

CIS deals with millennium glitch

By **SUZANNE RIGGS**
Staff writer

The clock is ticking as Texas A&M computing officials strive to combat a universal computer glitch known as Y2K.

The glitch was created in the 70's and 80's when programmers saved computer memory space by using only two spaces to record the year, leaving off the century. Years like '76 and '95 are then correctly assumed to be 1976 and 1995. But, when a computer sees the year '00, it may assume 1900, or it may shut down.

"The problem is real and must be dealt with," said Tom Putnam, Director of Computing and Information Services (CIS).

As a result, the CIS Operations Council formed the Year 2000 Team in 1996 to help iron out any of the problems that A&M could encounter.

If their efforts fail, everything from the financial aid, student accounting and payroll systems could be affected.

However, Putnam said preparing for these anticipated effects should not be difficult.

"In critical systems like these, we know where the problems are and we know how to fix them," he said. "We expect to have them corrected by the end of the year."

The departments are another area that could be affected, although Putnam said most of the problems will be minor.

"The main problems here will be those of nuisance such as spreadsheets not working correctly," he said.

Putnam said the Year 2000 Team will be distributing software to determine if the departmental PC's are century compliant.

All computers in the labs are now century compliant. "We recently purchased new computers for the labs, and the new computers have Y2K compliant BIOS programs."

Lance Coppinger, an assistant analyst at the Physical Plant, said problems could arise from some of the embedded systems.

"For example, during the weekend the air conditioning systems are programmed to automatically raise the temperature," he explained. "And if the date is wrong we could run into problems."

Coppinger said these types of issues will be looked at more closely beginning this summer.

Despite all the efforts to prepare for Y2K, Putnam said A&M is already experiencing some of its side effects.

"One of the first places it was noticed was over a year ago when calculations were made for some kind of insurance benefits," he said. "The calculations went over the year 2000 and the program stopped."

Putnam said even if A&M is completely cleared of the glitch there still could be problems.

"Some suppliers that give the University items such as food may have accounting systems that fail and then we'll be forced to find other sources," he said.

He said A&M students should not ignore the problem.

"Students with non-compliant PCs can't contaminate the A&M system," he said. "However, their computers may put incorrect dates on files, making them hard to find, or they may create e-mail with incorrect dates. Some people sort their incoming mail using that date header, and they might not notice old e-mail messages with dates of '1900.' That unnoticed message may be important to someone."

Those with questions may visit the Year 2000 Team web site at <http://www.tamu.edu/cis/teams/yr2k/>.

"The web page includes an inventory of many different computer hardware and software products, telling which versions are Y2K compliant," he said.

Jennifer Jahedkar, CIS Communications Specialist, said other informative Web sites include:

- <http://www.year2000.com/>
- <http://www.itaa.org/year2000.htm>
- <http://www.dir.state.tx.us/yr2k/>

Just horsin' around



"Sugar", a yearling, gets put through her paces at the horse center by Audra Lindsey, a senior psychology major.

WHAT'S UP

Friday

Alpha Phi Omega: Meet to go visit Crestview Retirement Home at 6:30 p.m. at Crestview.

Study Abroad Programs Office: There will be a meeting from 2 to 2:30 p.m. in 154, 161 Bizzell Hall West. The meeting will promote the Italy Spring '99 program.

Episcopal Student Center: There will be a celebration of holy eucharist followed by free dinner at 6:15 p.m. on Sunday at 902 George Bush. Call Father Mark at 696-0774

for more details.

ATM Roadrunners: Meet at 4:15 p.m. in front of G. Rollie White Coliseum. We will run three to four miles. All students and skill levels are welcome. Call Steve at 847-7905 for details.

Mexican Students Association: There will be a bilingual poetry reading by Mr. Raul Renan at 3 p.m. in 301 Rudder. Refreshments will be provided. Call Paco Rangel at 693-0140 for details.

Management 481: A guest lecture

by Michael Williams will be held at 10:20 a.m. in 144 Koldus. He is a vice president for the Central South West Corporation.

Saturday

Texas A&M Jazz Society: A free concert will be held in front of the MSC at 11 a.m. Central Baptist Jazz and Texas A&M Jazz Society will perform.

Residence Hall Association: The Princeton Review will give free practice tests for the GRE, GMAT and LSAT from 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. in the Multipurpose room of the Com-

mons lobby and 101, 102 Heep. On campus residents only may call John at 696-9099 to reserve a place.

Sunday

Texas A&M Paintball Club: 1st annual paintball with parents will be held from 12 to 6 p.m. at the Brazos Valley War Games. Members, non-members and parents are invited to join in the fun of paintball. Call David for directions at 639-2584.

AMSA Pre-Med: A BBQ bash for all pre-med students will be held from 1 to 4 p.m. at the Bryan Regional Ath-

letic Complex. Call Dave at 764-9176 for directions.

Monday

Officers' Christian Fellowship: Bible study on how to live a Christian life in the military/Corps of Cadets will be held at 7:45 p.m. in 108 Military Science Building. Call Tim at 847-1730 for details.

ATM Womens Rugby: Come join! No experience needed. Practices are from 4 to 6 p.m. at the pitch on the corner of Texas and University Call Nikki at 694-0084 for information.

Alpha Phi Omega: Meet to go visit Club at 3:30 p.m. in 133 Koldus

Intervarsity Christian Fellowship: On-campus Bible studies will be held. Contact David at 847-1730 for location and further details.

What's Up is a Battalion service lists non-profit student activities and events. Items should be submitted no later than three days in advance of the desired run date. Submission deadlines and notices of events and will not be run in the newsroom. If you have any questions, please call the newsroom at 845-3313.

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