The
Academic Computing Facility
Microcomputer Newsletter

About this Newsletter ...

This is the first issue of an informal newsletter which will be devoted to information about "personal computers", or "micros". The Microcomputer Newsletter will be published periodically by New York University's Academic Computing Facility (ACF). It is one way in which we hope to provide information which will help members of the NYU community select and use personal computers and personal computer software.

Personal computing is a rapidly expanding area. Each day seems to bring a sometimes confusing array of new hardware and software products for personal computer users. More and more people are obtaining personal computers, and are using them for a growing variety of tasks.

How people use their personal computers seems to depend at least partly on the kind of work which they hope to accomplish with them. We believe that many personal computer users at NYU have helpful and interesting information to share, information which will be specially pertinent to the needs of other micro users at NYU.

Therefore, we invite you to write us and let us know about your personal computing experiences. We would like to hear about problems you've encountered, solutions you may have come up with, and unusual or clever ways in which you have applied commercially available software to your work. We also welcome your suggestions as to how we can better help you. Please send your comments, anecdotes, suggestions, and ideas to:

The ACF Microcomputer Newsletter
c/o Gary Chapman
ACF Microcomputer Laboratory
251 Mercer Street
New York, N.Y. 10012

The ACF Microcomputer Newsletter is a joint effort of the ACF's Microcomputer Laboratory and its Documentation Office. We hope to publish on a bi-monthly basis during the academic year, and plan to include those contributions which we feel will most benefit our readers. This issue of the newsletter was written on an APPLE Macintosh, using MacWrite, and was printed on the ACF's Imagen laser printer. It was written by Gary Chapman and Estelle Hochberg.

New York University
The ACF Microcomputer Laboratory

As many of our readers know, the Academic Computing Facility opened a Microcomputer Laboratory this past fall for faculty and research staff at NYU. The Lab is intended to serve as a place where individual faculty members can come to try out different equipment, and to obtain some guidance in selecting microcomputer software and hardware.

The Laboratory houses a variety of popular personal computers. At present, these include an IBM PC/XT, a KAYPRO 10, an EPSON QX-10, an ATARI 600XL, and three APPLE computers: a Macintosh, a Lisa, and an APPLE IIE. We also have a NEC 2050 letter quality printer, several dot matrix printers (from APPLE, OKIDATA, and EPSON), and a Sweet-P Pen Plotter. In addition, a PLATO workstation has been placed in the ACF Microcomputer Lab. (See the item below, on PLATO, for more about that system for computer-assisted instruction.)

Who has used the Lab thus far in these first few months. NYU faculty members representing a variety of disciplines have come to the Lab for advice or demonstrations, since September, when it was first opened officially. Visitors to the Lab have come from such areas as History, Business Education, Fine Arts, Mathematics, Medicine, Nursing, Politics, Sociology, Computer Science, and Chemistry.

We have noticed that for users of personal computers at NYU -- as for micro users across the nation -- the most common application is word processing. Communications software, database systems, and statistical software are among the other areas which have proven of considerable interest.

Microcomputer documents from the ACF. The Micro Lab and Documentation Office have prepared a number of small documents intended to help individuals select and use personal computers. To date, our publications include the following (in addition to this newsletter):

• "The ACF Microcomputer Laboratory", a description of the purpose and resources of the Lab
• "Books and Periodicals Available for Reference" (at the ACF Microcomputer Laboratory)
• "Guidelines for Selecting a Microcomputer"
• "Suggested Microcomputer Readings", a list of books and articles which provide advice on selecting microcomputer hardware and software
• "Guidelines for Using KERMIT at NYU"

These documents can be obtained from the Microcomputer Lab, along with information on microcomputer discounts available to members of the NYU community (see the item below, for more about this). Some of them are also available from the ACF's Documentation Office, Room 306 Warren Weaver Hall.

