

News Cache

NEWS FOR THE RENSSELAER COMPUTING COMMUNITY


♦ OCTOBER 1993

AIX/370 Access Restricted

On Saturday, August 28, 1993, AIX/370 (aix.rpi.edu) was removed from general service as a timeshare machine, and restarted as a limited availability system. It is now available on a subscription basis to users doing numerical analysis or other work that requires the capabilities of a large mainframe computer system.

For details on obtaining continued access to AIX/370, send electronic mail to aixesa-support@rpi.edu stating why you require AIX/370. If you are using AIX/370 for general purpose timeshare access, you should use an RCS timeshare system, such as rps.rpi.edu, rps-ibm.rpi.edu, or rps-sun.rpi.edu instead.

As announced in the September 1993 issue of *News Cache*, AIX/370 will be discontinued entirely on January 3, 1994. Current users of the limited-availability AIX/370 service should contact Mark Miller, via electronic mail at millem@rpi.edu or Mike Kupferschmid at kupfem@rpi.edu, for information about migrating their applications to the new clustered workstation batch service that will be made available this fall.

Currently, anyone who has /extra space has been pre-authorized access to AIX/370. However, /extra will also be withdrawn from service on January 3, 1994, so /extra users should find alternate disk storage before that time. 


Mouse Destruction

Users have recently complained to us about the condition of the mice and the mouse pads in the RCS Sun workstation labs.

It appears that people are peeling the felt off the bottom of the mice. This in turn makes the mice scratch the mouse pads until they're unusable.

ITS contacted Sun about obtaining replacement mice and pads. Sun informed us that this type of "wear and tear" is not normal. While the company went out of its way to replace the destroyed mice and pads at no charge this time, in the future we will be charged \$100 for each mouse and its pad.

Shortly after new mice were installed in VCC South and JEC 3207, they were again destroyed. In addition, we have even experimented with Teflon coating for the felt to keep it from collecting dirt and adding to the demise of the mouse pads, but that doesn't seem to have slowed the destruction.

Please, we ask you to not pick the felt off the bottom of the mice. Doing so causes the mouse pads to become scratched and useless. Please take care of your computing labs and help us keep costs down. The more money we have to spend on such items is money diverted from other services. 

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ITS Short Courses Offered

At ITS, we design non-credit (no grades), short courses for people who would like to learn about computing. There is no tuition—only a small registration fee for each course.

Although we also offer some advanced courses aimed at experienced computer users, most of our courses have been designed for those with little or no experience.

Registration fees are \$10 (tax added if you pay by cash or check) per faculty or staff member and \$2 per student (includes tax). Most courses are advertised in *News Cache*, and reminders are posted on-line in the RCS Message of the Day. You can register by phone or by mail. Please see pages 12 and 13 in every issue of *News Cache* for current course listings and instructions on how to sign up.

For complete descriptions of the courses ITS offers, please refer to the course booklet available at the VCC Reception Counter. Course descriptions are also available on-line on RCS in the directory `/campus/doc/its`. Please see the article *Documentation, Course Schedules, Lab Hours, and More Available On-Line on RCS* for more information on how to find these files. 

New Quick Studies

Quick Studies #21 and #22, one-page guides to *Using Z-Mail Electronic Mail on RCS* and *Using the XMosaic Retrieval System on RCS*, respectively, are now available.

The Z-Mail Quick Study discusses the basics of using the Z-Mail electronic mail system; topics such as starting the application and addressing, typing, and sending mail messages are covered, as well as how to read mail, reply to a mail message, and save the message to a file. The XMosaic Quick Study provides a quick overview of starting the package, selecting "hotwords," navigating

through the information levels within XMosaic, and printing files. For more information on XMosaic, please read the article *XMosaic: Information Discovery Tool* in this issue of *News Cache*.

ITS Quick Studies are available free-of-charge on the documentation racks behind the VCC Reception Counter. RCS-related Quick Studies are also available on RCS for on-line viewing or printing in the directory `/campus/doc/its.memos`; the files `quick21.txt` and `quick22.txt` are available for on-line viewing, and the files `quick21.dvi` and `quick22.dvi` are available for printing. To print

either of these files on the Xerox page printer in the VCC print room, enter the following command from a UNIX window or at a UNIX prompt:


lpr -Pvcx8 -d quick21.dvi

(or `quick22.dvi` in place of `quick21.dvi`).

To print either Quick Study on a LaserWriter, enter the command


dvips quick21.dvi

(or `quick22.dvi` in place of `quick21.dvi`).

For an index of Quick Studies available on RCS files, please refer to `/campus/doc/its/how-to-use`. 

Computing Lab Hours During Midterm Break


All ITS labs, other than those in the VCC, will follow special hours from Friday, October 8, to 8 a.m. on Wednesday, October 13.

