Is today’s computing and networking marketplace out of control? New products appear at a dizzying pace and the explosive growth of information continues, accelerated by the world’s discovery of the Internet. The dynamic between technology, information, and the marketplace poses many questions. Penn seeks answers to those questions on many levels. Beginning in February 1996, Penn will celebrate its rich computing heritage with a tribute to the past, but the primary focus will be on exploring the future. Even as Penn looks to the future, it must assimilate and respond to day-to-day product releases and market trends within the context of its developing technology standards. Here, many of the questions posed are as seemingly simple as how to deal with the release of Windows 95.

This article introduces some of the computing and networking decisions that may affect you now or in the coming months.

WHAT ABOUT WINDOWS 95?

You should not install Windows 95 until either Information Systems and Computing (ISC) or your local support provider can give assistance and support. If you choose to upgrade to Windows 95 without benefit of ISC or local computing support, be aware that existing applications may not be fully compatible with Windows 95. Contact your software vendor to determine compatibility. If you are purchasing a new machine, opt for Windows 3.1 if you have a choice.

The release of Windows 95 in August 1995, although by no means a surprise, occurred with limited access by ISC to pre-released evaluation versions. Because software evaluation and testing within the Penn environment is critical to developing support, ISC decided not to support the initial Windows 95 release.

Current data on installation (continued on page 16)
problems and incompatibilities with the ISC-recommended network software suite, in combination with industry advisories, suggests that waiting until the first maintenance release is available is likely to be the most cost-effective support approach. The first maintenance release of Windows 95 is expected in early spring; exactly how soon support will be in place remains to be determined. For information about the latest ISC Windows 95 developments see http://www.upenn.edu/isc and then select “Information Technology Architecture and Standards.”

NETSCAPE NOW SUPPORTED

If you’re in the market for a graphical World Wide Web browser, pick up Netscape Navigator, the ISC-supported browsing software available at no cost for educational use. Netscape for Macintoshes and Windows PCs is available from the FTP server ftp.upenn.edu (in the /mac and /pc directories). If you have been using Mosaic as your network browser, be sure to upgrade to Netscape 1.1N—it is not only more versatile, stable, and powerful, but is required for access to some information resources, such as Penn InTouch.

WHAT IS PENN INTOUCH?

Penn InTouch is a Web-based resource that makes student enrollment and financial information available on the Penn Web. Students can check account balances, update address information, view transcripts, determine the status of loan applications, print out class schedules, and conduct a variety of other business which previously could be done only in person during business hours in campus offices.

Penn InTouch evolved from a 1994 card swipe kiosk pilot program. It represents an ongoing commitment by the Offices of Student Financial Services, the University Registrar, and University Management Information Services to anticipate and meet the changing needs of Penn’s student community.

To access Penn InTouch, you’ll need to install Netscape on your computer or visit a Penn InTouch kiosk. The URL for Netscape access is https://sentry.isc.upenn.edu/inouch/, but you can also access the system from the students’ home page on the Penn Web (http://www.upenn.edu). Kiosks are conveniently located in the Book Store, Houston Hall, and the lobby of the Franklin building.

THE NEW PENN WEB

A redesigned Penn Web debuted in mid September, along with a style guide for Penn Web developers, and a campus-wide calendar in Web format. The new design offers a top-level page plus five “views,” each tailored to an audience group’s perspective: Faculty & colleagues
A number of key principles have guided the effort to develop Penn’s official World Wide Web presence: official Penn information should be relevant, complete and current; official information should be labeled as such for the viewer; the same review and approval procedures used for official print publications should be followed for Web publication.

The World Wide Web is a dynamic, changing medium, and the Penn Web will continue to evolve and improve over time. If you want more information or have a question or a suggestion, contact the Penn Web Committee, c/o Office of the Vice President and Secretary, Suite 400, 133 South 36th Street/3246, or webcom@pobox.upenn.edu.

WHAT ABOUT PENNINFO AND GOPHER?

As the Penn Web is being developed, PennInfo and Gopher are being rapidly phased out. PennInfo and Gopher software are no longer supported as information access tools; please upgrade to Netscape. Residual information in PennInfo and Gopher databases is available from the Penn Web and public kiosks formerly providing access to PennInfo are being converted to World Wide Web kiosks.

ANTIVIRAL SOFTWARE

Be sure to keep your
computing system protected with the latest versions of antiviral software. Macintosh users should have Disinfectant 3.6 and DOS/Windows PC users should have Vi-Spy 12.0 r7.95. To pick up a copy of either program, bring a blank, unformatted, high-density (1.44MB), 3.5-inch floppy disk to the Computing Resource Center.

WHAT ELSE IS NEW ON PENNNET?

PennNet, the University’s data communications network, continues to be upgraded to provide better support for academic and administrative programs.

To serve the ever-increasing demand for access to PennNet from home or on the road, the modem pool has been expanded to 468 modems and reconfigured into three separate pools. The large modem pool at 215/898-0834 supports speeds up to 38.4 Kbps via Annex, SLIP, or PPP connections. A new modem pool for the Kennett Square area, at 610/444-5593, also supports speeds up to 38.4 Kbps via Annex, SLIP, or PPP connections. An additional modem pool at 215/573-4PPP supports speeds up to 115.2 Kbps (with compression and PAP authentication) and is dedicated to PPP connections.

Point-to-Point Protocol (PPP) is now supported for both Windows and Macintoshes. Support for IPX routing to most campus buildings (subnets) now enables access to Novell Netware file servers across PennNet.

Details about the new, streamlined ISC-supported networking software suite are available on page 7, as well as some very general information about the new ISC software distribution strategy.

Penn’s gateway to the Internet has been upgraded from four megabits per second (Mbps) to ten Mbps via a direct fiber connection to a new PREPnet hub in the University City Science Center.

But that’s not all. Library services have expanded significantly. SPIKE has come to the Wharton School (see our next issue for details). Electronic request forms for PennNet services have been created. The Network ID and password system has been redesigned. A process is being developed to resolve existing userID conflicts across campus. The Whois directory is scheduled for an upgrade soon. And Penn is gearing up for an 18-month-long celebration of computing that began on Valentine’s day 50 years ago with the creation of ENIAC.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

More detailed information about many PennNet changes is available in the new edition of the PennNet Passport, the guide to computing and networking at Penn and beyond. If you need additional information about computing at Penn, check with your local support provider (see page 3); contact the ISC helpline, First Call (573-4778 or help@isc.upenn.edu); stop by the Computing Resource Center at 3732 Locust Walk; or search the Penn Web.