DEADLINES FOR MOVING MAIL APPROACH

Students Must Move Off VAX by April 2nd

As of March 23, 2001, roughly 57% of faculty and staff and 33% of juniors, sophomores, and freshmen have moved to the new NT mail system. The good news is 1227 people have already changed; the bad news is that approximately 1700 faculty, staff and students still need to move from the VAX.

With less than a month before the April 2 student deadline, the Information Technology Department is particularly concerned about the number of students who have not yet moved to the new email system.

Changing the email system for a population this large and diverse is a huge undertaking. It cannot be done without the help and cooperation of the entire Amherst College community. IT will be here to support the community during this transition; however, we need your help to initiate the process.

To get started, you can use our documentation on the IT Email Page (www.amherst.edu/it/email). Or you can use our printed instructions in the “Guide to Moving Your Mail at Amherst College” booklet available from your Academic Department Assistant, your dorm’s Resident Assistant or the Desktop Computing Office in 109 Seeley Mudd. If you have problems along the way you can call us for help — students should call x7921, while faculty and staff should phone the IT Help Desk at x2526. Please move to the new email system as soon as possible.

If you are still have questions or doubts, please read through the Frequently Asked Questions to the right and our articles on the next page.

Frequently Asked Questions

About the New Email System

Q: Do I really need to move my mail?
A: If you are not a senior, abroad this semester, or on sabbatical, then you must move your mail.

Q: But I don’t use the VAX — just WebMail/Netscape/Outlook Express/Outlook.
A: Your email program currently gets messages from the VAX. You need to change where your messages are being delivered — from the VAX to the new NT system — and then set up your email program to get messages from the new system. Complete directions on how to do this are at www.amherst.edu/it/email.

Q: Why is the VAX going away?
A: In order to provide the entire Amherst College community with more speed, space, security and advanced features, we decided that it was wiser to enhance our existing NT email system than to upgrade and maintain an aging system with limited capabilities.

Q: If the VAX is not being retired until September 30th, why do I have to move my mail before then?
A: We need the time between the assigned deadlines and September 30th to allow us to handle special cases, such as students and faculty who are away from the College this semester. In addition we must relocate other services currently running on the VAX and have time to deal with unforeseen problems. If you have extenuating circumstances, please contact us as soon as possible at aceit@amherst.edu or call the IT Help Desk at x2526.

Q: I don’t want to be a guinea pig.
A: Over a thousand people have already moved to the new system. We are confident that if you follow the directions (at www.amherst.edu/it/email), you will find the process is stable and secure.

Q: I have my Amherst email forwarded to another account (UNIX, Hotmail, Yahoo, AOL, etc). Do I still need to convert my mail?

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A Moving Letter to the VAX System

This letter was recently delivered to the Information Technology Department. Its author is unknown.

Dear VAX,

After all these years, I don't know how to break this to you so I'll just give it to you straight: I've connected with a new server - NT - that is, well, better. I've packed up and moved my mail to NT's place. This Exchange has given me an entirely new Outlook on life. NT is bigger, stronger, friendlier, and more attentive to my needs.

I want you to know I am not leaving you because of the green and black thing or that terminal illness you had when we first met. It's about us and the times we live in. The world is changing at warp speed and I need the power, space, and freedom to change with it. You don't seem to understand that I am a Communicator. I have places to go and people to meet. Attachments and Contacts never meant much to you but they do to me. NT has allowed me to reach out and search the globe in a way I never thought possible. NT knows everybody — I just say a name and it fills in the rest. I can't go back to asking the question “whois”. Now that I have written my story across the Netscape globe in a way I never thought possible.

Time has always been a sore subject between us. Time never meant much to you. With NT I can schedule appointments with destiny and meetings with fate. In short, dear friend, now that I have seen the big city, I can't go back to your quiet cluster.

I want you to know that even though my mind is made up this hasn't been an easy decision. I'll always remember the day I first logged in, the first time we really Talked, all the Plans we made together. I'll miss your slow steady ways and your familiar face. Thank you for the years of loyalty and I hope you understand why it is now time for me to move on.

