Online Time Entry System is a Timesaver

"It almost seems too easy!" That was the response of one user after viewing a demonstration of the new Electronic Time Entry System (ETES). This Web-based system will allow bi-weekly, temporary and work study employees to enter their time sheets online. For employees who currently use a swipe card, that functionality will exist within ETES as well. The implementation is expected to result in many advantages for the University, supervisors and staff.

The new application is supplied by Fastech, a leading provider of staff time and attendance reporting technology. Fastech is customizing the system for Northwestern, adding necessary features such as multiple job processing, corresponding supervisor approval security, and customized reporting features.

While Human Resources is testing the business side of the system, NUIT is also heavily involved. Because data from ETES must interface with HRIS, NUIT is writing interfaces to import and export data and customizing some panels within HRIS. The interfaces will allow the employee’s demographic, job badge, and time entry to flow between HRIS and ETES.

Spring Rollout Planned

Rollout will begin this spring for pilot departments. Additional departments will be brought on board throughout 2003 and into the second quarter of 2004, with the emphasis on getting people comfortable with the system rather than on meeting specific target dates.

To keep the community informed, ongoing training, demos, information sessions and brown-bag sessions will continue into next year. Classes and computer-based tutorials will be available for bi-weekly and temporary employees. Supervisors will be required to attend a hands-on workshop.

Continued on page 2

NUIT Phases Out Support for Some Older Versions of Operating Systems

Northwestern University Information Technology has announced deadlines for its support of certain versions of the Microsoft Windows and Macintosh operating systems. NUIT attempts to support operating systems for slightly longer than announced plans by the manufacturers. In some cases, support plans are influenced by the availability of key features or necessary compatibility with important applications.

**Windows support:** As of September 1, 2003, NUIT will no longer support Microsoft Windows 98 and Windows NT Workstation. At the same time, support for Windows Me will be downgraded to "reasonable effort" by NUIT support staff. This means help desk personnel will make every attempt to assist, but problems will not be escalated to full-time support specialists.

NUInfo's Greatest "Hits"

Ever wondered which NU Web pages are accessed most often? Here's our “top ten list” for July-December 2002.

1. HereAndNow <hereandnow.northwestern.edu>
2. Northwestern University <www.northwestern.edu>
3. CAESAR <www.northwestern.edu/caesar/>
4. Academics <www.northwestern.edu/academics/>
5. Students <www.northwestern.edu/student/>
6. NUTV Help Guide <www.tss.northwestern.edu/nutv/helpguide/>
7. Admissions <www.northwestern.edu/admissions/>
8. Weinberg College of Arts & Sciences catalog <www.registrar.northwestern.edu/nucatalog/>
9. List of graduate majors <www.northwestern.edu/academics/programs/gradmajors.html>
10. Faculty/Staff top-level page <www.northwestern.edu/staff-fac/>

Thanks to Adam Finlayson of University Relations’ Web Communications department for providing these statistics.

What's New in Training & Communications

NUIT's Training & Communications team has undergone some significant changes recently. Because of the need for increased communications both within NUIT and throughout the NU community, our team is now "NUIT Communications."

We’re planning new initiatives to help increase your awareness and knowledge of how technology can work for you. You can look forward to more informational "brown bags," our Knowledge@Noon series highlighting resources to enhance your work environment and keep you "in the know." See page 4 for a list of upcoming sessions.

Many of you are familiar with our popular Dreamweaver workshops. These will still be available, but will be offered by NU Human Resources Training & Development rather than NUIT Communications.

Questions or comments? Email it-communications@northwestern.edu.

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ETES continued from page 1

Advantages for All

Advantages will be seen on several levels. For the University, time will be accurately reported by employees, approved by supervisors and uploaded into HRIS. ETES will also calculate overtime payments and assist in tracking hours.

Employees will enter time online, eliminating the need for paper time sheets. They will be able to check entries daily, check vacation and sick leave balances, and change their local address online. The system will be utilized by much of the University staff, including 4,000 temporary employees and 2,400 regular bi-weekly employees as well as their supervisors.

You've Got Mail!

