

# Testy disc

Computer program designed to reduce study time

**KATHERINE E. MATZINGER**  
Reporter

Computers seem to have come all facets of life in the 20th century, even into studying. Bob Prall of College Station has designed a computer disc, which can be used free to help students study. Prall said he decided to design a program to help his son study when he was in high school. Prall said he was inspired by a law that threatened to keep his son from playing football at M Consolidated High School. Prall wondered what he could do as a parent to help his son with his homework, Prall said.

Prall said he designed a disc that can be run without the user having computer knowledge. The disc is set up so a person can type in questions or notes from any subject and then be tested over the material. The idea behind it is like the "heard theory," Prall said. "Repetition means learning." The questions can be scrambled in different orders and presented to the person for answering. The answers are graded on a scale one to five — one meaning no information was known and five meaning all knowledge pertaining to the question was known. The program calculates the average score and stores it on a progress file. This allows the person to see improvements in learning. "Not only can you study the material, but you can learn your own way," Prall said. For example, Prall said, a student

*"The idea behind it is like the flashcard theory. Repetition means learning."*

*— Bob Prall, designer of a computer disc that students can use free of charge.*

can learn how many times he needs to go over material in order to learn it.

It gives the student a chance to repeat material without repeating things already learned, he said.

"That's what all college students spend their time doing, isn't it — going over material they don't need to?" Prall asked.

If a person decides to filter out questions that are scored four or better, the system will take this into account in the average scoring.

Therefore, progress is based on the same scale.

Prall said his son, 15, wanted to learn so that he could beat his previous score.

He said his son could see the progress and was motivated to learn more.

Prall said his son has cut down on his learning time by 35 to 40 percent.

"It is a much quicker way to learn — because you don't have to repeat what you already know — and it has the flashcard effect," Prall said.

Prall said he thinks the disc is a great learning device.

Just from watching his son's study habits improve, he said he knows the disc can help others.

"The two best things about the system are that the person can see his own progress, and it's free," Prall said.

The disc is available at the Micro Center located in the Memorial Student Center.

It costs nothing to run the disc and anyone wishing to copy the disc — even if he plans to use it for personal profit — can do so.

Prall said he hopes students will make discs of basic class notes to study for certain subjects.

One disc could include basic rules for learning a foreign language

*"One thing I want to stress is that a person never has to register or pay for anything to get the benefits of the disc."*

*— Bob Prall.*

along with vocabulary, for example.

Once the disc is designed and the person wishes to add it to Prall's collection, that person must register with Prall.

The one-time registration fee is \$27.50. Additional discs can be filed for \$5.

Anyone who has registered is eligible to purchase other discs and has access to a catalog of available discs.

Prall said the first students to send in basic things like language discs are almost sure to make a profit.

The disc sent to Prall is sold to others.

The profits are split between Prall and the disc designer with the designer receiving 40 percent and Prall 60 percent, which helps cover over-

head, including the maintaining of the catalog and postage.

Prall said he makes a minimal amount on each disc.

Most of his profit is made from people registering.

"One thing I want to stress," Prall said, "is that a person never has to register or pay for anything to get the benefits of the disc."

A person can copy a disc for the price of a blank disc. Students eventually will trade class notes and discs more than they now trade old tests, Prall said.

Prall said he is hoping people will send in discs and that he soon will have thousands of them on file.

People will register so they can receive catalogs and order specific discs.

Prall said he believes professors will like the discs because they can put basic notes on them to supplement lectures.

"I bet within two years there will be a good set of class notes on almost every subject on disc available to all students," Prall said.

Prall said that it is much easier and more economical to trade discs than handwritten notes.

For \$2.50 a disc can be purchased and within two minutes 133 pages of notes can be copied.

Prall said he doesn't know whether he will make a profit.

That remains to be seen. Prall said even if he doesn't make a big profit he feels good knowing he's helped someone and he's helped his country through education.

"I'm not bothered by someone using the disc and never registering," he said, "but I would be unhappy if they don't give it away."

## The Society for Entrepreneurship and New Ventures

Will have panel discussion meeting on the Association of Collegiate Entrepreneurs Convention: What we learned

7 pm 301 Rudder March 5

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## Police beat

The following incidents were reported to the Texas A&M University Police Department through Monday:

**MISDEMEANOR THEFT:**  
• Two \$100 bills were stolen from a backpack in the Civil Engineering Building.

• An empty beer keg, tap and container was stolen from the back of a 1978 Chevrolet pickup truck parked in PA 24.

• Seven bicycles were stolen from campus.

**BURGLARY OF A HABITATION:**

• About \$120 was stolen from three separate rooms in Puryear Hall.

