Behind the Scenes: Bringing University Administrative Systems to Life!

Have you ever watched the credits roll at the end of a movie? It’s amazing to see how many people it takes to create a blockbuster production. Everyone on the film crew has different jobs, working “behind the scenes” for the same goal . . . to bring the project to life!

Minus the Hollywood glitz, Northwestern’s Information Technology Management Systems (ITMS) team works in much the same way—behind the scenes every day to keep essential University administrative systems running smoothly. If your job involves accessing functions such as payroll, job tracking, registration, or student accounts, or you have enjoyed the convenience of being able to update your directory information, view your paycheck, or review your benefits online, then you are being supported by Management Systems.

“We think of ourselves as part of a much larger team within Northwestern,” said Betty Brugger, director of Management Systems. “Collaboration with other departments is essential. The varied talents, skills and interests of those we partner with help us to achieve optimal results.”

Major Blockbuster Releases

Management Systems’ primary customers are central administrative offices and administrative units of schools and divisions. Among the major initiatives Management Systems has helped develop and maintain for the University are the Human Resources Information System (HRIS), Electronic Time Entry System (ETES), and Student Enterprise System (SES). Management Systems continues to work with partners across the University to implement and overcome vendor software challenges for the benefit of campus users.

All University personnel, benefits and payroll information is processed and stored in HRIS. This self-service, Web-based system features such functions as online availability of paycheck information, and an option that allows updating personal directory information online.

Within HRIS, ETES permits the several thousand biweekly regular, temporary, and work-study University employees to enter their hours worked via the Web, allowing for more accurate time reporting. Supervisors can view and approve information online, and generate custom reports to help analyze issues such as labor distribution, patterns of time, and absences.

“I’ve been very pleased with the (ETES) system from the beginning,” said Peter Devlin, personnel librarian for the University Library. “It used to take the better part of a day to get our biweekly staff time sheets entered. Now, there’s virtually no paperwork to do.”

SES supports administration of all central admissions, financial aid, student financial and student records information. Using SES, students can register and access their student record, student account, and financial aid information, as well as access automated financial aid packaging for selected professional and graduate programs.

“From the very beginning of SES, we’ve partnered with Management Systems to support business functions and provide electronic services to students, faculty, and advisors in a variety of methods,” said Suzanne Anderson, University Registrar. “It’s impressive to see how much this team has accomplished in just a few years.”
Connecting from Home

As NUIT phases out its central modem pool on August 1, high-speed home Internet connections have become affordable and available virtually everywhere. For little more than the cost of dialup, you can surf the Web up to 50 times faster from your living room.

Having high-speed Internet at home lets you maximize Northwestern’s digital resources, including multimedia access. DSL (digital subscriber line) and cable are the most popular types of residential Internet access. Let NUII help you make the appropriate choice for your needs by visiting Connecting from Off-Campus at <www.it.northwestern.edu/offcampus/>.

When accessing University resources at home, keep your password and data secure by using Virtual Private Networking (VPN) to access the NUII Network. Many of Northwestern’s electronic resources require a VPN connection from off-campus. Find details at <www.it.northwestern.edu/vpn/>.

More information about the retirement of the NUIT modem pool is available at <www.it.northwestern.edu/transitions/>.

Resources for Travelers

For faculty and staff who travel on University business, many hotels and conferences now offer free or inexpensive Internet connections. Also, NUIT’s partnership with iPassConnect provides affordable access worldwide for faculty and staff. With nearly 20,000 wired and wireless locations from Chicago to Croatia, iPassConnect has received rave reviews from University travelers since its launch last summer.

Joe Mambretti, director of NUIT’s International Center for Advanced Internet Research (iCAIR), is especially impressed with iPassConnect. “I’ve used it in Sweden, California, England, and Canada,” Mambretti said. “It’s very convenient and easy to use.” Find details at <www.it.northwestern.edu/offcampus/ipass/>.

More information about Internet resources for travelers is available on NUIT’s Get Connected Web site at <www.it.northwestern.edu/offcampus/>.

There's More Than One Way to Get Your E-Mail

In the early ‘90s, electronic mail was a novelty at Northwestern and Eudora e-mail software was “the only game in town” with a graphical interface (GUI). Now, more than a decade later, most of us would find it difficult (if not impossible) to get along without e-mail, and Eudora is only one of many popular, versatile e-mail software options available.

“It was time for us to take a close look at what e-mail software might work best for the University community,” said Wendy Woodward, director of NUIT Technology Support Services, explaining NUIT’s decision to stop promoting Eudora as the recommended Northwestern e-mail client. “E-mail technology is changing, and there are other industry-standard applications that offer users more flexibility and integration with other systems.”

Woodward added that Eudora has shown compatibility problems with the new Lightweight Directory Access Protocol (LDAP) based directory service, as well as with certain Internet service providers.

