

TERMINAL

TALK

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- THE WOFFORD CONNECTION -

Wofford College Computer Center

Spartanburg, South Carolina

Terminal Talk will be an information sheet published by the Wofford College Computer Center for its users. It will present information about the terminal, its use, and the changes in the service. It will also be a record of the development of the Computer Center. The masthead was designed by Frank Anderson to symbolize the teleprocessing service using punched paper tape. To have your name placed on the distribution list, contact Dr. Olds.

The Good Word Comes In

Early this month, Wofford College received word from the National Science Foundation that funds have been granted to support our participation in a two-year study entitled "Experiment on the Ways of Supplying Computer Facilities to Small Colleges for Instructional Uses." This experiment is under the direction of Dr. John Hamblen of the Southern Regional Education Board and Dr. Olds will direct Wofford's part of the program. The overall aim of the experiment is to provide a set of experiences which can be of some help to other schools in planning for computer facilities.

Wofford's grant will be used to support a time-sharing terminal which provides access to a computer in Raleigh, N. C. via regular long distance telephone lines. It is the purpose of this project to study the effect and effectiveness of such a terminal in the academic and research program of a small college. Your cooperation is needed in developing and documenting its uses. During the two-year period of this grant, please take an active experimental approach to the terminal. This is the time to discover and test possible uses and to find just what parts, if any, of Wofford's program can be improved by computer use.

History

This grant is the result of considerable work by several of our faculty. Prof. Hartman and Dr. Olds have been working toward this since early in the spring of 1967. No financial help could be found within the college. At least four proposals have been prepared with the help of Dr. Seegars, Dr. Stephens and others. Last April 15, by agreement between President Marsh and the physics department, Wofford College received its first computer facility. This was supported in part by special college funds, in part by the physics budget, and in part by the user. An initial "free trial period" proved very popular (usage averaged over thirteen hours a day) and later some students even paid from their own pockets to use the terminal for data analysis.

The switch from General Electric (Atlanta) to Call-A-Computer (Raleigh) as a result of the grant will present few, if any, difficulties to current terminal users. The terminal is a first step toward getting a computer on campus, a project still under study by the Computer Committee.

Time Sharing

"Time Sharing", as a term is applied to this service, means that a single computer system is made available to several users in rapid succession. Because humans are relatively slow, a single computer can service many, and provide each with the illusion that he has a computer to himself.

In our case, the computer system is in Raleigh. Its major components are: a General Electric Datanet-30 which controls the input and output of the system on as many as forty telephone lines at once and also contains the "master program" that makes the whole system work; a General Electric model 235 computer which does all the computation and compilation on request; a magnetic disk file on which the programs for various users, the system library, the billing records, and the compilers are stored; tape drives, printer, terminal, etc. for system management.

Access to this complex system is thru a single teletypewriter and this is the principal limitation of the time-sharing service. It is slow and limited in format. Major strengths of the service are the on-line conversational operation and the economic considerations.

This particular system and the BASIC programming language were developed at Dartmouth College from about 1963 to 1967. Time sharing is quite new and perhaps Wofford may be considered a pioneer. Nevertheless, in the computing field a pioneer must run to keep from being trampled by the crowd.