

MSU Moorhead Computer Center History

First computer employee - 1962

In 1962 Ronald Sonnenberg was hired as the first data processing employee. The department was a data processing branch of the Registrar's office. When Ron came on campus to interview, he was a nineteen year old from Vergas, MN. Ron was not familiar with the campus but knew he had to talk to the Registrar. When Ron arrived at the Registrar office, he joined a long line going into the office. When Ron got to the front of the line and said he was there for an interview, he was already 20 minutes late. Ron was told that all of the others in line were waiting to register and that he could go immediately for the interview. Apparently, the interview went well because Ron became the first data processing employee with the title of Tabulating Machine Operator II and a salary of \$1.97 an hour. The main use of data processing at this time was to provide student services such as record keeping and registration for classes. The department was located in the first floor of Flora Frick.

First computer - 1966

The Computer Department at Moorhead State College can probably be said to have come into existence the fall of 1966. Richard Corner served as part-time director of the Computer Center and Instructor in Business Administration. The data processing equipment at that time (all leased) consisted of an IBM 407 accounting machine, a collator, a sorter, interpreter and a keypunch machine. Victoria Volk was hired as a keypunch operator.

In January of 1967, an IBM 1620/1622 computer system was purchased from the University of North Dakota at a cost of about \$30,000. A second keypunch machine (for student use) was leased shortly thereafter. With the acquisition of a computer there were programming courses offered by the Mathematics and Business department. The development of administration applications expanded from those associated the Registrar office to include financial processes from the Business office. The department had out grown its space in Flora Frick and was moved to the east side of MacLean in the area where the bookstore is now. Most of the campus administrative offices were also located in MacLean.

During the 1967-68 academic year, the Computer Center operated administratively under the Dean of Academic Affairs (in particular, the Assistant Dean of Administrative Affairs, Dr. Robert Hanson), advised by a faculty committee called the Computer Center Committee.

In the spring of 1968, Linda Green (later to become Linda Stulz) joined the department as keypunch operator. In June, 1968, Marvin (Marv) Klimek was hired as Tab Machine Operator to assist Ron. Sonnenberg who had been promoted to a programmer. Dr. Martin (Marty) Holoien, a mathematics professor was appointed part-time Director of the Computer Center. A federal grant was used to upgrade the computer system.

In February, 1969, Deona Basaraba (later to become Deona Grondahl) was hired as keypunch operator. In July Wayne Hoeshen was hired as the second programmer. It was also in July that the 407 Accounting Machine was replaced by a leased high-speed printer (300 lines per minute) attached to the 1620 computer.

In January 1970 preliminary work was started to obtain a computer system with mass storage (disk and tape) capability. A proposal was also submitted (later funded) to request funds for a small time-sharing computer for academic computing. In January 1971, a Honeywell 115 computer system with two disk drives, two tape drives, and a high-speed printer was installed. In February 1971, a PDP 8/I five-terminal timesharing computer system was also installed. The PDP 8/I was used entirely for academic purposes, i.e., classroom teaching and problem solving in Physics, Mathematics, Chemistry, Engineering, Computer Science, and other disciplines. Besides college departments, time on that system is leased to the three local high schools. In 1971, Glen Guida joined the department as a programmer. Computing continued to increase for administration usage in student records, grade keeping, class registration and financial applications.

Also in 1971 the computer science department was created. It had formerly been in the department of Mathematics. Marty Holoien was named the first chair of Computer Science. Marty continued to serve as part-time director of the Computer Center.

By 1973, Moorhead State had three computer systems serving the academic computing needs of the college: an on-site Honeywell 115; a remote CDC 6400 (referred to as MERITSS, the acronym for Minnesota Educational Regional Interactive Time-Sharing System); and a remote Univac 1106 located at Mankato. This was the start of remote processing over phone lines. Modems with a maximum speed of 110 baud were used for the first time.