The ACF Microcomputer Lab is located in Warren Weaver Hall, Room 317. Individuals should make appointments, by calling Gary Chapman at 460-7160 or 460-7181. □
Connecting Computers:
From Micros to Minis and Mainframes, and Back

Increasingly, we are asked for information on how a personal computer can be used to access another computer. Here at NYU, for example, an owner of an IBM PC or APPLE Macintosh might wish to connect to our CYBER mainframe or to one of our VAX minicomputers. In some instances, the purpose will simply be to use the microcomputer as a terminal. In others, he or she will want to transfer files between the micro and the NYU system.

The first step is to obtain the communications hardware which will make it possible to connect your computer to a phone line. Typically, you will need to equip your personal computer with a serial port and a modem.

Next, you must obtain software to control the process of communication between your micro and the NYU computer. Communications software typically allows you to dial the telephone number of the computer system to which you wish to connect, and makes your personal computer "look like" a terminal to the other system.

With such a combination of communications hardware and software, you can use your personal computer to do work on a mainframe or minicomputer, just as if you were sitting at a terminal here at NYU. Many users, however, wish to go one step further. They are interested in moving information (in the form of files) between their microcomputers and the larger NYU computer systems. The general task of sending and receiving files from one computer to another is called file transfer. The selection of software to accomplish file transfer can require some care.

The communications software which you are using to dial up may allow you to send and receive files over your phone line (most commercial communications packages do). However, there can be problems. As an example, if there is static on the phone line while you are moving a file from one computer to another, some of the information you are sending may be garbled or lost.

We recommend, instead, that you use communications software which incorporates an error-checking mechanism. A communications program that features error-checking lets you know if your file has been transferred without errors. This is where KERMIT comes in.

KERMIT is an error-checking communications software package, developed at Columbia University. It is being made available to members of the NYU community by the ACF. Versions for users of IBM PC, APPLE IIe, APPLE Macintosh and KAYPRO (CP/M) personal computers are currently available from the ACF's Microcomputer Laboratory. There is no charge for the KERMIT software.

KERMIT can be used for transferring files between microcomputers and NYU's CYBER mainframe and the VAX/UNIX and VAX/VMS minicomputers. We hope that it will soon be possible to use KERMIT for file transfers between micros and NYU's IBM mainframe.

For further information on KERMIT, contact Gary Chapman at 460-7160.
The PLATO Experiment at NYU

PLATO is a system for computer-assisted instruction from Control Data Corporation (CDC). It runs on mainframes and on microcomputers. The ACF has brought the PLATO system to the NYU campus on an experimental basis. Participating in the experiment are the departments of Computer Science, Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry. Authorized students in these departments now have access to four PLATO courses at the ACF's Education Building site where three PLATO microcomputer workstations have been installed. The four courses are: Pascal, Calculus I, Physics I, and Chemistry I.

These four courses represent only a small sample of the PLATO "courseware" which is available. The full set includes courses in such areas as mathematics, science, economics, computer languages, nursing, medicine, and foreign-language instruction. Instructors can examine these courses by coming to the ACF's Microcomputer Laboratory. The PLATO workstation in the Lab has been specially set up so that visitors can "tie in" to a CDC mainframe on which the full range of courses is offered.

Recent developments with respect to the PLATO system may make it possible for instructors to use IBM Personal Computers to create their own PLATO courses. It may also be possible for students and instructors to use IBM PC's to access PLATO courseware on CDC mainframes, where the widest variety of prewritten PLATO courses is already available.

Faculty members who would like to learn more about PLATO should contact Gary Chapman at 460-7160.

Recent Developments at the ACF Microcomputer Lab

Those of you who have visited the ACF Microcomputer Laboratory since its opening last September may be interested in some recent additions to our facilities.

• Paradise Graphics Card for the IBM PC. This new graphics card, which sits inside an IBM PC, allows the use of either a color or a monochrome monitor. If you have a monochrome monitor, as we do, you can still run most software written for a color system.

• 512K Macintosh. We recently obtained the memory upgrade for our Macintosh, bringing its internal memory to 512K. Part of this additional memory can be set aside as an "electronic disk drive" (frequently called a RAM disk). Storing software, such as MacWrite or MacPaint, on this RAM disk can mean a considerable speedup in operations.

