

# Too few terminals bad news

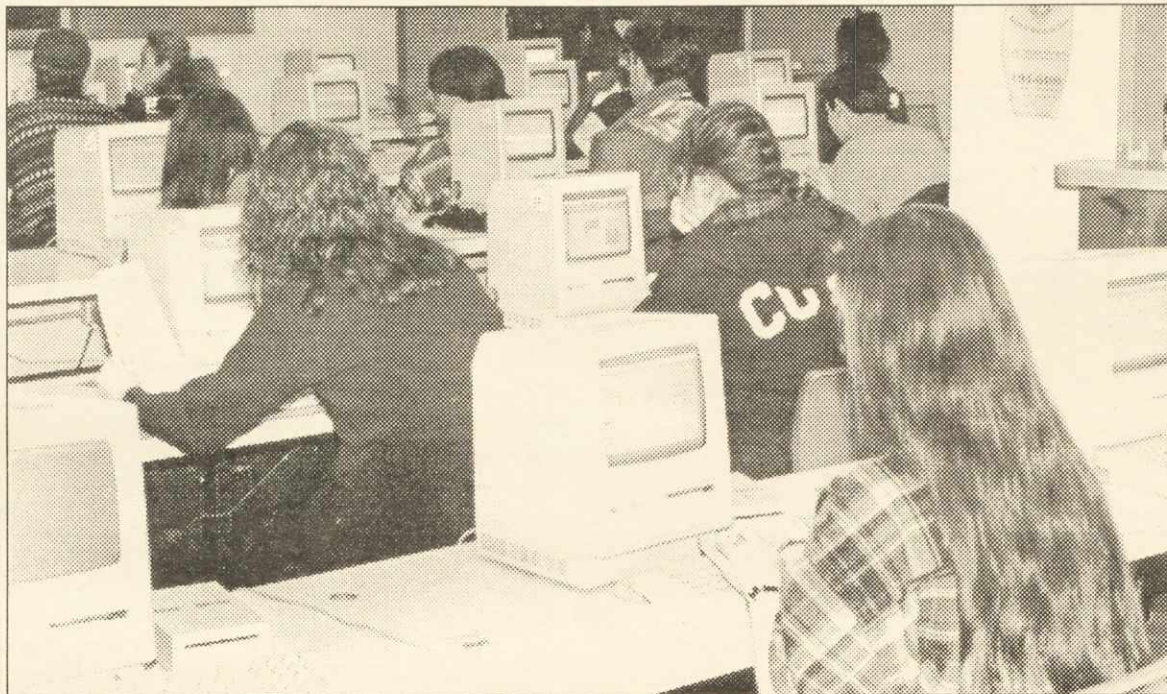
by Garth Sweet

More than ever this year, students are sitting outside the Killam computer labs waiting for a free terminal. Getting access to computing services at Dalhousie is becoming tougher and tougher.

Dalhousie's Academic Computing Services department maintains about 1,200 network connections on campus, of which about 250 are designated for student use. Unfortunately the number of students wanting to use these services can be much larger than the number of computers available.

According to Randy Barkhouse, Director of Academic Computer Services, it's usually towards the end of term that services are in such demand and problems arise with shortages. This year, though, he says shortages of available computers have been showing up earlier than usual and with greater frequency. For instance, on the VAX system (a.k.a. Dal1), which is maintained for general student use, the peak number of users was around 140 last year. This year it's been reaching the machine's limit of 250 several times a day.

Dialing in from home has been a popular alternative to finding a free terminal on campus, but even doing that you're often met with a busy



This is often the scene: too few computers, far too many users.

PHOTO: GARTH SWEET

signal. In response to the need for more modem connections to the computers on campus, an additional 16 lines were added last year, bringing the total up to 72.

According to Mr. Barkhouse, however, it made no real difference in the backlog on the phone connections. "With PCPC [Dal's computer retail outlet] alone selling around 300

machines with modems in them last year, the extra 16 lines were absorbed pretty quickly".

