

Software news

*By K. Scott Rowe, TCC Systems
Programming Manager
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Graphical login: The TCC's Linux machines will soon support a Graphical Interface on login (XDM) instead of the old text-based login. This will allow users to use X windows by simply logging into a Linux machine. No longer will it be necessary to run `mitx` or `startx`. The new interface will also allow users to easily change their Linux X setup by providing a list of common Window Managers and environments to choose from.

There is a radiobutton on the login screen. Simply select "change your current X environment," and then login normally. You can then graphically choose, with the environment selector, from a selection of environments complete with snapshots and descriptions. You can select from environments such as `fvwm2`, `Gnome`, `KDE`, `AfterStep` and more.

This new configuration uses the `.Xsession` file and not the `.xinitrc` file so it won't effect most people's old X setups. This means that you can try out new environments and still revert back to you original setup by simply selecting the "Use old config file" button in the environment selector.

New accounts: The default window manager is now `fvwm2`.

Software upgrades: These software packages were recently updated on the TCC machines:

- Netscape-4.73 web browser. This version will, by default, not use disk cache. It is also the default browser under Windows.
- Maple-6 math system.
- Minitab-13 statistics package.
- SAS-8 statistics package.
- PhotoShop LE photo editor.
- xfig-3.2.3 drawing package.
- Cadkey-99 design package.
- Python-1.5.2 programming language.
- Perl-5.005_03 programming language.
- icon-9.3.2 programming language.
- StarOffice-5.1 MS-Office equivalent for Linux.

Where to go for help

Help desk: Our User Consultants are here to answer your questions. Call them at 835-5437 or visit the Help Desk in Speare 5.

TCC homepage:

<http://www.nmt.edu/tcc/>

User Consultants page:

<http://www.nmt.edu/~uc>

TCC secretary: Jan Anderson, 835-5735.

- mutt-1.2i mail utility.
- teTeX desktop publishing system.
- FrameMaker-6.0 desktop publishing system.
- xmms-1.0.1 mp3 player.
- AfterStep-1.8.0 window manager.
- McAfee-4.5 virus defenses.
- Slackware-7.0 Linux operating system.

Avoid Microsoft Outlook. We recommend that you do not use Microsoft Outlook. This package has several annoying bugs:

- You cannot retrieve any e-mail that has both the "Bcc:" and "Reply-to:" fields blank.
- It is highly susceptible to a number of popular viruses such as the notorious ILOVEYOU worm.
- There are several bugs that can cause it to crash.

For more details about reasons not to use "Lookout," see:

<http://www.nmt.edu/tcc/lookout/>

Instructional TV News

*By Bob Boston, TCC ITV
Coordinator*
(bboston@nmt.edu)

The faces are the same but the Instructional TV department is all new this fall. We are completing a major overhaul of the ITV facilities—everything from rewiring the studios to completely revamping the control room.

We have more flexibility in sending and receiving classes than ever before. We are able to provide new services such as videotape dubbing, video production for faculty, staff, and students, and virtually anything else that you might want to do with a television studio. We will also begin producing orientation and other training materials for Tech students, faculty and staff.

So come by and take our tour. See what we have available for you. Talk to us about your projects and let our experienced technicians take you from dream to reality. The ITV control room is in Speare 22.

Computer classroom news

*By Mike Topliff, Director of
Academic Computing*
(mtopliff@nmt.edu)

Over the summer, the six computers in Weir 204 were moved to room 208 of the Library, and the 13 computers in Weir 226 were moved to room 116 of the Speare building. In addition, 8 computers were installed in room 187 of the MSEC building. Room 4 of the Speare building retained its 34 computers.

All four of these computer classrooms are available for scheduling of classes through the Registrar.

The four classrooms each have an instructor's PC connected to a ceiling mounted computer projector and an attached VCR, sound system, and wireless microphone. There is also a printer in each classroom.

WebCT: Web Courseware Tools at Tech

By John W. Shipman, Applications Specialist (john@nmt.edu)

Are you teaching courses at Tech? Would you like to use the Web to give your students easy access to course materials?

We have the popular WebCT package installed on the TCC machines, along with a dual-processor 600 MHz dedicated server for this package.

Features include:

- A centralized course page where students can find all the course-related resources. You as an instructor can control and monitor who has access to these resources, and when.
- A syllabus tool lets you publish and manage the complete syllabus, calendar, policy statements, and related material.
- A flexible gradebook lets you define your formula for computing the course grade. You can allow students to check their own grades, and you can permit your grader to post the grades directly.
- With just a few mouse clicks, you can put up bulletin boards and chat rooms. These communication tools can help students see what problems other students are having, and the instructor's suggestions.

The TCC will offer free WebCT training this fall. We realize that different courses may or may not fit this kind of Web access, and we'll try to help you evaluate which Web-based tools are appropriate for your classes.

We'll offer this training to faculty on a first-come, first-served basis. Space is limited, so please e-mail me (john@nmt.edu) if you are interested.

TCC Free Classes

by John W. Shipman, Applications Specialist (john@nmt.edu)

Every semester, the Tech Computer Center offers a number of free, low-pressure, non-credit class series for students, faculty and staff. These hands-on sessions are held in computer-equipped classrooms so you can see the results right away.

We currently offer three different classes:

- Check out our series "Making the World Wide Web work for you" for introductory and intermediate instruction on Web-related topics.
- Come to our "Web maintainer's workshop" if you have already mastered basic Web page construction and maintenance and want to know more.
- In the "Python programming language" class, we'll learn what may be the best general-purpose language available today.

Each of these classes meets for 50 minutes once a week, starting the second week of each semester. The topics repeat every semester, so if you missed some last time, catch them when they come around again.

There is no charge for these classes. We don't give grades and we don't give assignments. Anyone is welcome.

Making the World Wide Web work for you

Our Web class series starts with the very basics and proceeds through advanced topics. We'll start with an overview and talk about the origin of the Web and current trends.

Then we'll go through most of the commonly used features of the Netscape browser, especially the process of building and maintaining your bookmarks. We'll tour some popular and innovative sites, and give you some hints for using search engines to find things on the Web.

Next, we'll show you how to put up your own pages. Then we'll discuss good style and navigation—how to make your pages useful and well-organized. Finally we'll cover advanced topics: how to build tables; how to create forms that readers can fill out; and how to create pages dynamically in response to readers' requests.

Web Maintainer's Workshop

Have you been asked to take over a web site that was built by someone else? Are you building or maintaining a growing site and wish the process were not so tedious?

If you answered yes to either of these questions, and you've already learned basic HTML, you might want to attend this workshop where you will exchange ideas with other web maintainers.

Unlike the other two series, this is not a class with a set sequence of topics. It is a round-table group where we talk about tools and methods and issues of layout and functionality.

We'll look at Adobe PageMill and other systems that assist you in Web design. You can also ask us to comment on your page designs or suggest solutions to your technical or aesthetic problems.

Programming with Python

The Python language may be the best general-purpose programming language currently available.

Python is powerful, elegant, free, easy to learn, runs everywhere, and interfaces to everything. It has excellent object-oriented features, but you can use it without these features if you prefer.

Applications including scripting, Web applications, rapid prototyping, systems administration, database work, and graphical user interface construction. Python scales very well and is a good choice for large production systems.

Where and when are these classes?

The times and locations for all these class series change each semester. For an advance schedule, look at this Web page:

<http://www.nmt.edu/tcc/classes/>

or log in to your Tech Computer Center account and read the "message of the day." This message will tell you the times, locations and topics of the next class in each series.

Credits

Edited by John W. Shipman. Please send all comments to tcc-doc@nmt.edu.