

Ada debuts; bigger computer facility for CRAGS

By Neil Myers

Computers seem to be moving in everywhere these days, and Capitol Campus is no exception. In January, Capitol became one of the first schools in central Pennsylvania to teach a new computer language, while it also expanded its micro-computer facilities.

The Ada programming

language is being taught for the first time here in Math Science 408 by Dr. M. Susan Richman, Associate Professor of Mathematics.

The "Ada" trademark is licensed to the Defense Department, which developed the language to replace well-known languages like FORTRAN and COBOL. According to Dr. Richman, it is expected to make maintenance of software (programs) easier and

eliminate the confusion of what she said were "450 to 1500 incompatible languages".

This is the first time such a course has been offered anywhere within Penn State, Richman noted, and it is one of the first in central Pennsylvania.

Dr. Richman, one of 15 university educators who attended an Ada training program last summer at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, said Ada is also unique

because its variable names are especially easy to use, and because it can avoid program failure even if the operator goofs.

Ada, she said, is "very possibly" the wave of the future, since the Defense Department is slowly requiring that most of its computer operations convert to the language.

Based on that assumption, Dr. Richman is planning ahead. She said the introductory Ada course and a more advanced course will be offered here in the fall.

She is also anticipating a grant that would allow the campus to purchase what she called a "large-ish" computer. That would open more positions in the Ada courses, which are currently limited to 10 students because Ada uses relatively large amounts of computer time on the Penn State network.

Meanwhile, it was moving day last month for Continuing Education's micro-computer lab in the CRAGS Building. Continuing Education moved its 17 Apple 2-E's to a larger facility in the same building.

Ronald Melchiorre, Area Director for Continuing Education, said the move provided better lighting and more room for the computers without reducing classroom space.

Although the change forced the relocation of Police Services within CRAGS and bumped the Photo Club into new quarters across the street, the dust seems to be settling.

"I like the change," said Charles Alesky, Supervisor of Police Services.

"Maintenance really did a super job," Melchiorre added.

He said Continuing Ed is currently using the computers in an array of seminars and courses for business, industry, the Bureau of Prisons, teacher instruction, and computer certification. There are even three "computer camps" for children being offered this semester.

Because the Apples are, as Melchiorre put it, "really being heavily used," he is hoping for a loan or donation to purchase some IBM personal computers. He plans to expand offerings in FORTRAN and COBOL with the new machines.

The existing Apples were purchased in April of 1983.

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