

Programmers prepare for 2000 coding issue

By **JOSH FUNK**
Staff Reporter

Though 2000 signals a wave of new technology, it could make today's technology think it's 1900.

Many of today's computers are not equipped to handle the change in centuries as the digits of years change from 1999 to 2000.

The problem stems from a single line of code that relates to dates in computer programs. When the programs were written, programmers used a two-digit entry, the last two digits of a year, for the date.

So at 12:01 a.m. in 2000 those two-digit counters will reset to 00 or 1900.

The University of Nebraska addressed this problem in its Winter 1997 University of Nebraska Computing Services Network newsletter.

Don Sand, a special assistant with the University of Nebraska Computing Systems Year 2000 task force, is working to eliminate the problem in all university computers before the turn of the century.

"There is no silver bullet to fix the problem," he said.

Also, some older personal computers have 1980 as the start number in their BIOS chips, which are similar to the memory function on a car stereo. It saves the system configuration until the power is turned back on.

This glitch will affect systems with

ongoing databases such as health and personal records and systems that date computations because computers could generate negative ages.

The problem might not be limited to computers. Other household appliances such as microwaves and washers could be affected if they have a date stored in their memory.

There is no quick fix for this problem either. In software, every line of code with the erroneous date in it must be tediously corrected by programmers.

All the information that is saved in the two-digit format must be converted to a four-digit format, or programmers must develop a program to act as a bridge between the old system and the new system.

Sand said most computer users might be in for a shock.

"They don't realize the impact of this, or they just don't see it as a problem," Sand said.

He said the biggest problem is to find all areas affected by the change, and the university is working hard to address the problem now before it becomes too late.

UNL Vice Chancellor for Information Services Kent Hendrickson said the issue was a concern for the entire university.

"We are trying to make sure that we deal with it now because 2000 is not far away," he said.

UNL boasts new lab

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its increased ability to help students with disabilities feel at home and capable in the university, and its ability to help all students learn better with technology.

Randy May, a 1993 UNL graduate, said he came to the university in 1987 from Springdale, Ark., when he heard about Horn and UNL's center to assist students with disabilities.

May has cerebral palsy, which impairs his mobility and speech, but he communicates well with the help of adaptive technology, such as the special keyboard and joystick instead of a typical mouse.

"If I needed to work on the computer, at night or on the weekend, Christy (Horn) would come in and open up the center just for me," May said. "If she knows you are trying, she will go the extra mile."

That mile helped May complete his bachelor's degree in political science, he said. May, 35, now works as a research analyst, and said he was happy the center's new facility will allow Horn to assist more students with disabilities.

Horn said May was a shining example of the type of student the center's new facilities could help.

Smart students with disabilities often feel they cannot overcome obstacles to their contributing in academic surroundings, she said.

All students have a contribution, she said, but without adaptive technology, those with disabilities could spend all their time to complete the minimum requirement.

A few years ago, students who could not type or write an assignment because of mobility impairments would have to dictate the assignment to another person.

Now special keyboards and voice recognition software help such students typewrite a class assignment on a computer.

Unlike dictating assignments, students have freedom to change any part of the assignment without absorbing another's time, she said.

The resulting independence is a boost to students' morale, as well as the improved work output.

Horn said she hoped the center could help all students learn better through its research in teaching and learning methods, and its wide range of adaptive equipment.

"I love my lab," she said, and would like others — like May — to get the chance to love it, too.



ARREST

Omaha police arrested a Lincoln bank robbery suspect at a roller skating rink in Omaha Saturday for parole violations.

Edward Schrader, 27, is a suspect in the Friday robbery of the Union Bank and Trust Company, 3643 S. 48th St.

On Friday at 9:30 a.m., a man went into the Lincoln bank and gave a note to the bank teller, who gave him an unknown amount of money.

Omaha police got a call Saturday from someone at a roller skating rink in Omaha who recognized Schrader, Lincoln Police Capt. Steve Ott said.

Schrader is being held in Omaha for the parole violation. Ott said they have not arrested Schrader in connection with the robbery, and the investigation is continuing.

UNL professors return

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night, just after Gupta had been notified by the U.S. Embassy that he would leave via airlift within two hours. Lee said he later called back to the hotel where Gupta was staying, but Gupta had checked out.

At 9 a.m. Friday, Lee heard a report that the Albanian airlifts had been suspended because of dangerous gunfire on the planes.

"I was really a nervous wreck," Lee said. "I was worried about their safety."

For hours, Lee did not know if the two professors had escaped successfully or had fallen to the gunfire that had stopped the airlifts.

Relief came at noon, when Gupta called from Italy to announce he and Hambley were safe. Hambley plans to return to UNL after visiting family in Philadelphia.

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The Daily Nebraskan is now accepting applications for senior positions for the fall semester. Any major field and class standing is eligible, as long as you are carrying at least six credit hours and have a 2.0 GPA or higher.

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✓ Opinion Editor	✓ Senior Photographer
✓ Copy Desk Chief	✓ Copy Editors
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