Academic Computing Steering Committee (AcCSC)

Minutes of Meetings:
January 26, 2001; Engineering Dean's conference room; 9:45 am

Present: Batson, Boyer, Keller, Klein, McFadden, Sener, Traver, Smith

Review of last meeting's minutes

Minutes:

1. **Notebook computers for faculty.** Dave and Diane will circulate a draft policy early next week. [Draft distributed Monday, 1/29.]

2. **Internet research.** Tom McFadden alerted us to a new service being marketed to our students (and faculty) from an online library service called Questia. This service promises to (eventually) provide students online subscriptions to searchable full text of some 50,000 "liberal arts" texts. Subscriptions can be for as long as one year, or as short as 48 hours, the latter costing $15. Questia promises students an easier time researching their papers. The service is being heavily marketed to students, faculty, and administrators. (Klein, Sorum, and Baker have been contacted; there is an ad in this week's *Concordiensis*.)

Tom raised several concerns: students are being enticed with promises of fast and easy research; full-text searchable with automatic footnoting means that students can lift passages (albeit with citation) without ever reading more than a page or two (if that) of a text, losing the context of the work and dulling critical thinking skills; over time, if many students use this service, papers will begin to sound more similar, as students rely over and over on the same references; the
distinction between research and plagiarism might become even more blurred in student eyes; finally Tom noted that to date Questia does not seem to be anywhere near their target of 50,000 works. In some areas they seem very thin, and seem to rely on popularization of materials rather than real primary sources. Furthermore, they seem to be relying heavily on works out of copyright, although they seem eager to gain rights to more current work. At Union they have contacted Prof. Baker about purchasing rights to some of his work, and they have advertised in Publisher's Weekly promising per-hit royalties to authors. Tom expressed concern for the free flow of ideas if authors begin to expect payment for every time a reader consults their work.

In subsequent discussion, we noted that many of these problems were those presented by any sort of web research, and in fact from some uses of the physical library. Students frequently confront work completely out of context, and without the benefit of any editorial screening such as would occur in visiting a physical library where most works have been through the hands first of an editor and then a librarian. Questia, it would seem, is only the latest manifestation of the challenges that the web presents to educators. Other than its marketing pitch, it has elements in common with full-text services that the library currently subscribes to, like Lexis-Nexis, Proquest, FirstSearch, and JSTOR. Other free services exist online to make available full-text, from the Library of Congress, to the decade-plus Project Gutenberg. Questia's automatic citation feature might even be considered an advantage. Its chief problem would seem to be its intense marketing and its commercializing of information.

The burden falls on us as educators to teach students how to do research; how to locate and evaluate sources; the Web and Questia only makes this challenge more difficult and more essential. We are left with the question of whether the College can or should establish any policy regarding the use of services like Questia by students, or contracts between Questia and faculty.
3. **Plagiarism.** Kimmo Rosenthal has warned that plagiarism seems to be becoming more commonplace, and working with Schaffer Library will mount a campaign to educate and assist faculty in combating cheating. Several possibilities exist, including publicizing among faculty methods to recognize plagiarized material; publicizing students convicted of plagiarism (and the penalties imposed); subscribing to one or more of the online services available to analyze writing and search for uncited sources.

Another tactic discussed was for faculty to change the nature of research projects to make cheating more difficult. For example, if students are required to submit an outline, a bibliography, and a rough draft of a paper some weeks before the final paper is due, plagiarism would become at least more difficult. Some faculty have even required students to submit photocopies of all sources cited. Students could also be examined on the content of their papers, to insure that (plagiarized or not) they have understood what they have written about.

4. **Copyright policy.** Tom and Dave hope to have a draft of a College copyright policy to circulate to the committee next week.

5. **Fair use policy.** Dave Cossey has received a response from the College lawyer about the draft Computing Guidelines, which will be re-named the Fair Use Policy. He will incorporate the changes into the document and circulate a new draft next week. [Draft distributed Monday, 1/29.]

6. **Intellectual Property.** Doug Klein and Tom McFadden will collect and circulate some sample intellectual property rights policies. One that is available online that Tom mentioned is from Indiana University.

7. **Cable in Dorms v. Network upgrade.** Doug Klein expressed concern that current discussion to wire the dorms for cable-TV not come at the expense of raising the necessary funding to upgrade the campus network.
The new network would not only be faster, but would also provide a new level of network security needed to fully implement the online services that will be possible with the new web-advising system, and later other online administrative transactions. If funding were available, this network upgrade could be done this summer. (Note that access to individual dorm rooms would for the most part not be necessary, so the CTY presence on campus would not be an issue.)

8. Committee Status. John Boyer asked what our relationship was with the AAC, since both he and Cherrice are on AAC. Doug said that the Steering Committee is no longer a subcouncil of the AAC, but now is responsible, along with the sister Administrative Steering Committee, for recommending policy directly to the President.

9. Faculty Computer Policy. Are all departments aware of policy that OCS will provide basic hardware? And do they know exactly what the "standard" OCS package entails? Department Chairs should request what they need, whether new computers or upgrades; individual faculty should call attention to their needs -- either through Chair, or AcCSC rep, or directly to Diane Keller. We are in better shape now than a few years ago, although as the level of requests rises (e.g. notebooks; digital video editing, etc.) the replacement will be under pressure.

Fuat Sener suggested devising a policy for faculty to be able to request (perhaps once a year) a computer "tune-up", to have an OCS expert come in and run diagnostic tests to try to speed performance, and to recommend what kinds of upgrades might help performance. Diane Keller said she would take this under consideration.

NO MEETING Feb 2.
Next meeting: February 9, 2001 9:45am