• LOGO and Pascal for the Macintosh. We have obtained the APPLE Macintosh Pascal interpreter, which has received rave reviews, and the ExperLOGO implementation of the LOGO language. We are disappointed with ExperLOGO, which seems to have several bugs and limitations.

• Datapro Publications: Reports on microcomputers and microcomputer software. The ACF Microcomputer Laboratory subscribes to these compendia of information on the microcomputer field. There are extensive (never complete!) listings of products and vendors, as well as reviews of specific products and articles describing strategies for selecting equipment. One good feature of these reports is that they do not focus on products for one or two different types of microcomputers (such as IBM and APPLE); rather, Datapro includes professional products from all sources.

• Miscellaneous New Software for the IBM PC. These include ZyINDEX, Dayflo, SearchLit, KWIC-REF/1, Concurrent PC-DOS, PC-to-MAC and Back, Printer Boss, Fontrix, DPath, The Reminder System, Microsoft WORD, and Samna Word III.

• Miscellaneous New Software for the Macintosh. We have obtained Microsoft WORD, Inside Macintosh, Tekalike, BASIC 2.0, ProPrint, the MAC-Daisywheel Connection, PFS File and Report, MacProject, and Ready-Set-Go.

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March 1985
Ask "Dr. Micro" . . .

Ask "Dr. Micro" is a question-and-answer column which we plan to include in each issue of the ACF Microcomputer Newsletter. We will try to address questions of general interest to our readers. We welcome your questions: instructions for mailing them are given at the end of this article.

Do floppy disks require any special care?

Nearly all personal computer users are familiar with floppy disks. A floppy disk or "diskette" resembles a small phonograph record enclosed in a paper (sometimes plastic) sleeve, and is the most commonly used medium for storing programs, text files, and other information.

As a rule, floppy disks are long-lasting, durable media. In fact, on more than one occasion, Dr. Micro himself has effected some completely unplanned demonstrations of just how durable a floppy disk can be. It is possible, however, through improper handling or care, to lose the information stored on a diskette.

Here, then, are a few tips which you can follow to protect your disks.

• Keep diskettes in their protective envelopes when they are not in use.

• Do not touch the exposed surface of the diskette with fingers or other objects.

• Keep magnetized objects away from diskettes. Magnetic fields can garble the information stored on a disk. (Watch out for telephones!)

• Keep diskettes away from dust, smoke, direct sunlight, heat, and residue from pencil erasers.

• Try to avoid bending or folding a diskette. Store diskettes vertically.

• Avoid temperatures below 50°F and above 125°F.

• Try to write on diskettes only with felt-tip pens (not ball-point pens). Even better, when you want to label a diskette, write on the label first and then affix the label to the diskette.

Please note, however, that whatever precautions you might take to protect your floppy disks, it will still be possible for an accident to occur. Thus Dr. Micro's dictum:

Thou Shalt Make Two Copies!

Never keep only one copy of important information. Always make a backup copy and keep it in a safe place.

"Dr. Micro" will gladly try to answer questions from microcomputer users at NYU. Send questions to "Dr. Micro", c/o Gary Chapman, ACF Microcomputer Laboratory, 251 Mercer Street, New York, N.Y. 10012. Questions of general interest to our readers will be included in subsequent issues of the ACF Microcomputer Newsletter.
Microcomputer Discounts Through NYU

New York University has made arrangements with a number of companies and computer stores to provide members of the NYU community holding valid ID cards with discounts on personal purchases of microcomputer hardware and software. The following discounts are available as of Spring 1985. Additional information on the discounts can be obtained directly from the companies and stores listed below. Retail prices do fluctuate, and because of that, the University urges purchasers to also investigate the possibility that lower discounts may be available from other retailers.