The University community is encouraged to investigate Windows e-mail clients such as Microsoft Outlook or Outlook Express, or Macintosh clients such as Entourage or Apple Mail. These e-mail solutions work well within Northwestern’s infrastructure and support the LDAP-based directory and Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) encryption technology for increased e-mail security. In addition, all have junk e-mail filtering features and some, like Microsoft Outlook, offer automatic security updates and upgrades through the Windows operating system.

NUIT provides Eudora users with step-by-step instructions for exporting their e-mail messages and address books into another e-mail application. Please visit the NUIT E-mail Web site at <www.it.northwestern.edu/mail/> for more information.

Some users may choose to continue with Eudora, or keep the application on hand for easy access to view old e-mail when needed. Woodward said that NUIT will continue technical support of Eudora for the foreseeable future, but discussions are underway to determine the future direction of communication systems at Northwestern.

For additional information about e-mail options, contact your departmental/school technical support person, call the NUIT Support Center at 847-491-HELP (4357), or e-mail consultant@northwestern.edu.

Enhanced Online Directory Helps Keep Your Information Secure

Have you ever tried searching the Northwestern online directory from off-campus or through your e-mail client and received less information than you expected? That was no accident—in fact, it was a good thing.

This important “anonymous return” feature of the new LDAP (Lightweight Directory Access Protocol) based directory keeps certain information in your directory listing from falling into the wrong hands. It’s one way to help ensure that only authorized individuals (i.e., users with a Northwestern NetID) can access University data.

“Northwestern is committed to building an infrastructure that protects the information of its community,” said Tom Board, director of NUIT Information Systems Architecture. “The introduction of an LDAP-based directory is certainly one step in that direction.”

Board said the best choice for finding directory information is Northwestern’s online “white pages” at <directory.northwestern.edu>.

What if you’re off-campus and want more detailed directory information? Click the “Authenticate” button next to the online directory search field and type in your NetID and

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Q & A: Phishing

Q: I’ve been receiving e-mails from banks and other companies asking me to log in and verify my details. Are these messages legitimate?

A: No. These messages are a form of e-mail fraud known as “phishing.”

Scammers use these e-mails and Web sites to trick unsuspecting people into sharing their financial data and other sensitive information. Eventually this information may be used for identity theft or simply to withdraw money from your account.

"Phishing" scammers use familiar company names, logos, and graphics to mimic the look of trusted e-mail messages and Web sites. Also, these messages often try to create a sense of urgency – “log in now or your account will be suspended.” You should delete these illegitimate messages.

Some tips for recognizing and avoiding “phishing” scams:

- Be suspicious of e-mails with urgent requests for personal or financial information.
- Do not reply, click, or enter information if you receive a suspicious e-mail.
- Don’t click unfamiliar links or fill out forms within e-mail messages.
- Log in regularly to check your online accounts.
- Check out NUIT’s Get Control Web site <www.it.northwestern.edu/getcontrol/> for more information about Privacy and Identity Theft.

If you think you have fallen victim to "phishing" scams or identity theft:

- File a report with Northwestern University Police by calling 847-491-3254.
- View the Federal Trade Commission’s Identity Theft Web site <www.consumer.gov/idtheft/>, where you will find information about contacting credit bureaus, closing accounts, filing complaints with the FTC, and more.

The Power of the Password

David Kovarik, Director
NUIT Information & Systems Security/Compliance

Most practitioners of information security would agree that authentication and accountability are two key components of sound security practice. The ability to positively identify and associate activities with individuals that access University resources is at the core of these two concepts.

While there are a number of alternatives—such as “smart cards” (similar to credit cards but containing embedded microprocessors in lieu of magnetic strips) and biometrics (automated recognition based on physiological or behavioral characteristics such as fingerprints, voice recognition, or handwriting)—the Password, coupled with a unique user identifier (i.e., your NetID), remains the most common approach to validation of individual identity.

Passwords have a long history of use, referred to in folklore and shrouded in mystery. “In days of yore and in times and tides long gone before,” the Password of “Open, Sesame” was used to open the door of the robber’s den in the Arabian Nights tale of “Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves.”

Though we are far removed from that mythical time and place, your Password is used to “open the door” to the University network. In combination with your NetID, your Password uniquely identifies you to the system (the authentication component) and allows you to access the host of valuable University resources you require to conduct your business, whether you are faculty, student or staff.

Given the “power” of the Password, it has high intrinsic value and should be afforded the same respect and protection of your most-valued possessions. It allows access to your personal information and finances, vital University systems such as HRIS, SES/CAESAR, and Central Email, permitting inquiry and often the ability to modify this information.

