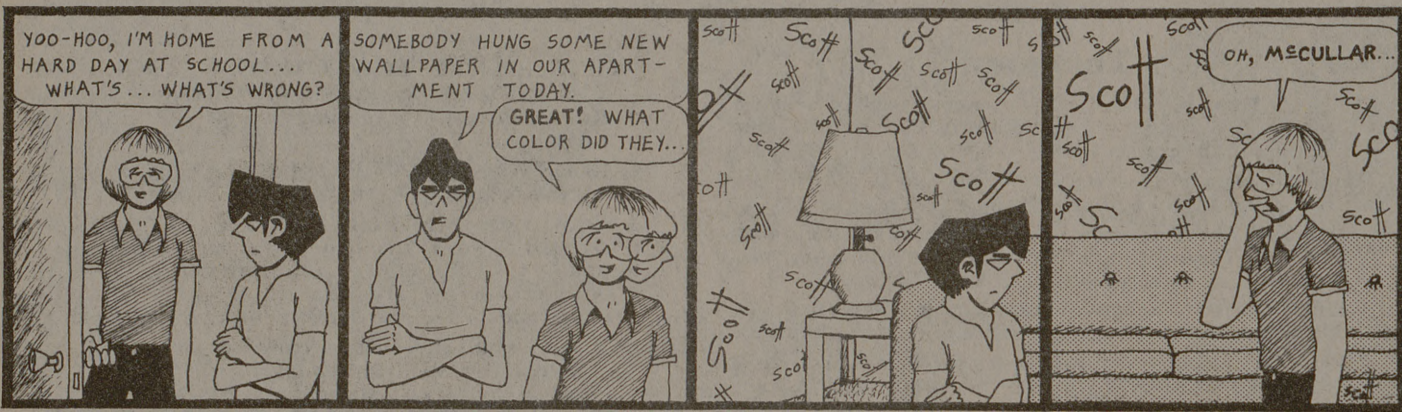


Warped

by Scott McCullar

System



(continued from page 1)

system to fit their needs. "The system we are now operating under, which is a patchwork of what we started with in '69, is just about patch-worked out." Shoup agreed. "It's Band-Aid upon Band-Aid," he said. "If you look at the system we're now using, it's state-of-the-art for about 10 to 15 years ago at most universities. We probably outgrew it when it ceased to be state-of-the-art." The changes in the Purdue registration system since Texas A&M's purchase of the program support this, he said.

Purdue redesigned its program to use scanning sheets in 1972, Assistant Registrar Camilla Lawson said, and that system was replaced three semesters ago with on-line computer registration. In the newest system, the student's schedule is keyed into the computer while he waits and immediate feedback is given on the availability of classes, she said.

Shoup said: "We're two generations away from state-of-the-art."

Massey said changes at the Data Processing Center, from which the University leases computer time to run its programs, also have forced the search for a new registration package.

"We are primarily a card registration system," he said. "The DPC is phasing out its card-reading system."

The registrar's office has spent the last 14 months extensively researching alternative registration systems, Lacey said.

V. Thomas Rhyne, coordinator of computing for the University, said it was important to research all possible systems to get exactly what the University needs and wants.

Shoup said he hopes the University moves quickly to get a new system.

"We need to be careful that we don't overstudy the problem at the expense of getting on with the activity," he said. "Probably buying a system that is not quite as good as we could get is not as devastating as buying no system at all."

"I'm not suggesting that we run out and buy the first thing that comes along; however, the need is very, very strong, and

often you can upgrade or improve a system if it has some basic capabilities to it."

Rhyne said the University is "moving as fast as we can to do the right kind of thing."

He said the new registration system must be approved by the registrar's office, his office, Vandiver, the System Information Management and Policy Committee, Hansen, the Texas A&M System Board of Regents and the Automated Information Systems Advisory Committee, a nine-member panel in Austin that must approve computer appropriations for state institutions.

Because of the approval procedure, Rhyne predicted a new system couldn't be implemented before the 1984 fall semester.

Shoup said he would hate to see it take that long.

"We've already seen a great deal of deterioration in what's happening, and we'll see continued deterioration in the quality of student interactions if that were to take place," he said.

Associate Dean of Liberal Arts Candida Lutes said she didn't know if the current system could last two years.

"But on the other hand," she said, "it's held up so long already with so many Band-aids on it that I suppose if we have to deal with it that much longer, we will. But we'll be griping about it for the next two or three years while we wait, and students will continue to have problems with it."

Lacey said the system chosen would provide for on-line registration. But he said it hasn't been decided if the computer terminals will be located in the department offices, the deans' offices or the registration headquarters.

"Right now, our planning revolves around getting the software for the kind of system we want," he said.

The cost of such a software package could run from \$350,000 to \$500,000, Massey said.

Support is great for on-line registration.

Associate Dean of Agriculture Dwayne A. Suter said: "Our advisers and faculty are strongly urging an on-line system with terminals in the departments."

Suter said he would prefer that kind of system to one in which the computer terminals would be located in the registra-

tion headquarters.

"The only disadvantage to that (terminals in the registration headquarters) is that particular grouping of one that have been agreed upon by the adviser and the student not workable, the student has to go back to the department again," he said.

On-line registration could help the colleges planning changes, Lutes said. If deans knew at the first day of registration, the course was full and another empty, she said, they could file personnel and classroom add new sections and cut others.

"Right now, I think the problem that the department heads and deans slow that they can't really alter the schedule," she said, "becomes set in cement."

An on-line system also could reduce errors, Carter said. Human error causes most of the problems in the current system, he said.

"It's easy to blame the computer," he said, "but the fault is with the computer."

Students, faculty and the people pulling class cards are responsible for mistakes during registration, he said.

An on-line system could point out errors immediately, Carter said, and students wouldn't have to wait until the next day to see if a mistake had been made.

Everyone agrees an on-line system would cut the time spent in the registration process.

About 20 percent of the faculty members spend one hour in registration, Lutes said. Students also could see a substantial decrease in the amount of time spent registering classes, he said.

Lawson said Purdue's system has cut the time students spend in registration from about 10 hours to 10 minutes.

"There would be a streamlining," Shoup said. "More than time, it would save a lot of headaches and ill feeling on the part of the people involved in the process — both the students and the advisers. It's a very frustrating procedure now at the University. In other schools, it's a pity the system has been driven by the hardware rather than by the need."

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Today's almanac

United Press International Today is Thursday, Sept. 16, the 259th day of 1982 with 106 to follow. The moon is approaching its new phase. The morning star is Venus. The evening stars are Mercury, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn. Those born on this date are under the sign of Virgo. American historian Francis Parkman was born on Sept. 16, 1823. On this date in history: In 1630, the Massachusetts village of Shawmut changed its name to Boston. In 1893, more than 100,000 people rushed to the Cherokee Strip in Oklahoma as the area

was opened to homesteading. In 1963, the Asian nation Malaysia was created, occupying the southern portion of the Malay Peninsula and the northern part of Borneo. The country is the world's largest producer of rubber.

In 1974, President Ford offered conditional amnesty to Vietnam draft dodgers and evaders. He said they could come home if they performed up to two years of public service.

A thought for the day: American author and humorist Mark Twain (Samuel Clemens) said, "There are several good professions against temptation but the surest is cowardice."

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