- **21% on Hewlett-Packard**
  Alpha Business Machines
  300 Fifth Avenue
  682-5666
  Contact: Rick Yoswein

- **20%-25% on Eagle/Visual Data Access Systems**
  One Penn Plaza, Suite 2215
  564-9301
  Contact: Richard Ein

- **10% on Texas Instruments**
  TransNet Corporation
  1945 Route 22
  Union, NJ
  201-688-7800
  Contact: Bill Browning

- **17% on Apple/Compaq/Panasonic and 25% on IBM**
  The Computer Factory
  485 Lexington Avenue
  687-5000
  Contact: Laurel Nadler

- **35% on DEC**
  Digital Equipment Corporation

Other arrangements and discounts are available for purchases of microcomputer hardware, software, and maintenance services for University purposes (i.e., purchases made using University funds via purchase order). For information, contact the NYU Purchasing Division at 598-2660.

In addition, several individual schools are exploring the possibility of site licenses and other bulk discount agreements. The University's Academic Computing Coordinators group is discussing means of creating a resource which would facilitate the sharing of such information.
Some "Micro-Like" Facilities on the ACF Minicomputers

On the ACF's VAX minicomputers, faculty and research personnel can find word-processing facilities, electronic mail, a spreadsheet program with graphics, and other software which can be of great help in the preparation of publications and reports. In word-processing, for example, a program called WordMARC will allow you to see bolding and statistical and mathematical expressions on an appropriately fitted VT100 terminal or IBM PC. It can be used on a wide variety of terminals and has "sister" versions for popular microcomputers. Graphic Outlook is a spreadsheet program that can also perform simple statistics and provide graphic output -- translating sums of cell entries into bar charts, pie charts, histograms, and so on. A relational database management system for handling records, and research and bibliographical notes will also be available soon.

These "micro-like" facilities are being offered on a limited experimental basis, to faculty and research personnel only, on the ACF's VAX minicomputers. Faculty members who are considering the purchase of a personal computer, or who would like to become acquainted with these sorts of computer applications, might find such minicomputer facilities a good interim means of getting started.

The ACF VAXes also offer an assortment of programming languages, as well as a number of statistical packages. These include SPSS-X, SAS, and SAS/GRAPH, as well as such interactive packages as SCSS and MINITAB.

Accounts on any of the ACF computers may be obtained through the ACF Accounts Office (Room 305, 251 Mercer Street, 460-7427).

In the Humanities: A New Microcomputer Users Group

The Northeast Association for Computing in the Humanities was founded last year, here in New York City. The group is made up of scholars from many different colleges and universities in the tri-state area. While most members are from the humanities, a few represent the social sciences.

Meetings are held on a monthly basis at the IBM Building at 590 Madison Avenue. Typically, a meeting will start with a general discussion period, in which information on microcomputer use is shared and problems are discussed. This is usually followed by a talk in which a specialist in some discipline of the humanities discusses a specific use of microcomputers.

Such user groups can be extremely helpful to personal computers users, whether they are experienced, very new, or merely prospective. For further information, contact Prof. Alan Margolies, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, The City University of New York (212-725-2772).

Microcomputer Books, Supplies at the NYU Book Center

The NYU Book Center has recently enlarged and improved its computer book section. Located on the lower level, it now offers a wide selection of trade books and periodicals, many of which may aid users in taking full advantage of their hardware and software. The Book Center also stocks such computer supplies as tapes, diskettes and computer paper.
An Overview Of The Academic Computing Facility

The Academic Computing Facility (ACF) provides the computing services for the general academic community at NYU. Faculty and students use the ACF's computing services for research and instruction in all academic areas.

- **Computer Systems** include an IBM 4341 (running an MVS operating system and offering WYLDBI), a CDC CYBER 170/730 (its operating system is NOS 2), and several DEC VAX 11/780's (running VMS and UNIX operating systems).

- Central Clusters of Terminals and Printers are located at Tisch Hall (lower concourse), 14 Washington Place, Warren Weaver Hall (third floor, faculty site), Bobst Library (B-Level, terminals only), and Education Building (second floor). **Dial-in access** to our mainframes and minicomputers is through 777-7600.