In addition to generating email to notify supervisors of new employee NetIDs and passwords, ETES will email staff a reminder about time sheet submissions and will notify them when time sheets are approved, or if a supervisor has changed the hours they submitted. Supervisors will be alerted when an employee makes a change to a prior pay period, and will be reminded that time sheets need to be approved before a payroll runs.

What If I Need Help?

Each department will identify a "superuser" who will act as the first line of defense should a problem arise. Before implementation, the HRIS business support team will visit the department and meet the business administrator for a pre-implementation discussion. ETES help phone and email will be available as backup, plus a supervisors' listserv.

For details regarding the rollout, events, classes, supported browser versions, and other features of the project, visit the HRIS site at <www.northwestern.edu/hr/hris/>.

Thanks to Renee Brown, Kathy de la Cruz and Bridget Mullan, HRIS, and to Tom Halloran and Doug Vivian, NUIT, for their contributions to this article.

Students Get Creative at MediaWorks

What do Hitchcock, Welles, Kurosawa, Ford and Hawks have in common, besides being the names of famous directors? Along with Eisenstein, Lang, Melies and Miyazaki, they’re (appropriately enough) the names of computers in NUIT’s new MediaWorks lab.

Tucked away in the lower level of the University Library, MediaWorks is exclusively for use by students—media majors and others. The lab boasts a total of nine high-end Macintosh workstations, each with two large flat-panel monitors and the latest video and audio editing software.

NUIT collaborated with the Medill School of Journalism, the School of Communication, the School of Music, and the School of Education and Social Policy in developing MediaWorks.

“Our intent was to meet a growing demand for digital media services at Northwestern, and these four schools have the greatest need for those services,” said Joe Hoy, media services specialist for NUIT.

In addition to audio/video editing and video digitizing tools, the lab features software for graphic/photo manipulation and scanning and Web content creation/animation, plus CD/DVD burners and three scanners. A wide range of digital devices, such as digital cameras and camcorders, can be accommodated.

NUIT’s Media Works Web site, <www.mediaworks.northwestern.edu>, has hardware and software information, allows students to check for available workstations, and includes online tutorials on digital video capture and scanning.

“There are so many different kinds of video projects you can do here,” said one NU student. “It’s an amazing place to work. The possibilities are nearly limitless.”
Human Resource System Moves to the Web

It’s farewell to the Human Resource Information System (HRIS) desktop client as of March 10, the target date for implementation of Web-based HRIS 8.3. The new version is not only Web-accessible, but features more built-in functionality, flexibly and accessibility.

HRIS at Northwestern dates back to 1997, when the client-server version of the application was purchased from PeopleSoft to accommodate the Y2K problem and to replace a 20-year-old legacy system. Because this was a commercial version of the product, many modifications were needed to accommodate Northwestern’s unique operating environment. Over time, enhancements were made and two major upgrades were applied.

The newest version, a Higher Education edition, eliminates many of the problems with desktop operating systems, connectivity, memory, and disk space, and provides better access for Macintosh users and for remote users. This edition also allows access to faculty tenure information and contracts.

Towards a Self-Service Environment

The biggest advantage of this Web-based system is that it allows Northwestern to move towards a more self-service environment. Plans are in the works to allow faculty and staff the ability to view paychecks online; to change benefits, direct deposit, address, phone, and W-4 information; and to enroll in charitable contributions such as the United Way.

There are also plans for new functionality such as automated billing for leaves of absence. Development for 2004 will include online job applications. Future enhancements will enable faculty and staff to take an even more active role in administering their personnel and payroll data.

With Web-based HRIS 8.3, there will be no need for desktop software installation. However, users will need an appropriate Web browser. A list of recommended browsers can be found at <www.northwestern.edu/hr/hris/upg/browsers.html>.

School administrators have met with Human Resources to prioritize the development of HRIS functions. In addition to those listed above, HRIS IDs will be converted to NetIDs, allowing use of the same authenticated ID for HRIS, email, Meeting Maker, and other NU services.

HRIS staff and NUIT are working to make sure the system upgrade is ready on time. NUIT is providing operating system and hardware support, database support, and implementing the software installation of PeopleSoft and any related upgrading tasks.

HRIS functionality has come a long way in the past seven years, and promises to go even further in the very near future.

Thanks to Kathy Tessendorf, Director, HRIS, and to Tom Halloran and Doug Vivian of NUIT for contributing to this article.