The Computer Science department offered computer courses, in particular the COBOL programming course and advanced courses dealing with computer operating systems were being taught to students.

MERITSS, the timesharing computer system accessible by students and faculty via teletype terminals or CRT terminals had been available at Moorhead State since the summer of 1972. At that time the College had five ports (lines to the computer system) and the associated electronic equipment and telephone lines (communications equipment) needed to make them operational. Early in 1973 changes were completed which provided the College with nine ports on the MERITSS computer.

The remotely located Univac 1106 at Mankato was a large computer system used for processing programs too large for the other two systems. It first became available for use at this College during July 1973. This computer had been used mostly for performing statistical processing in connection with two Computer Science courses and with research projects conducted by staff members associated with the College.

Donna Lyden (later to become Donna Baumhardt) joined the department as a data entry operator in 1972.

First computer registration – 1974

The first computer registration took place in 1974. Students no longer had to stand in lines to get their classes from departments but would select their courses from the class schedule and turn in their course requests that were keyed on a punch card. The cards were then run on the computer and students were enrolled in the classes and printouts were returned to the registration area where they were handed to the students showing their classes schedules. Richard (Dick) Wentz joined the department's programming staff in 1975. In 1977, Jerry Fuchs joined the department's programming staff.

First on-line real-time registration – 1978

In 1978 the first true online registration for classes took place. Punch cards had been replaced with online computer terminals on the local system and the selected classes were keyed in and a class schedule for the student was printed immediately. In 1979 Arne Garness joined the department as the first academic support programmer and Judy Odegard joined the department as a data entry operator. A new area was necessary for the computer department and the second floor of Flora Frick, the gym area, was remodeled and became the home for Computer Science and Computer Services with offices and classrooms.

The Minnesota State University system determined that all computer processing would be done at two central sites. Academic processing would be located in Mankato and administrative processing would be done at St. Cloud. This was the start of remote processing over high speed phone lines with modems. It also meant that the onsite computer was no longer needed and remote terminals were installed. The early 80's saw the introduction of personal computers. Apple II's and other personal computers started being used for academic classes and labs were being created for them. At first personal computers were used for Computer Science but as time past they were being used for other technical classes.

First computer center director – 1983

Early in 1983, the combined departments were split into Computer Science and Computer Services. Les Bakke was appointed as the first full-time director of the Computer Services and Marty Holoien continued as chair of the department of Computer Science.

First Data General computer – 1983

During the summer of 1983, the Minnesota State Colleges drafted a request for bid for a new distributed administrative computer system. Data General Corporation was selected to supply the new computer system. Data General was one of the very first computer systems with an electronic office application that included word processing, a spreadsheet, e-mail and a calendar. The initial purchase included the computer and 12 terminals. The terminals were placed in administrative offices. In addition to the

electronic office functions, the computer also served as a terminal server for the large computer in St. Cloud. Batch processing was also done through the Data General computer. Financial aid, business office transactions and other administrative data were the bulk of the batch processing.

Academic Data General computer – 1985

In 1985, a second Data General computer was purchased for the academic departments. More computer terminals were being used for word processing, e-mail and access to administrative applications by both the administrative departments and academic departments. Jerry Nygard joined the department as an electronic technician to maintain the communications of these terminals.

Computer Center moved – 1987

MSU received funding to remodel the library, add two floors to the east side of the building and to create a new Computer Center. During the early part of 1987, staff installed cables and other computer communications equipment. In July 1987, the entire Computer Center moved from Frick to the second floor of the library. The move included moving four minicomputers, communications lines, terminal servers, line printers in addition to all normal office furniture and supplies. Computer services were restored to the campus by 4:00 pm. Saturday was devoted to making everything else work. Technicians from DEC and Data General assisted with the disconnection and reconnection of the large computers. Campus staff from the Physical Plant and Computer Center did all of the rest of the work. Changes in computing resulted in more computer labs with personal computers being needed for academic use.

