

The monthly review of the [Oberlin Project for Unified Systems](#) for the staff and faculty of Oberlin College

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Y2K and you: OC prepares for the Year 2000

The Networking and Operations group in Oberlin's Center for Information Technology (CIT) has put together a web page that outlines how the Center is preparing for the Year 2000. Below is an excerpt from the web page; for more information, check out the site at <<http://www.oberlin.edu/Y2K/>>.

The turn of the century creates significant challenges for critical College information systems and for departmental and personal computer applications at Oberlin College. Like other institutions of higher ed, corporations, government agencies, and organizations worldwide, Oberlin College is concerned with and is preparing for the Year 2000.

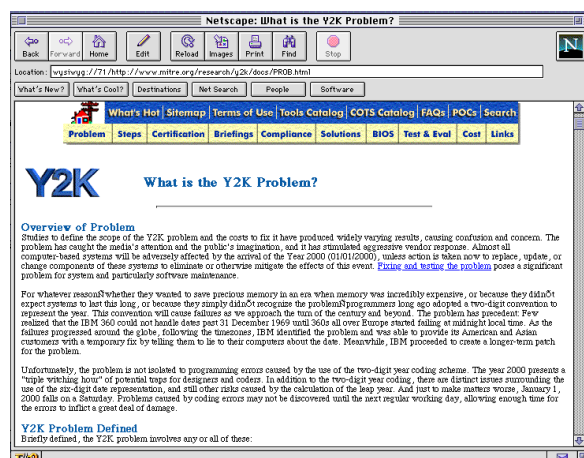
The Y2K Problem: The problem stems from the fact that many computer systems use a two-character value to store the year. In other words, "1998" is stored as "98" in computer files and memory. At the turn of the century, systems that use this two-digit date field will not be able to express or correctly perform date-based functions. The two-digit date affects data manipulation, primarily calculations and comparisons, within

applications. For example, consider a research project that analyzes traffic accidents to determine the impact of certain legislation introduced in 1990. A statistical program averaging the number of accidents logged each month for the years before 1990 would read the year 2000 as 00, and would therefore include accidents that occurred in or after the year 1900. Introducing these irrelevant data into the calculations would skew not only the results of the analysis, but the decisions based on those results. For more information on the Y2K problem see <<http://www.mitre.org/research/y2k/docs/PROB.html>>.

Large Systems and Small: Insuring that every computing system is Y2K compliant is a formidable task, given the wide assortment of hardware, software, and equipment used at Oberlin College. In addition to addressing this problem within the College's major computer systems and applications, it must also be addressed in other areas as well, such as offices where applications (i.e., spreadsheets and databases) have been created by departments to solve local-computing problems. Not to be overlooked is software purchased from commercial providers as well as older versions of the operating systems themselves. There are many areas that are, or could be, affected, and all of them must be addressed.

Databases to Elevators: The ramifications go beyond the hardware and software on our desks and in our central, shared computers. Recent

Interested in the Y2K issue? Check out the web site shown at right: <<http://www.mitre.org/research/y2k/docs/PROB.html>>.



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studies indicate that many of the computer chips in electronic equipment have Y2K problems. Such equipment can include anything from scientific and medical equipment to elevators. These, too, contain computer chips that can pose problems in the year 2000. How do we tell whether critical equipment is ready for the year 2000? Unfortunately, it is impossible to tell by simply looking at the item, and testing is often impossible. The best way to determine if a failure is imminent is to contact the manufacturer.

Solutions: Making College information systems ready for the year 2000 requires careful planning, collaboration, and departmental outreach. It is essential that each department make Y2K compliance a high priority, and dedicate the resources needed to ensure that critical College functions will be maintained.

Help from CIT: The Irvin E. Houck Center for Information Technology (CIT) is working to address those issues in its purview and to heighten awareness of the challenge of the Y2K for the entire Oberlin College community.

CIT is responsible for designing, programming, testing, and maintaining the College's strategic information systems and for

ensuring that the Y2K problem is solved at Oberlin College for each application, system and resource within CIT's realm of responsibility. Identification of every application, system, and resource (including hardware, software and networking resources) for Y2K compliance is underway. A summary of Y2K status for each area within CIT can be found at http://www.oberlin.edu/Y2K/Y2K_CITStatus.html.

College information system owners, including departments, offices, and individuals, need to assume responsibility for their own specialized software, discipline specific software, or software not supported by CIT on centralized computing resources.

Y2K compliance of all departmental, office and individual PC hardware and software, both application and files, is the responsibility of that department, office or individual.