Q & A Session: Meeting Maker

Q. Can I include someone in a Meeting Maker invitation if they don’t have Meeting Maker?

A. Yes, as long as the person you want to invite has an email address.

First, set up your email information in your Meeting Maker Preferences panel (see below), then include the person in your Contact List. This list keeps track of information about people outside your Meeting Maker environment.

Select Edit => Preferences from your Meeting Maker menu bar. The Preferences panel will appear.

Click the General tab, then fill in your email information in the E-mail Settings section of the panel. The Local SMTP Host: field should contain your email server’s address. (For example, if your email server is merle, type merle.it.northwestern.edu.)

Type your email address in the E-mail Address: field. Leave the E-Notify field blank. Click OK.

Select View => Contact List from your Meeting Maker menu bar. The Contact List dialog box will appear.

Click the New Contact icon in the toolbar. The New Contact panel will appear.

Type in all the information you think is necessary for your contact. Be sure to include his/her email address.

Click OK. Your contact should now appear in your contact list. Close the Contact List dialog box.

To invite your contact to a meeting, propose the meeting the way you normally do.

Click the Guests tab and select Contacts from the drop-down menu above the left pane. All the people in your contact list should appear.

Select the person you want to invite and click Required, Optional, CC, or BCC. When you are ready, send the proposal. Meeting Maker automatically sends an email message inviting your contact to the meeting.
New Technology Series is Focused on Faculty

Northwestern faculty are invited to take part in NUIT’s 2East: New Technology Series, which focuses on current and cutting-edge research and instructional technology. Upcoming sessions include “Using a Blackboard-based Course Site in Your Teaching,” March 6, and “Digital Video with iMovie,” March 26. A brown-bag discussion on “Copyright and Intellectual Property,” March 11, will highlight recent developments in U.S. copyright law.

For details on specific sessions or to register for any of the free 2East: New Technology Series presentations or workshops, visit <www.2east.northwestern.edu> or email ZeNTS@atlas.northwestern.edu.

What’s Next?

Here’s a quick look what we’ll be featuring in our next eCommunicator...

New WebEmail: If you like the WebEmail Gateway’s convenience, you’ll definitely like the new, improved software NUIT is putting in place to let you check email on the Web anytime, anywhere. NUIT plans to launch the new WebEmail software this spring.

E911: NUIT implemented enhanced 911 (E911) telephone service on both campuses this year. Find out how enhanced 911 enables a faster response by fire services, police and emergency medical services in critical situations.

Knowledge@Noon Technology Brown Bags

NUIT’s “Knowledge@Noon” seminars are a great way to learn about Northwestern’s technology resources! These are for everyone, regardless of your current knowledge of the subjects. Sign up for these free sessions at <www.northwestern.edu/training/technology/classes.html>, and be sure to check our Web site regularly for new topics.

“Get Control:” March 19, April 23, May 21, June 18. This seminar will discuss how to reduce spam, virus protection, updating Windows and Anti-virus software, making regular backups, and securing your information.

Course Management System: March 5. Northwestern’s Course Management System (CMS) enables instructors to add an online component to traditional classes or teach an entire course on the Web. Faculty can quickly and easily create a course Web site to bring learning materials, class discussions, and tests online.

Upcoming topics include “Listservs and Managing Your Online Identity,” and “Site-Licensed Software at Northwestern.” If you have questions or ideas for future sessions, email Julie Moeller, Manager of NUIT Communications, at j-moeller@northwestern.edu.

NUIT Phases Out Support continued from page 1

Macintosh support: As of September 1, 2003, NUIT will no longer support the Macintosh OS 8.x operating system. It is also likely that support for Macintosh OS 9.X will end in 2003, though a firm date has yet to be determined. After that time, NUIT will continue to officially support Macintosh OS X. NUIT anticipates that advancing functions of the campus network, and especially wireless access, will require Macintosh OS X. More information is available at <www.it.northwestern.edu/itcom/press/aug02/mac-support.html>.

For further details, see NUIT’s software support guidelines at <www.tss.northwestern.edu/reference/supported_sw.html>. NUIT also provides hardware and software purchasing guidelines at <www.it.northwestern.edu/guidelines>.

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