The VCC will remain open 24 hours a day. Labs in CII and Sage, will be open from 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. on Monday and Tuesday, October 11 and 12 and will be closed all other times during the midterm break weekend, starting at 5 p.m. on Friday, October 8. Otherwise, all computing sites will close at 5 p.m. on Friday, October 8, and remain closed until 8 a.m., Wednesday, October 13. 

C Programming Class Offered

ITS is offering a seven-part class on C Programming, available to anyone in the Rensselaer community for \$10. It will cover the basic syntax of the language and programming conventions. Programming exercises will be given out that so that you can work on them on your own time. C is available on RCS and DOS machines on campus.

Prerequisites: Knowledge of a UNIX text editor, such as emacs or vi. Recommended text: *The C Programming Language*, 2nd Edition, by Kernighan and Ritchie, Prentice Hall, 1988.

To register, please fill out the form on page 13 of *News Cache*. 

News Cache

News Cache: a special place to hold frequently accessed information

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RPInet Dial-in Service Improved

When you dial-in from an off-campus computer to access RPInet, your connection is provided through a pool of modems and terminal servers. This summer, the modem pool was reworked — there are now 60 new modems, and you dial just one number, 276-8400, to reach them.

The old configuration consisted of several groups of modems operating at various speeds. The new setup is an integrated pool that offers connections at line speeds from 300 bits per second through 14.4kilo bits per second.

The modems are configured to negotiate the most reliable, highest speed connection possible with the calling modem. Network Operations Center staff use management


software to keep a close watch on the modem pool, to detect problem devices and take immediate corrective action. We expect this to significantly increase overall reliability of the modem pool.

While configuration and testing of new terminal servers continues, the modems pool will continue to terminate on the NIMs (Network Interface Machines). There are plans to replace the NIMs with new terminal servers over the course of the semester. The new servers offer improved SLIP and CSLIP capabilities and a variety of other enhancements, including a higher interface speed (57.6 vs 19.2 kbps). Watch *News Cache* for progress reports. 

VMS Service Ending in 1993

The ECS VMS service, consisting of DEC 6320s, VAXstation 2000s and VAXstation II/GPX, terminal servers, and LPS 20/40 printers, will be terminated as of December 31, 1993. Prior to the merger of Engineering Computing Services and Information Technology Services, ECS had recommended that this service be discontinued as a result of a number of factors:

- Hardware obsolescence — much of the present equipment was originally procured in 1987.
- Changes in DEC software licensing terms which made support of the DEC equipment increasingly expensive.
- Dwindling class use.
- Emergence of RCS as the preferred environment for instructional computing.

Present users of the ECS VMS service should address questions and concerns to vms-support@rpi.edu. 

Memos Updated

Memos RPI.112, *Using UNIX Workstations*, and RPI.113, *Using UNIX: The Rensselaer Computing System (RCS)*, have been updated.

Both memos have been changed to reflect the new RCS environment; Memo 113 also includes a general update to reflect changes that have taken place since the ECS/ITS merger back in June, an update regarding setup information, and information on the new Z-Mail electronic mail system.

All ITS memos are available, free-of-charge, at the VCC Reception Counter. You may also read them on-line on RCS in the files `/campus/doc/its.memos/rpi112.txt` and `rpi113.txt`. To print your own copies on the Xerox laser printer, change to the RCS directory `/campus/doc/its.memos` and enter the following commands at a UNIX prompt:

```
lpr -Pvcx8 -d rpi112.dvi
```

or

```
lpr -Pvcx8 -d rpi113.dvi
```



Those TLAs

Three letter acronyms (TLAs) and other letter combinations seem to be everywhere in the world of computing. Here is a primer of some of the basic TLAs you might run into while computing at Rensselaer.

AFS: AFS, a descendant of the Andrew File System, is a UNIX file system now supported by Transarc. Used on RCS.

AIX: Advanced Interactive Executive. IBM's implementation of UNIX.

BBN: Bolt, Beranek, and Newman — the company that produces BBN/Slate, which is available on RCS.

CII: Center for Industrial Innovation — a building on campus.

ftp: File transfer protocol. A command used on RCS and other UNIX systems to transfer files from one host to another.

IBX: Integrated Branch eXchange. The campus voice-data telephone system. IBX is the model name of a PBX (Private Branch Exchange) manufactured by Intecom.

ITS: Information Technology Services. Provides computing, information processing, and telecommunications to the Rensselaer community.

JEC: Jonsson Engineering Center — a building on campus.

MTS: Michigan Terminal System. One of the operating systems available on the ES/9000 large-scale computer at Rensselaer. To be phased out over the next two years.

NIM: Network Interface Machine. Connects the IBX and internet tiers of the network so that any internet-connected host, such as RCS or MTS, can be reached through the IBX.

RCS: Rensselaer Computing System. UNIX workstations linked together via network cables.

VCC: Voorhees Computing Center — a building on campus. 