Like most departments on campus, Computer Services also took some cuts. In particular, they received no new capital funding, severely limiting what services they could add. "We basically did nothing [new] this year, just maintained

what we had," explained Phillip O'Hara, Assistant Director Teaching Unit of Academic Computing Services.

With computing budgets being reduced, but the demand for computing services at Dalhousie growing yearly, and more and more faculties using computers in their curriculum, the backlogs we are seeing now may become the standard when trying get to a computer at Dal.

# Dalhousie hunts down bug

by Steve Tonner

He's popular the world over. Almost everyone either knows about him, or has felt the effect he's had on their lives at sometime. Fifty per cent of Nova Scotians are living with him right now. And scientists at Dalhousie and all over the world can't wait to get rid of him.

What we're talking about here is a bacterium known as *Helicobacter Pylori*, which lives deep in the folds of people's stomachs. It has been linked with such maladies as upset stomach, ulcers, and even stomach cancer.

The bacterium was discovered in 1984 by two scientists who were studying patients with recurrent stomach problems. When they analysed tissue from the patients' stomachs, they found that they both had the same bacteria present, which has since been identified as the *Helicobacter Pylori*, also known as H-P. The H-P bacterium is being studied at Dalhousie by a group of scientists who call themselves the "Dalhousie *Helicobacter Pylori* Study Group", whose efforts are directed towards finding out more about the bacterium, in hopes of finding a way to control it.

Despite the troubles H-P has caused to millions of people all over the world, Dr. Sander Van Zanten, one of the members of the group, stresses its true purpose.

"We're here to study it, not to destroy it," said Dr. Van Zanten.

The Dalhousie H-P Study group's objective is to obtain a better understanding of the H-P bacterium, and to eradicate its bad effects, as well as to help relieve Ulcerative Colitis, a related disorder of the large bowel. The group was formed mostly by chance, after Dr. Van Zanten learned

of other work being done at Dal which could be beneficial in controlling H-P.

The Dalhousie Study group is a loose affiliation of researchers from five different departments, each working on the problem of H-P in a different way. This, according to Dr. Van Zanten, is one of the group's unique qualities.

Other researchers around the world are also trying to find out more about HP, but most of them are working alone, or in groups which are limited to only one field. The Dalhousie group has the distinct advantage of being able to work from many different angles, which should hopefully increase the chances of finding a successful cure in a shorter period of time.

However, there are significant stumbling blocks to be cleared first. Scientists are trying to find out more about the H-P bacterium, but they don't know very much about it. The exact facts of how it is transmitted are still a mystery, which adds to the problems researchers must face when trying to rid us of it. H-P can be controlled with drugs, but this method of treatment can be very expensive, and must be continued indefinitely.

One of the methods of attack being investigated by the group is the use of a proper bismuth compound. Bismuth is an ingredient in ordinary Pepto Bismol, which has been able to eliminate H-P in 5% of patients. Another is a probe into how H-P develops immunities to certain drugs used to treat it.

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Answer:

The answer is that you need 23 people to have even odds at getting two people born on the same day of the year. Remember that next time you're at a party, and you could make some easy money.

Our apologies to all the people who emailed the answer. You got deleted by mistake. Sorry, please try again.

Question:

The Killam library has been invaded by a pesky bookworm! He plans to feast on a 10 volume encyclopedia set, eating straight through the encyclopedias, starting on the first page of the first volume and finishing up with the last page of the last volume. Each volume contains exactly 1000 pages of text and the volumes are lined up in the standard format of volume 1 through to volume 10. Ignoring the covers, title pages and such, how many pages will our industrious bookworm eat through before he needs to order dessert?

Please send your answers to this week's Pointless Ponderables c/o the Gazette, to either our email address (Gazette@ac.dal.ca) or our office in the SUB, and if yours is the first correct answer we'll print your name in the next issue. Entries must be in by Monday at 4:00 pm, and must include your full name.

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