of student work. Students will now be able to save their work that they have done at home, in a dorm room, or in another lab and then access it again in the general access facility of their choice for further work or printing. This means that removable media such as floppy disks will no longer be needed (except for very large projects) thus eliminating a common cause of data loss through media failure and viruses. Everyone will be

hearing more about this service as it is put into place, implemented, and tested.

Labs will also be set up so that if a student needs to access resources specific to their major college servers (class Websites and projects for example), they may do so in any facility. This project, called Students in the Tree (SIT), has been in place for awhile but its use should be much more widespread in the future. This allows a student much great flexibility in his or her choice of lab environment, however, it should be noted that college- and school-specific hardware and software will still only be accessible in that area's lab facility.

Keep in Touch

Finally, it is quite easy for University community members to keep in touch with lab issues and developments. To review any part of the Lab-of-the-Month series, readers can go to http://www.unt.edu/benchmarks/archives/GeneralAccessLabs/Glabs.htm and select the lab article of their choice. Additionally, all lab hours, equipment lists, locations, policies and other lab information is found at http://www.gal.unt.edu , the official Website of the General Access Lab System.

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