

The monthly review of the **O**berlin **P**roject for **U**nified **S**ystems for the staff and faculty of Oberlin College

in this issue

- 3 BANNER banter:
changing your password
- 4 sneak preview of
BANNER 4.0
- 4 opus note

opus events

April 17-29 and May 2-9
PRESTO registration for
fall courses

May 1-19, 2000
Financial Aid functional
training

June 12-15, 2000
Student Records
functional training: CAPP

feature

Coming soon: the “Citrix Solution” and BANNER 4.0

If you're a BANNER user, or a potential user, listen up: the next six to eight months are going to hold some pretty significant changes in the way you use the system. A fairly major upgrade to the software—BANNER version 4.0—is planned for implementation in the fall, and that upgrade will include differences in navigation and functionality across modules. In addition, before the move to 4.0, every BANNER user will be migrating from the current Forms Runtime client/server setup to a new client/server setup known as “the Citrix setup.” The Citrix setup doesn't make anything in BANNER work differently, but it does require a new login procedure, and the forms themselves look quite different in Citrix.

Arg, all these changes—just what is going on here?! Well, a lot, actually. The bottom line is this: in order to prepare for some important technical changes to BANNER behind the scenes, there are a number of front-end changes that also need to take place. Here's the deal.

Oracle and the Mac

A bit of background: in order to work, BANNER

depends on database software manufactured by the Oracle corporation. Oracle and BANNER aren't the same thing, but BANNER has to have Oracle in place to operate. Oracle is sort of like the operating system (OS) on your desktop machine: your OS doesn't really *do* anything as far as you (the user) are concerned, but your machine needs it in order to work. Oracle is sort of like the OS for BANNER: you don't really see it, but it needs to be there for BANNER to work.

In 1998, much to the chagrin of Oberlin and other colleges and universities that use Macintosh computers, Oracle decided that it would no longer support the Mac. In other words, future releases of Oracle's database software won't work with Macintosh machines. This presented a real problem for the CIT: how to keep BANNER up and running if people could no longer use their Macs. Demanding that the entire campus switch over to Windows machines didn't seem like a viable option, so the techies set out to look for another solution to the problem. Fortunately, there was still time to do some research, since the version of

continued on page 2...

Forms Runtime vs. Citrix: the graphic on the left shows the form SPAPERS as viewed with the Forms Runtime setup; on the right, the same form using the Citrix setup. Note that both these forms are shown as they would look on a Macintosh desktop machine.

...feature

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Oracle that would no longer work with the Mac wasn't due out til 2000. The search for a solution began.

The Citrix solution

Well, guess what. 2000 is here, and a solution has indeed been found. It's referred to as "the Citrix solution" because the software involved is made by a company called Citrix, but there are several other pieces involved. The Citrix solution still involves a client/server setup, but it differs from the current Forms Runtime setup in a number of critical ways.

Here's an attempt at an English-language version of the differences: in the current setup, when you log into BANNER, your machine (known as the "client" machine) is connected to two different servers. The first server, called BRAVO, is where the actual data in BANNER comes from; the second server, called OCNS4 (also known as "ORAForms"), is where the forms come from. In other words, when you're working in BANNER, your computer is working really hard to receive all that information from the two servers and combine it in the right way so that the data and forms come out looking the way they should. This is part of the reason why BANNER is sometimes so darn slow: the client machine has to do a sizeable amount of processing in order to display the data and forms coming from the two servers.

With the Citrix setup, there's actually a third server (which runs the Citrix software) that acts as sort of a go-between in the middle of all this. OCNS4 and BRAVO still supply the data and forms, but instead of trying to shove the data directly into your client machine (lovely image, isn't it?) OCNS4 and BRAVO feed that data into the Citrix server, where the data is compressed into a much smaller, more manageable format. Your client machine is connected to the Citrix server on the other side, so when you do something in BANNER, the Citrix server supplies your client machine with that much smaller, more manageable piece of data.

The upshot is that with Citrix, BANNER can potentially go faster and take up less space on your desktop machine. And because the Citrix server is cross-platform, it doesn't matter what kind of client machine you're using—Citrix can talk to both Macintosh machines and Windows machines.

So far, there are only a few offices on campus who are actively using the Citrix setup as part of the CIT's testing of the system.

The Office of College Admissions is one of those offices, chosen in part because so many users in the office do serious data entry, and the CIT was interested in how the Citrix setup affected BANNER's performance and speed. And so far, the news is good: "Being on the Citrix server has really helped to speed up our data-entry processes, so we consider it a wonderful improvement," says Office Manager Maryann Stillwell. "We are especially happy with the speed at which we can now move into and out of BANNER forms," Stillwell adds.