From a system perspective, you are your NetID/Password and any activity (for better or for worse) associated with your NetID is attributed directly to you (the accountability component). Considering its value, you should exercise the same protection over your Password that you provide to the PIN (Personal Identification Number) you use to access your personal financial accounts.

The University offers a policy that governs the use of Passwords; it is a valuable source of information and contains well-founded recommendations on the construction and protection of Passwords. Please take a few minutes to acquaint yourself with the document (<www.it.northwestern.edu/accounts/password/>). I believe you will find it a small but important investment in your security and personal protection.

Looks real but it isn’t: identity thieves use fraudulent, "phishing" e-mails to solicit sensitive financial (and personal) information.
Software Corner

Find the software you need from NUIT at <www.it.northwestern.edu/software/> . For support, please contact questions@software.northwestern.edu or the NUIT Support Center at 847-491-HELP (4357).

Meeting Maker 8.5

A new module that allows users to connect to the Meeting Maker server using Microsoft Outlook, and an improved user interface, are highlights of Meeting Maker 8.5 (also known as Meeting Maker Millennium). This new version represents a major update to both the Meeting Maker server and the application. NUIT plans to release Meeting Maker 8.5 to the University community this spring.

Acrobat 7.0 Professional

Extended commenting capabilities and an organization feature with “drag-and-drop” capability are among enhancements of Adobe Acrobat 7.0 Professional, recently made available to the University community by NUIT. Individuals who purchased Acrobat licenses from NUIT on or after May 7, 2003, or who separately purchased Acrobat two-year maintenance on earlier licenses, are eligible for a free Acrobat 7.0 upgrade. E-mail questions@software.northwestern.edu and include the original or maintenance order number and the NetID to be activated. New licenses are available through NUIT’s Site-Licensed Software site, <software.northwestern.edu>.

Modem Pool Retirement

Are you still using the University modem pool to access the NU Network? Time is running out! The modem pool will be retired on August 1, 2005, due to reduced demand for modem pool services as well as increased security concerns. Residential broadband Internet access is more affordable than ever, and with a wide range of choices. NUIT recommends high-speed DSL or cable modem service to faculty, staff, and students living off-campus as the most convenient and effective means of accessing the Internet from home. (See “Online from Off-Campus” on page 2.) For more information, visit NUIT’s “Off-Campus Connections” site at <www.it.northwestern.edu/offcampus/>.

Final Farewell, nwu.edu

Northwestern’s original nwu.edu domain will be removed from the University domain name services (DNS) soon. This also applies to all sub-domains including md.nwu.edu, law.nwu.edu, and kellogg.nwu.edu. Any host computer still addressed by a name within the nwu.edu domain will no longer be reachable under that name after June 20, and services from that computer may no longer be available within or outside of the University. System administrators should be using the corresponding northwestern.edu domain name for their host systems.

What’s New and Changing: Technology @ NU

For more information on the following items, please visit the NUIT Web site at <www.it.northwestern.edu/transitions/>.

Windows 2000 Support

To help ensure a productive, secure working environment for Windows users, NUIT is phasing out support for Windows 2000 on August 31. NUIT strongly recommends that Windows 2000 users upgrade to Windows XP as soon as possible. Although Microsoft will extend its critical, security-related patch support, there is no guarantee of Windows 2000 compliance with new hardware or software. University schools and departments should take this into consideration when preparing their operating budgets.

Software Site-Licensing Changes

When you buy software, it makes sense to shop for the best price—one factor in NUIT’s decision to end its site-license software agreement with Macromedia. As of March 1, NUIT is no longer accepting or processing new orders for Macromedia software, including Dreamweaver, Flash, and Fireworks. The ability to buy software from outside vendors at more competitive prices, and the elimination of University overhead costs associated with the distribution of Macromedia software, contributed to this decision. Northwestern’s Purchasing Department encourages users to order Macromedia software through Software ONE. For more information and a list of recommended vendors, visit Northwestern’s Virtual Store, <www.virtualstore.northwestern.edu>.

Featured Web Site:
Spyware Prevention & Treatment

Do you know your Internet activities are being watched? According to technology industry estimates, over two-thirds of all personal computers are infected with spyware. There’s no quick fix, but NUIT’s Spyware Prevention & Treatment Web site has useful tips and tools to help protect your identity.

Spyware is technology that collects and transmits data about you and your online activities. Adware (usually legal) collects information for advertisers about your browsing habits, geographic location, and possibly the contents of your computer. Malware maliciously attacks your computer or is used for illegal purposes, and includes so-called “key loggers” that record everything from passwords to credit card numbers.

