

The Silicon Ear

(with apologies to Linda Coughlin)

An occasional academic-computing newsletter for faculty and staff.

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Farewell to Chris Mattia, and a Plea for Restraint

As many of you have no doubt heard, Chris Mattia will be leaving almost immediately for a new job in California (at the same firm that lured Max Smith away last year, in fact). Chris has been around St. Mary's on and off since he transferred in as a student from Anne Arundel Community College back in 1994 (starting off with Bob Paul's 8:00 AM ecology class, and finishing by writing the very first SMP!) and we've come to regard him as an integral part of the St. Mary's Way: he'll be very sorely missed!

...Which brings us to the plea for restraint: we have not yet been able to hire a replacement for Max (though interviews begin very soon), so with Chris also gone we will have no Learning-System Specialists. George Waggoner and Linda Coughlin have pulled together some temporary help and redeployed the technicians, and some departments have generously agreed to lend technical expertise so that all buildings will be covered, but of course we're still down two people. So, here are some requests from George:

- Route all requests through the help desk (e-mail helpdesk@smcm.edu, telephone x4357 [HELP]). You may CC your local technician if you wish, but please use the help desk as your primary point of contact.
- Please do not rely on personal relationships to get things done: don't stop Anna or Bob or Jeff or whoever in the hallway with a "quick" request.
- If you've got a bright idea about how to use technology to enhance your teaching or scholarship, nurture that idea yourself for a few more months until there's someone who can really help with it. For now we're in "sustain" mode.

Here is the way technical help will match up with buildings initially. Keep in mind that all of these people serve the entire campus, not just these buildings, so the

Help Desk may dispatch someone from a different building to help you with your problem:

Schaefer: Bob Brown

Montgomery: Anna O'Connell

Kent, Calvert, Anne Arundel: Jeff Krissoff

David Emerick and Lane Andersen of Media Services have also been asked to pitch in to help support Montgomery Hall, particularly the computing lab.

Keep Sending Those CDs and Licenses

The "key server" (see Vol. 1 No. 2) is up and running in test mode, and Technology Services will be deploying it in some lab areas next semester. Briefly, a key server is a way of allowing people all over campus to use software for which we have just a few licenses, by ensuring that only the permitted number of people can use the software at any one time. To do this, it has to "know" about all the software that should be shared in this way. George sent around an e-mail last semester requesting software-licensing information from all faculty and staff, so please respond to that request.

Spam, Spam, and more Spam

CTSS installed a new spam filter from Barracuda Networks in September. In addition to more thorough and efficient spam blocking, the filter has a user interface to allow us to set our own scoring/tagging options; they'll send out instructions on how to do this shortly. To date, the filter has blocked over five million messages from reaching our mailboxes! Hourly and daily statistics can be found here: <http://netservices.smcm.edu/emailandspam.php>. It's more than a little depressing to see what a small fraction of the incoming e-mail is legit.

News, Hints, and Kinks

- Over the summer and early this fall, CTSS installed over 230 new life-cycle computers and secondary replacements. Thanks to all involved with the process!
- The contractor completed the north-campus telecommunications duct bank project this summer, and the first fiber-optic cables were installed in August. The nearly 1900-foot link between Baltimore and Schaefer Halls will be used to connect the core campus network and extend CATV service.
- SPSS doesn't work on any of the new Intel Macs yet, although the SPSS people working on a fix. It's a very nasty problem, because it looks like it works fine, it just supplies the wrong answers! Pretty serious "kink," eh? If you're an SPSS user, fall back to an older Mac or a Windows machine until the problem is fixed; we'll let you know.
- EndNote X (read, "ten") is now available for both PC and Mac. To download it, go to the student software download site

<http://shd.smcm.edu/software.php> (must be plugged in to the campus network).

- The SMCM Library now has its very own blog <<http://smcm-library-issues.blogspot.com/>>. You can see a photo of the new solar energy panel on the roof, read about Banned Books Week, or enter a conversation about the pros and cons of food and drink in the Library. You can respond to a current post or submit a new topic for discussion. Join in!
- Things not working in the evenings or the weekend? The Student Help Desk is open until 10:00pm Monday – Thursday, 10:00am – 2:00pm on Saturday, and Noon – 10:00pm on Sunday. At all other times evenings and weekends you can call Public Safety (240-895-4911), who will notify the appropriate on-call CTSS staff member. Last weekend the College web site was down for some time, but even though several users had noticed the problem, no one called Public Safety until after many hours had passed. Once CTSS was notified, the web site was back up in just a few minutes.
- Check your laptop battery! If you have a laptop of virtually any brand, go to your manufacturer's website now, and check to see whether your battery has been recalled. A bad batter can start a fire, and we wouldn't want your lap on fire! We know of recalls for Apple, Gateway, HP, and Compaq, so it may be that no one is immune. Usually it just takes a second to check your computer and battery serial numbers against a list at the company's website. Do it!