Other staff members in the Admissions Office are also pleased with the Citrix setup. "I am much happier with Citrix," says Administrative Assistant Joanne Simms. "There isn't the long wait between forms that I was experiencing earlier. I'm moving along much quicker now." Simms' colleague Leslie Curtis agrees: "To make a long story short, I really like Citrix," says Curtis. "It is a GREAT improvement over the slowness we experienced prior to Citrix. It's still BANNER but now it's much more tolerable!"

There's one catch: because Citrix is cross-platform, and because all the BANNER forms are originally designed for Windows machines, the BANNER forms with Citrix look like they do on a Windows machine, even if you're using a Mac. That means that for Mac users, moving to the Citrix setup will take a bit of getting used to; the forms don't act any differently, but they do look much different, and there is a completely different set of keystrokes to learn (if you're currently using BANNER on a Windows machine, your keystrokes and forms will be the same).

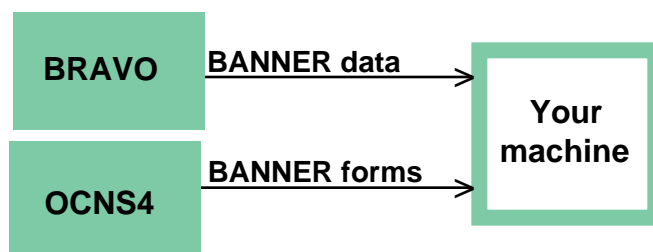
According to OPUS Project Manager Monica Wachter, the Citrix setup will be rolled out to users during the spring and summer months. "We anticipate having all

BANNER users using the Citrix setup by the end of the summer," Wachter says, noting that this timeline is necessary because the Financial Aid staff, which will begin training for their implementation in May, will be doing all their training on BANNER 4.0.

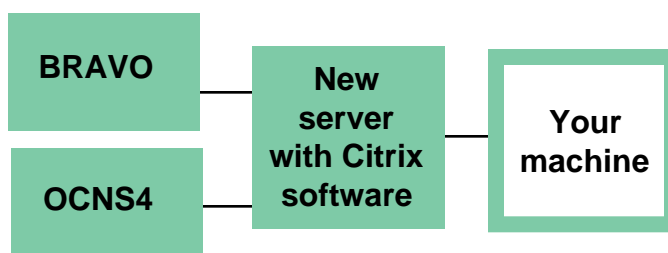
BANNER 4.0: the phantom menace

So what's the connection between Citrix and the move to BANNER 4.0? Remember that infamous new version of Oracle that won't support the Mac? Well, that new version of Oracle is necessary for operating BANNER 4.0—if we want to run 4.0, we gotta get on the new Oracle bandwagon. And since we need to be running BANNER 4.0 by the fall (since SCT only supports older versions of the software for a limited time), it's important that everyone is at least somewhat

continued on page 4...



A picture is worth a thousand words: above is the current BANNER setup, with BRAVO and OCNS4 feeding information directly to your machine. Below is the new Citrix setup, with the information passing through the new server (which runs the Citrix software) before getting to your machine.



BANNER Banter: Change that password!

Trivia question: what task takes only seconds to do, is vital to maintaining the integrity of confidential College data, and is put off again and again by computer users everywhere? You got it: changing your password.

Unlike some other systems (like Mulberry and the legacy systems on OCVAXC) BANNER does not prompt you to change your password. But it's absolutely critical that you do—especially if you never altered your password when you originally got it during your BANNER training. Keep in mind that there's lots of sensitive stuff in the system, and all the security in the world (and we've got tons of security set up

in BANNER) won't keep the system safe if you're lazy or sloppy about changing your password or giving it out to other people. So do yourself and your colleagues a big favor: use the instructions below to change your password to something that no one but you would know.

The password change form in BANNER is GUAPSWD, shown below. Instructions for changing your password are also below. Keep in mind that your password should be 6-8 characters long and can contain numbers if you like, but the first character of the password must be a letter. And even if you think your password is secure, now might be a good time to change it anyway. Better safe than sorry! ■

Step one: In GUAPSWD, enter your old password in the **Oracle Password** field. Make sure to spell the old password correctly.

The screenshot shows a window titled "Oracle Password Change Form (GUAPSWD 3.1.2)(PPRD)". It contains the following fields and buttons:

- Oracle User ID:** JDOE
- Oracle Password:** (empty field)
- Database:** LIVE
- New Oracle Password:** (empty field)
- Verify Password:** (empty field)
- Buttons:** Save, Exit

Step two: enter your new password in the **New Oracle Password** field. Your new password should be 6-8 characters long and can contain numbers, but the first character of the password must be a letter.

Step three: re-enter your new password in the **Verify Password** field and click the **Save** button. This will save your new password in the database. Make sure to remember your new password; you'll need it to get into BANNER the next time you log in.