- **Software** includes a wide array of languages, "word-processing" programs, and statistical and graphics packages. These include BASIC, PASCAL, C, FORTRAN, ICON, ADA; SPSS, SPSS-X, SAS, SAS/GRAPH, LISREL, NCAR.

- **Databases** available for research include a variety of surveys in economics and the social sciences. For example, the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research databases and the U.S. Census data are available on magnetic tape. (Contact 598-7851 for further information.)

- **Tutorials** in the use of the systems and their editors are given regularly during the academic year. Tutorials in special topics are also arranged at the request of faculty.

- **The ACF Seminars**, a series presented each fall and spring semester, bring speakers on topics of particular interest to our users. Past seminars have covered the use of graphics packages, and of SPSS, UNIX, text editors, and electronic mail systems. Other seminars have dealt with special topics in PASCAL programming, and with microcomputers.

- **Consultancy** in the use of our computers is offered at each of the ACF sites. Help in the use of statistical packages is specially available in Tisch Hall (Room LC-7, 598-7851). Warren Weaver Hall consultants are for faculty (460-7398), while help for students using the CYBER is offered at 14 Washington Place.

- Writeups and other documentation describing the use of our computers and computer products (language compilers, statistical packages, text editors, and so on) are produced for distribution to classes as well as to individual users. (Call 460-7397 for further information.) Reference collections of software manuals and guides are provided at all ACF sites.

- The ACF/NYU Newsletter includes summaries of technical information on our systems and software, and announcements of tutorials, seminars, special documentation and user services, and such. A copy is mailed to each individual account holder. (To add your name to the mailing list, please submit the form included in the present bulletin.)

- The ACF/NYU Microcomputer Newsletter will provide timely information bearing on the selection and use of microcomputers and microcomputer software. (To add your name to the mailing list, please submit the form included in this issue.)

- A Microcomputer Laboratory is available to faculty who wish to examine microcomputers and microcomputer software packages, and explore their uses in instruction and research (460-7160).

- Accounts on ACF computer systems are obtained through the ACF Accounts Office, 251 Mercer Street, Room 305 (460-7427).

For further information on computing hardware and operations, contact Terry Moore (460-7156); on software or communications, Ed Franceschini (460-7291).

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The director of the Academic Computing Facility, Professor Max Goldstein, and his staff are available to respond to questions about general policy issues and concerns -- on all modes of computing (micros, minis, and mainframes) -- and will be glad to arrange meetings with departmental groups or individual faculty members.

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March 1985
How To Get On Our Mailing List

We are putting together a mailing list for this newsletter. If you would like to be included in it, please fill out this form and send it to The ACF Microcomputer Newsletter, c/o Gary Chapman, 251 Mercer Street, New York, N.Y. 10012.

Name: ____________________________________________

Address (a University address, if possible, please):

____________________________________________________

Please check one:

Faculty ____ Administration ____ Student ____ Staff ______

Please check here if you would also like to be included in the mailing list for the general newsletter of the Academic Computing Facility: ______

Are you interested in other ACF resources, services, documents?

The Academic Computing Facility (ACF) provides a wide range of computing services to faculty and students at New York University. Microcomputer-related activities are just one part of what we do and of the facilities that we offer. An overview is included on the facing page.

If you are interested in learning more about the ACF and how our services might be of help to you, obtain a copy of the January 1985 edition of the Academic Computing Facility Newsletter. That newsletter describes recent developments at the ACF, and contains a directory of ACF personnel and resources. For a copy, write or call the ACF's Documentation Office, Room 306 Warren Weaver Hall, 251 Mercer Street, New York, N.Y. 10012 (460-7397). To have your name added to the mailing list for the ACF Newsletter, please complete the form just above, and be sure to specify (by placing a check on the appropriate line) that you wish to be included in the general newsletter list. ☐

This issue of the ACF Microcomputer Newsletter was written by Gary Chapman and Estelle Hochberg.

Newsletter Editor: Estelle Hochberg Editorial and production assistance: Judith Shorwell.

ACF/NYU Microcomputer Newsletter, Vol. I, No. 1 March 1985