CIT support staff, if requested, will help College information system owners identify Y2K problems and determine courses of action for addressing those problems. But please keep in mind that our resources are limited; the

responsibility for these specialized systems lies with the user. We'll do what we can to help identify problems, but the replacement or fix will be up to the user department. ■

Please keep in mind that the CIT's resources are limited; the responsibility for specialized systems in College offices/departments lies with the users of these systems. We'll do what we can to help identify potential Y2K problems, but the replacement or fix will be up to the user department.

opus notes

Blair-Miller visits Oberlin

On Wednesday, December 2, several OPUS teams met with Cindy Blair-Miller, an Account Manager at SCT and the manager of Oberlin's account with the company. Blair-Miller's visit was coordinated by Monica Wachter, OPUS Project Manager, who feels it is important for Blair-Miller to be kept up-to-date on how the College's implementation of BANNER is going. "Cindy's visit allows her to meet face-to-face with staff who are directly involved in the project," Wachter says, "and it allows those staff to communicate to her what they like and, more importantly, what they don't like about the product."

During her visit, Blair-Miller met with a number of groups involved with OPUS, including the Administrative Computing Systems staff, several staff involved with the Admissions implementation, and the Administrative Computing Advisory Committee. ■

Yet another SCT techie on site

In order to keep the huge amount of work associated with the Student Records module of BANNER under control, OPUS has brought in another SCT technical staff member to work on site. Patrick Kelly, a Technical Consultant in the Professional Services division of SCT, is assisting Analyst/Programmer Katie Styer by writing the programs that will convert student data in the legacy systems into a format that can be loaded into BANNER. "Due to the complexity of the SR module, I simply would not have the time to write the conversion programs for general student data," notes Styer, who is concentrating on mapping out the program that will convert students' academic history data, amongst other things.

This is not the first time that an SCT techie has been called on to write such a conversion program. SCT Technical Consultants Carrie Serum, Jeff Michael, and

David Weiss have come on board to help with the Human Resources, Finance, and Student Records modules. ■

Last technical training set for January

The Administrative Computing Systems group in the CIT will mark a major milestone January 4-8, 1999, when the Analyst/Programmers will attend their last technical training session for a BANNER module. Technical training differs from functional or user training in that only the Analyst/Programmers attend; the sessions are geared exclusively for staff working on the technical pieces of the software. The A/Ps have attended technical training sessions for each BANNER module: Human Resources, Finance, and Student Records. The session in January, for the Financial Aid module, will be the last one for Oberlin's BANNER implementation. ■

BANNER and Y2K: An open letter from SCT

The following letter was sent to all SCT-BANNER users via an electronic listserv posting. The letter, from SCT's VP for Development and Strategy Frank Tait, outlines the company's preparation for the Year 2000. This letter can also be found online at <<http://www.oberlin.edu/Y2K/BannerY2K.htm>>. If you have questions regarding BANNER and the Y2K issue, please contact opus@oberlin.edu.

Dear SCT customer:

As you know, the Year 2000 may present problems for a variety of information technology systems or computer-controlled products currently operating. We are placed in a difficult position when asked how the Banner2000 product line will operate in the Year 2000 and beyond for a variety of reasons. For example, the operation of the Banner2000 software is dependent on and may be used in conjunction with a variety of software, hardware, firmware and related components which make up your information technology environment; the Banner2000 software may have been modified in a manner which is not Year 2000 compliant; and you may be using the Banner2000 software in a manner which may not have been contemplated by SCT.

SCT has been in the process of updating all of the systems that are part of the Banner2000 product line to support the Year 2000 since the Banner 2.0 release in 1994. We have performed tests on the products since then and have found some issues in these tests and corrected them in several products and are in the process of correcting them in other products. Based on these tests, SCT believes that the identified release of the products set forth below, when used in accordance with its applicable documentation in an isolated environment, is designed to address the Year 2000:

Product	Release	Release Date
Accounts Receivable	3.0	September, 1997
Financial Aid	3.3	August, 1998
Finance	3.0	September, 1997
General	3.1	July, 1998
Human Resources	3.1	August, 1998
Student	3.1	July, 1998
SCT Aspire	1.0	July, 1998
Web for Faculty	3.1	July, 1998
Web for Student	3.1	July, 1998
Web for Employees	3.0	October, 1998

There are a couple of specific issues for the year 2000 that include date logic in the Human Resources and Alumni batch programs. The Alumni processes all expect and correctly process a 4-character year. However entering the 2-character year does not function correctly. This is being fixed so that by entering a 2-character year we use the standard Banner2000 pivot year and process correctly [ed's note: Oberlin is not using the Banner Alumni product]. The Human

Resources program had a similar but not identical issue. Both the 2 and 4 digit years can currently be entered, but entering a two digit year makes use of a hard coded pivot year to determine the century associated with the date. These programs are being modified to use the centralized Banner2000 pivot year, rather than the hard coded pivot year. The current versions of these programs will actually operate correctly. These changes make the entry of dates easier and standardize on the approach using the other Banner products.