• Two pistols were stolen from room 10.

**CRIMINAL TRESPASS:**

• A resident in Aston Hall reported that a man entered his room and asked for money to buy soft drink. When the resident refused to give the man money, the man attempted to grab change holder, but the resident was able to grab it first. The man tried to wrest the change holder away, but the resident threw it under a bed. The man then took the change holder and walked out the room. The man returned the change holder with 50 cents missing. The resident did not press charges.

## Federal report: Delta crew could have avoided crash

Associated Press

DALLAS — Federal investigators believe the crew of a Delta Air Lines jet that crashed near the Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport on Aug. 2 could have aborted the ill-fated landing, but waited too long to try, the Dallas Times Herald reported Tuesday.

The reports say the crew of Delta Flight 191, en route to Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport from Fort Lauderdale, Fla., had clues a storm in its path was severe, according to the newspaper.

The newspaper, in a copyright story, said internal reports were completed in the past two weeks by leaders of the National Transportation Safety Board teams assigned to assess factors in the crash, in which 137 people were killed.

The agency's final conclusions about the probable cause will be detailed in the final report, due in April or May, a board spokesman said.

Delta officials said the pilots of the L-1011 jumbo jet had no way of knowing they were flying into the thunderstorm microburst and could not escape once they were in the powerful downdraft of air.

T. Theodore Fujita, a University of Chicago meteorologist who studied the crash with Delta's help, said the type of storm cloud the Delta crew saw is often innocuous and can be entirely misleading to pilots.

"The Delta 191 microburst was accompanied by the most complicated winds analyzed by the author since . . . the Eastern 66 accident at JFK (airport in New York) on June 24, 1975," Fujita's study said.

The microburst developed at least three "vortex rings," or tornado-like eddies of wind that began as the jet of air descended to the ground and began to spread out, the study said.

Scientists have likened a microburst to a strong jet of water squirted from a garden hose onto the ground.

Flight recorders aboard the jet indicated the co-pilot saw lightning ahead at 6:04 p.m.

One minute later, the plane encountered wind shifts and heavy rain as it entered the microburst.

Officials said the crew, after entering the microburst shaft at 6:05 p.m., could have aborted the landing and veered out of the storm up to 20 seconds before impact.

The captain did not give the order to abort the landing until about seven seconds before impact, after the airplane entered a severe vortex ring on the microburst's edge, the newspaper said.

Officials said escape would have been impossible at that point.

Weather information the crew received did not mention the thunderstorm and gave wind speeds of 5 knots with gusts up to 15 knots.

"At the present time, a pilot has no equipment available to him to ascertain the exact nature of the winds until he flies into a microburst," Fujita said in his study.

Sources told the newspaper that the internal reports are not critical of air traffic controllers' actions in the mishap, but do cite the fact that two of three weather observers were away from their posts when the storm was forming.

## Japanese construction firm breaks ground in Austin

Associated Press

AUSTIN — Officials of the first Japanese-based firm to develop a real estate project in Austin say they will be recruiting Japanese business firms to help fill a planned \$6.3 billion office building.

A delegation of officials from Tokyo-headquartered Sumitomo Construction Co. and members of the

Austin Chamber of Commerce broke ground for the building Monday.

The five-story Town Lake Center is being constructed on a 2.4 acre tract south of downtown Austin. It is expected to be completed in one year.

Owners of the building are Sumiken Real Estate Co., a Sumitomo

subsidiary, and Sumico Development, a subsidiary of Belco Equities of California.

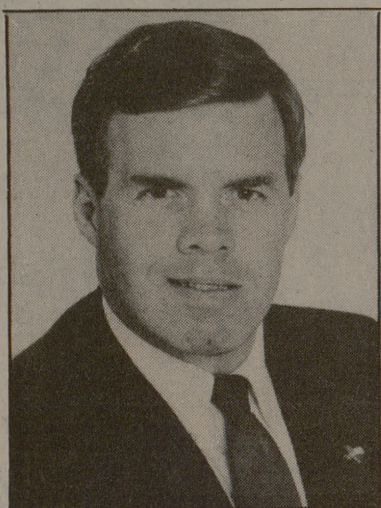
Sumiken chairman Takesada Hori said the Japanese developer is optimistic about the site, which is across the street from the Palmer Municipal Auditorium. Hori said his company is considering doing different kinds of projects in Austin over the next few years.

"This is the first investment," Hori said. "We want to expand here into land development and housing if it is feasible. We do all kinds of business."

Sumitomo executives said they do not have formal agreements from Japanese companies to lease space in the new building, but plan to lease space to Japanese companies coming to Austin and to American tenants.

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