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Ten Good Reasons to Move Today

1. The VAX is really going away. If you want to continue using your Amherst email account after this semester you must move to the new system.
2. It is less painful to move now. The IT staff (x2526) and student (x7921) email teams are ready to help you with your conversion. They will not have time later in the semester. And you don’t really want to move your mail in the middle of finals, do you?
3. The new system is considerably faster.
4. You will have much more disk space.
5. You can access your messages and mail folders from anywhere with Internet access and a web browser (using WebMail or Outlook Web Access — see www.amherst.edu/it/email for more information).
6. The new system automatically finds and removes known viruses before they get to your inbox. It is not a replacement for an up-to-date virus scanner on your own computer, but it catches the vast majority of computer viruses afflicting the campus.
7. Mail on the new server is backed up every night.
8. Most Amherst users will not have to change their email interface. The new system supports Netscape, Outlook Express, Outlook, WebMail, and Outlook Web Access.
9. If you use Outlook or Outlook Web Access, the new system allows you to use an online calendar and a Global Address List of all faculty, staff, and students on campus.
10. Students who move before April 2nd will automatically get the chance to win 10 AC Dollars. Details on the Email Page.

Frequently Asked Questions

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A: Yes, you still need to move from the VAX to NT. Currently all incoming mail from outside Amherst College goes to the VAX cluster first. On June 22, 2001, the NT email server will become the first stop for all incoming email. If you have not moved to the new system by that date your Amherst email will be bounced back to the sender. However, if you move to the NT system you may simply forward your NT account to your non-Amherst account (by going to www.amherst.edu/it/email/forward) right after moving.

Q: The new system works differently. I don’t want my email on the server.
A: All of the email clients allow you to move your mail from the server to local folders. However, if you move your email to local folders and don’t leave a copy on the server, you will not be able to access all of your email from other locations and your email will not be backed up for you.

Q: Do seniors need to move their mail?
A: No, seniors are not required to move their mail to the new NT email server; however, they may choose to do so. On September 30, 2001, seniors’ accounts on the VAX, NT and UNIX systems will be deactivated. After May 29th seniors may obtain email forwarding at an alumni.amherst.edu account. See the Office of Alumni and Parent Programs website at www.amherst.edu/alumni/.

Q: I have a friend who is abroad or on sabbatical. What should I tell them?
A: We are compiling a list of the students and faculty who are not in residence this semester. They may move their mail now if they wish, but will not be required to do so until September. Tell your friend to email us at aceit@amherst.edu for more information.
More Bandwidth, Accounts Change, People Move

Amherst Works with Verizon to Triple Bandwidth

The Information Technology department is pleased to announce that that there will be a bandwidth increase after all this spring. Originally, IT had planned to increase the speed of Amherst’s Internet connection February using Vitts Networks. However, Vitts failed to secure adequate capital for its corporate expansion, and is unable to provide the service. Recently College has signed a one-year contract with Verizon to provide a direct link to the Internet service.

The Systems, Networking and Telecommunications Department (SNT) spent some time researching alternatives to Vitts. In the end, Verizon was selected because it was believed that they had the best chance of providing in a timely manner. Although this plan is significantly more expensive, IT is proceeding with the bandwidth increase due to the concerns of many that increased Internet connectivity is essential to the work of the College. Over the course of the next year IT will work on long range networking plans, in coordination with the other schools in the Five College consortium.

SNT hopes to have the expanded service (from a 3 to 10 Mb connection) in place by the beginning of April. However, there are a number of variables beyond the control of either Verizon or SNT that could adversely affect that timeframe.

New Accounts Policy Defines Who Uses Amherst Resources

In December an account policy for Amherst College computer resources was approved. This policy applies to accounts for email, web page space, shared file server space, and other general facilities commonly given to members of the Amherst College community. It does not apply to the administrative information system or to CourseInfo, Amherst’s course management system, which has been in place since the spring of 2000.

Accounts are extended with the assumption that use of them will not interfere with the main purposes of the College – the academic work of the faculty and students, and the smooth support of the academic mission by staff and administration. Use of an account in ways that are not consistent with the main purposes of the College may result in the revocation of all account privileges, following the College’s usual disciplinary processes for students, faculty, and staff. The Director of Information Technology, in consultation with the Dean of the Faculty, may revoke accounts for those who are neither employed nor enrolled in the College. To see the guidelines used in extending account privileges, see the IT web page: www.amherst.edu/it/about/accounts.html.