As indicated above, please understand that the Banner2000 software may not perform in the manner described unless, at a minimum, all third party products, including hardware, network, software, firmware and related products used in combination with the Banner2000 software properly exchange date data with the Banner2000 software.

We are continuing to test and evaluate the Banner2000 systems for Year 2000 compliance. Any issues discovered as a result of our testing and evaluation will be corrected and distributed to all licensees under a valid maintenance agreement as part of our normal maintenance release process...

SCT recommends that you conduct your own Year 2000 test and review of each of the components that affect the operation of your information systems, including the Banner2000 software and any modifications that have been made to the baseline Banner2000 software, whether made by SCT, you, or a third party, to ensure that those modifications and other information systems are Year 2000 compliant in a manner consistent with the baseline Banner2000 system. Thank you for your continued interest in SCT.

Regards,

Frank Tait
Vice President, Business Development & Strategy
SCT Education Systems ■

For more information on issues pertaining to SCT-BANNER, see the SCT web site at <<http://www.sctcorp.com/Corp/fedsystech.htm>>.

Account protocol: Keeping Oberlin's systems safe

When you're talking computers, security is always a hot topic. With the arrival of BANNER and the integrated system, the topic is even hotter, since the shared database which allows College workers to see the data they need can also fall victim to the wrong people trying to get at that data for nefarious reasons.

There are plenty of security mechanisms in place in the Center for Information Technology, including the use of individually-assigned usernames and passwords, and each module has a security administrator who decides on a case-by-case basis which users can see what in BANNER. But all the security in the world can't stop someone from horsing around in BANNER if you've left the system up and running on your machine while you're at lunch, or keep security intact if you give your username and password to the new temp in your office who doesn't have an account yet. And what if a staff member leaves your office for a new job, but the CIT folks never hear about it? That person will have active computer accounts that are potential security hazards until someone just happens to mention that the individual hasn't worked in the office for ages.

The best way to protect your systems—and not just BANNER—is to adopt some practical procedures in your office for managing computing accounts. CIT staff from the Administrative Computing Services group and the Networking and Operations group offer these tips to keep potential security breaches to a minimum:

Keep your username and password private. Never, ever, ever give your username and password to someone else to use. It doesn't matter who it is; it is a critical breach of College security to allow someone else to log on to any system using a username and password that is not their own. Furthermore, if a person to whom you have given your username and password should do anything wacky in the system, from entering a misspelled last name to stealing salary information, you are the one responsible. If someone in your office needs access to a system, call the CIT and get them their own account.

Monitor your desktop. When you leave your office for an extended period of time—for lunch, a meeting, and certainly when you go home at night—make sure to completely quit any secured systems. This would include BANNER, Mulberry or QuickMail, the VAX machine, and ALPHA, to name the most common systems. Logging out of these systems makes it much more difficult for someone to sneak onto the system using your identity as a cover, and it also frees up space on the network and servers for overnight processing to take place.

Keep the CIT up-to-date on staffing, especially transfers. When someone transfers from your office to another position on campus, let your analyst/programmer or another contact (see list, below) in the CIT know as soon as possible. In fact, if you can drop the CIT a line even before the person leaves, that's even better. Getting an e-mail that says "Jane Doe will be leaving our office next week" is a much more cheerful experience for the CIT staff than getting an email that says "Jane Doe left two months ago, didn't you know that?"

The same is true for someone you've just hired; it's very important to let the CIT know that someone new is coming. Listing the accounts she/he will need will help avoid the "I don't have an account!" panic on the new hire's first day (make *sure* you know the correct spelling of the new person's name). Here's a list of the people in the CIT to contact when a new person in your office needs computing accounts:

- **For a BANNER account:** contact the security administrator for the BANNER module you need access to (opus@oberlin.edu can help if you don't know who your security administrator is).

- **For an e-mail account:** Kevin Weidenbaum, Director of Client Services.


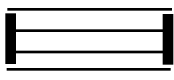
- **For a World Wide Web page:** Everett Doner, Associate Computer Systems Manager.

- **For an APKnet account:** Linda Iroff, Assistant to the Director of Information Technology.

- **For an OCVAXC account:** David Foos or Katie Styer, Analyst/Programmers.

Most of all, be aware that as a user of Oberlin's systems, part of the responsibility for keeping those systems secure is yours. The techies can only provide the tools; it's up to users to use 'em! ■

To see the College's Acceptable User Policy governing the use of college computers, see <<http://www.oberlin.edu/~clientsv/helpdocs/general/GENPolicy.html>>.

The Score is published monthly by the Oberlin College Center for Information Technology and the Oberlin Project for Unified Systems.

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