On NUIT’s Spyware Prevention & Treatment site, you’ll learn how to recognize, control, and prevent spyware. You can also download Spybot - Search & Destroy, free software recommended by NUIT for diagnosing and removing spyware. Visit the Spyware Prevention & Treatment site at <www.it.northwestern.edu/security/spyware/>.
Information Commons: An Uncommonly Inviting Space for Shared Learning

If you’ve visited University Library recently, you may have noticed a bright and lively new area on the main floor—the Information Commons. NUIT Academic Technologies partnered with the Library to design the Information Commons, which is designed to encourage collaboration, group and independent study, and greater interaction with library and technology staff.

“We want to help the Library remain a vital and active space for study,” said Bob Taylor, director of Academic Technologies. “The Information Commons was designed specifically to draw students and faculty to the Library, even though they can easily access the network resources they need elsewhere. It’s about providing an environment for teamwork, a sense of community, and easy access to professional staff from the Library.”

Construction of the Information Commons began last summer, after Library staff spent nearly six months working with an architect and reviewing similar facilities at several other universities. The new space houses more than 50 high-end computer workstations with flat-panel monitors, CD burners, and a variety of software including Microsoft Office, EndNote, and RefWorks. The Library and NUIT Academic Technologies share responsibility for staffing the facility.

Open, flexible seating arrangements allow students to work independently, yet remain within easy communication of other members of a project team.

The Information Commons also features attractive, upholstered booths with curved wood paneling tall enough to allow privacy for groups of up to five students. Laptop and wireless data connections are available throughout the area.

A small-group collaboration room with informal seating for six to eight people will be added to the Information Commons during the coming months. In addition to wireless access and laptop connections, the room will feature two interactive electronic whiteboards that allow users to display, manipulate, and annotate computer images, jot down notes, and save the information to a file or publish it to a Web site.

“We hope this space will inspire creative energy,” said Taylor. “The technology will be in place to capture a project team’s ideas as they evolve.”

Thanks to the University Library for permission to adapt material for this article from the Library Briefings newsletter, Winter 2005 issue.

Free Technology Presentations For You!

NUIT Tech Talks

Each quarter, NUIT presents a variety of free “Tech Talk” presentations on new technology and technology-related issues, open to the entire University community.

• “GET CONTROL! Five Simple Steps Toward Safe Computing” Friday, April 8
• “Safe Keeping: An Introduction To Backing Up Your Information” Friday, April 22
• “The Times Are Changing: Technology and You at Northwestern” Friday, May 13
• “Tips and Tricks for the New Meeting Maker 8.5” Friday, May 27

All Tech Talks take place from noon to 1:00 p.m. in the Forum Room of University Library. Feel free to bring lunch—drinks are on us. These sessions are informal and enjoyable! For information about upcoming Tech Talks, visit the NUIT Events site at <www.it.northwestern.edu/events/>.

Anticipation Builds for CONDUITS

After a successful first phase launch last fall, allowing staff “back-office” use of the electronic order processing functions of the new CONDUITS (Customer-Oriented Network Delivering University Information Technology Services,) anticipation for implementation is building.

Roll-out for the eagerly-awaited online billing system will be slightly delayed until sometime this fall to accommodate a software upgrade from Pinnacle Communications Management that will allow better communication and customer service efficiency. The CONDUITS team from NUIT continues to fine-tune and further customize the environment for enhanced customer services.

General information about CONDUITS, including a departmental contacts list, is available at <www.it.northwestern.edu/transitions/>. Please direct questions to NUIT Consulting Services at 847-467-5560 or consulting-services@northwestern.edu.
Enhanced Online Directory (continued from page 2)

password when prompted, or connect to
the NU Network via VPN (Virtual Private
Network) before doing your search. More
information about VPN can be found at
<www.it.northwestern.edu/vpn/>.

The online directory database is updated
nightly with data from Human Resources
and the Registrar. You can update your own
directory information through the “Edit Your
Directory Information” page at <https://
directory.northwestern.edu/edit/>.

LDAP, an industry standard basis for
authentication, authorization, mail
routing and online directory services,
recently replaced the University’s “Ph”-
based directory service. “This new
directory structure will help unify security
practices and streamline the processes for
implementing new software,” said Board.

For more information, visit NUIT’s “Online
Directory Services” site at <www.
it.northwestern.edu/network/directory/>.
Questions can be directed to your local
technical support person, the NUIT Support
Center at 847-491-HELP (4357), or
consultant@northwestern.edu.

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UNITS Needs You!
The University relies on UNITS
(University Network of Information
Technology Specialists), an
organization of technical contacts for
computer support within University
departments that help staff and faculty
maintain their desktops and network
security. UNITS representatives receive the latest information regarding virus outbreaks, NUIT
services, and information technology.
Because UNITS representatives are
employed by many departments
throughout campus, they are able to
answer end user questions quickly.

If there is someone working in your
department that you typically seek out
for personal computer advice, please
encourage them to join UNITS!

For information about how to join this
dynamic group, please visit <www.
it.northwestern.edu/dss/units/> or call
847-467-6404.