Students Available for Specialized Program Help

The Software Consultants are a group of students dedicated to solving problems with programs and helping students, faculty, and staff learn to use computers more effectively. They can help with a range of problems, from advanced word processing tasks (such as using footnotes or special headers and footers) to spreadsheets, presentations by computer, making web pages, and scanning, changing, and printing images. While the Seeley Mudd Computer Center Supervisor usually has too little time to help with or learn advanced features of programs, the Software Consultants are there for just that purpose.

The Consultants are available in the Computer Center Monday through Thursday from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday through Wednesday from 8:00 to 11:00 p.m. During these hours, you can also call them at x7921. You can also send an email to the Software Consultants at softcon@amherst.edu. If you have a special project for a student in mind, please call Janet Price at x4151.

Cathy Moves On; Bob Moves In; Nicholas Just Moves

In January, Cathy Miller ’94 resigned from Curricular Computing to take a new position as Director of Educational Technology and Distance Learning at Manchester Community College in Connecticut. While her colleagues here miss her very much, the position was a wonderful career move for her. “I had a really great time at the College and I am sad to leave,” she says, “but I look forward to my work developing the online program at Manchester and I hope I won’t lose touch with my friends at Amherst in the future.” Cathy would love to hear from Amherst colleagues and friends at camiller@amherst.edu.

Also in January, Bob Ryan joined Desktop Computing Services as a PC Microcomputer Specialist. Bob has worked with desktop computers for nearly two decades as a technology writer, editor, and consultant, and remains a contributing editor to Access Magazine. He lives in Hadley with his wife Rose and daughter Hannah.

Nicholas Dahlman ’98 has been working with the IT Department since 1999. A familiar face at the Seeley Mudd Computer Center, he was the Kermes Desktop Computing Fellow for the fall of 2000. In March, he was promoted to Microcomputer Specialist, becoming a permanent member of the Desktop Computing staff. Among his responsibilities are the Dell computers in the Center and Webster; co-managing the Student Supervisors and the Software Consultants; and editing this newsletter.
In Other News

New Computer Viruses Plague Campus

In the past several weeks, many faculty, students and staff have reported computer virus infections. The two most common viruses are the Snow White virus and the MTX virus. There have also been several reports of the AnnaKornokova virus and the Romeo and Juliet virus. For more information on these viruses, visit IT’s Virus page (www.amherst.edu/it/virus).

While not all computer viruses damage or delete your computer files, they all steal your time. It takes only a moment for a virus to infect your computer (often spreading itself to many other people), but it can take several hours to completely remove the virus from your system. Although virus software makes the removal process much easier, it’s still time consuming and arduous to remove a computer virus from your system. Inevitably, you will become infected before a deadline or due date when you have little time to spare.

It can also be very embarrassing to open a virus-laden attachment. Many viruses use your email account to send off-color material or inappropriate messages to your friends, colleagues and family. When the LoveLetter virus hit last spring many faculty and students sent emails proclaiming “I Love You” to each other. Some examples of virus attachment files are: “Free_xxx_sites.txt.pif”, “You_are_fat!.txt.pif”, and “sexy virgin.scr.” While your friends might get a kick out of it, would you want to send something like that to your mother, your professor, or your boss?

To protect yourself from computer virus infection, the IT department recommends the following steps:

• If you have not yet installed anti-virus software on your computer, the IT department strongly encourages that you do so. The College purchased a licensing for McAfee VirusScan (Windows) and Virex (Macintosh) in fall 1999. Our license agreement allows faculty, and personally owned computers. The software can be installed over the campus network. There are also several kits in the Science library which faculty and staff can check out for home computer installs.

• Once anti-virus software installed it may need some tweaking to provide the best protection. For example, VirusScan can scan email attachments for computer viruses, but that feature is not enabled on by default.

• The virus definitions also need to be updated regularly. Anti-virus software protects your computer from viruses by comparing the actions of your computer against a list (the virus definition files) of known viruses and their behaviors. If the virus definition files (also known as DAT files) are not kept up to date, your computer will have no protection against a recently released virus.

• You should also move to the new mail system at your first opportunity. The NT mail system screens attachments for known viruses and notifies you when it has found a virus.

Directions for installing, configuring, and updating VirusScan (Windows anti-virus software) and Virex (Macintosh anti-virus software) are available on the IT website. Directions for moving your email to the NT mail system are also on the IT web site.