

# To aid accessibility

by Sandy MacKay

This month, the Department of Advanced Education and Job Training will introduce a new on-line computer system that should speed up the processing of student loans. The program will allow students easy access to the status of their loan application. Computer terminals will be located at the Student Aid Office in the Killam Library at Dal, and at the Computer Centre at University College of Cape Breton in Sydney.

What this project is designed to do is allow students ready access to their files. The on-line system enables the user to determine her or his current status. For example, a student may use the system to discover when the application was received, when processing began, and when processing was completed. The on-line system will show the state of any appeals to the board, and also show any deficiencies in the student's application.

"500 applicants out of 13,000 simply forget to sign their application" says Elizabeth Ann Macdonald, Director of Financial Aid for Students. The 'deficiency' screen will indicate to the student exactly what the hold-up is, be it a missing signature, or lack of tax information.

"Many of the calls to our office are students asking 'Did you get my ... (application, work term report, appeal)' and the on-line system can answer these questions directly. We still expect calls from students," said Macdonald,

in reference to problems that need attention, but she added that the on-line system will answer the 'Did you get my ...' kind of question.

The Student Aid Office receives an average of 400 calls a day during the summer, and the average climbs to 500 after mid-August. Whereas a telephone call to the office might take anywhere from five minutes to days, waiting for a clear line, Macdonald estimates that to get information from the on-line system should take an average of a minute and a half. Students need only a Social Insurance Number and their Student Aid file number. Student Aid file numbers are being sent out to students upon completion of the processing of each application. This means that students will not actually be able to find out their status until the processing of the application is complete. A small catch-22, because this means that

"Did you get my..."

students who have a deficiency on their initial application will not be able to access the on-line system to find out what that deficiency is.

The Student Aid on-line system will be available to students with SA file numbers on September 11th. Since this is a new project the Student Aid Office will be conducting a survey to get user reaction to the system. Further, Student Aid counsellors will be at the Dal campus October 16 and 17. Students can make

appointments at the Registrar's Office.

Instructions on using the on-line system will be posted at the terminal sites, Macdonald said, adding "we've had lots of cooperation from the library staff, they've been very good and helpful."

The Student Aid on-line system follows the trend of putting information at students' fingertips. Many university libraries (including Dal) have their entire catalogue on on-line systems. Carleton University in Ottawa is beginning to move into the area of on-line registration, which could be the beginning of the end of those long lines.

The terminals at the Killam Library are available from 8 am to 7 pm, Monday to Thursday, and from 8 am to 4:30 pm on Friday. At the Student Aid Office the hours are 8:30 to 4:30, Monday to Friday. If you happen to be in Sydney, the hours are the same as those at Killam.

According to a May 23rd news release from the Department of Advanced Education and Job Training, the cost for this pilot project will be about \$82,000.

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## CUP Briefs

OTTAWA (CUP) — 'Christ' and 'damn' are among the words Newfoundland's education minister doesn't want final year high school students to read.

Phil Warren sparked a furor in Newfoundland when he pulled several pieces from a short story collection destined for Grade 12 students because they included words like 'damn', 'Christ', and 'God'.

The stories in question were written by Margaret Atwood, Ernest Hemingway and Jules Verne, among others.

"There were eleven or twelve items containing language which might be offensive to some parents and even some religious groups in the province," he said.

But Warren would not name any parents or groups who had complained about the text.

"I think by the time kids are in Grade 12, they don't need protection from literature," one Grade 12 student said.

The Newfoundland-Labrador Writers Alliance has organized a petition calling for an end to the censorship.

"I think we should let these students live in the real world," Alliance executive Carol Hobbs said. "We should not be so insular."

The petition has gathered more than 600 signatures, and Hobbs said there have been mostly positive responses.

"Yet there are those that support the Department of Education decision," she added.

by Karen Luscombe

TORONTO (CUP) — Concerned friends and neighbours have started a fund to cover the appeal costs for a University of Toronto engineering professor, found guilty of sexual harassment last spring under the school's Sexual Harassment Policy.

"The fund was established to prove he was in the right," said Helen Barclay, accused professor Richard Hummel's neighbour, who started the fund.

"We thought he'd been treated shabbily. I've known the family for a long time, and there's never been any question as to Prof. Hummel's character."

Last spring, the U of T Sexual Harassment Review Board found Hummel guilty of leering at women swimmers at a U of T pool. The board banned him from the pool for five years and recommended he take counselling. His appeal is slated for late August.

Barclay said they had no specific financial goal in mind but they were "looking for any support at all . . . even moral."

Kate Hughes, lawyer for the woman who filed the complaint against Hummel, said bringing in lawyers was unfair to students.

"When students bring a complaint and have to retain a lawyer because the other side does, they'll have a financial burden that students are not in a situation to bear," she said.

Hummel said he needed a lawyer, but the complainant was not forced to retain counsel.

Hughes said women's groups have only been able to provide moral encouragement in such cases, due to tight budgets.

Hughes said her client was paying the fees herself, and might have difficulty obtaining legal aid.

"If she wishes to," Hummel added, "she can start up a fund equally well."

## Student Aid Information ... At Your Fingertips



An on-line Student Aid Information Service has been established to assist students in following the status of their 1989-90 Canada Student Loans and Nova Scotia Government Bursaries.

For your convenience, the computer systems are set up in the following locations:

**Dalhousie (Killam Library)**

Monday - Thursday . . . . . 8 a.m. - 7 p.m.

Friday . . . . . 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

**Student Aid Office**

Monday - Friday . . . . . 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

**U.C.C.B. (Room B1023)**

Mon - Thur . . . . . 8:30 a.m. - 7 p.m.

Friday . . . . . 8:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.



**Department of  
Advanced Education  
and Job Training**

Honourable Joel R. Matheson, O.C.  
Minister