MSUS institutional research project – 1989

In 1989, John McCune, Administrative Vice President, Bette Midgarden, Associate Academic Vice President and Les Bakke, Computer Center director developed a proposal for the Minnesota State Universities to develop and manage system institutional research. The System office agreed on a contract for services. Iris Gill was hired as the IR analyst. The University provided research services for the system office and state offices for the next ten years. The computer center continued to provide this service until the merger of the Minnesota State Universities, Community Colleges and Technical Colleges. In June 1989 Jim Williamson was hired as a Electronic Technician to assist Jerry Nygard. Bryan Kotta was hired in 1990 as Academic Computer programmer replacing Arne Garness who retired,

MSUS student records software development – 1994

Moorhead State University was awarded a System contract to develop a new student records system for the State Universities. Glen Guida was appointed lead developer for the Minnesota State College System. Kim Voegelé and Rolly Vipond were hired as programmers. Bid specifications were developed and released. Four vendors responded to the bid and Digital Equipment Corporation (DEC) was selected as the hardware and software vendor. Rdb was chosen as the database system and Uniface as the fourth generation client software. User groups were defined in the various student and administrative records. With the formation of MNSCU many computer

changes took place with the merger. The independence that each campus had in Computer processing was changed to a cooperative among campuses. Moorhead State University was selected to develop the basic student record, registration, term course, curriculum, recruitment and admissions. Other campuses were selected to develop financial aid, human resources, placement, accounting and other modules. Moorhead was chosen as one of four regional computer centers, along with St. Cloud State University, Mankato State University and a site in St. Paul.

Conversion to semesters 1994-95

Semester conversion started in 1994. The Computer Center developed a database application to manage all of the course changes, degree requirement changes and various levels of approvals. The catalog (Bulletin) created for semesters was done completely electronically. Data was moved from the curriculum database to Printing Services for printing.

Student computer fee 1995

In 1995, a University advisory committee recommended the adoption of a student computer fee. The fee proposal was approved by Administration, the students and by the System office. Fall 1995 was the first term we collected a student computer fee. Jeanne Alm was hired under these funds to provide student help and to manage the computer labs. Also in 1995, the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities was created by merging the Technical Colleges, Community Colleges and State Universities. Curt Brosdahl joined the department in 1995 as a programmer.

MnSCU student records development and conversion

In 1997, JoDee Haugrud joined the department as a programmer and later became MSU's first Webmaster. All student and employee records were converted to the new MnSCU records system. Iris Gill moved to the office of Academic Affairs to serve as campus IR director. Craig Beckerleg was hired as her replacement with additional responsibilities of computer support.

Web registration

MSU became the first college in Minnesota to have a complete interactive web registration for students. The application developed by MSU programmers allowed students to register for the upcoming term on-line, on campus or from any computer with access to the web.

MnSCU computer reorganization 1998

MnSCU's system office reorganized the computer services in the spring of 1998. MSU Moorhead employees who worked for the regional center were transferred to MnSCU information technology (IT) division and reported to MNSCU instead of Moorhead. Marc Holland was hired as a Technical Specialist for the ever increasing use of the Internet and remote communications.

In 1999, Amanda Stegmaier joined our department as web assistant. MnSCU computer programming was reorganized with much of the control transferred to the

MNSCU system office in St. Paul. In 2000, Bill Scheffler joined the department providing Macintosh support.

Y2K 2000

Y2K was mostly a non-event for the computer center. Our programming staff in the early 1990s had converted all dates from a two-digit year to a four-digit year. Dates were the major issue with the new century. At midnight on 31 December 1999, Les Bakke was at the center to make sure that all systems processed the new year without a problem. John, head wrestling coach and Jo Sterner joined him and at 15 minutes past midnight, Les reported to St. Paul that everything was operational, the first campus to verify. John, Jo and Les opened and consumed a bottle of champagne in celebration.