Computer Hiccups Hassle PSH

By Paula Marinak
Capital Times Staff Writer

Some PSH students and faculty had difficulty traveling the "Information Superhighway" when classes began this semester. The staff in the Information and Instructional Technology Department has successfully removed the roadblocks related specifically to Internet use, but other problems remain. Internet woes have plagued the entire Penn State system for the past several weeks. But as of late September, these problems have been corrected.

"The primary cause of Internet slowness at Penn State Harrisburg and Penn State Schuykill lies with our Internet Service Provider, and the Pittsburgh Super-computing Center," said IIT Director Robert Brinkley. These problems have caused Web pages that are not part of the Penn State domain to appear on a computer monitor very slowly, or not at all.

Though disgruntled users have blamed the Internet for most of the hassles, Brinkley pointed to two other culprits that are exclusive to PSH: problems with the Local Area Network, and difficulties with dial-up access to the campus system (the intranet).

LANs are groups of interconnected computers that share resources. For example, a computer lab would make up one LAN, while a classroom that had computers or other technology in it would be part of a separate LAN.

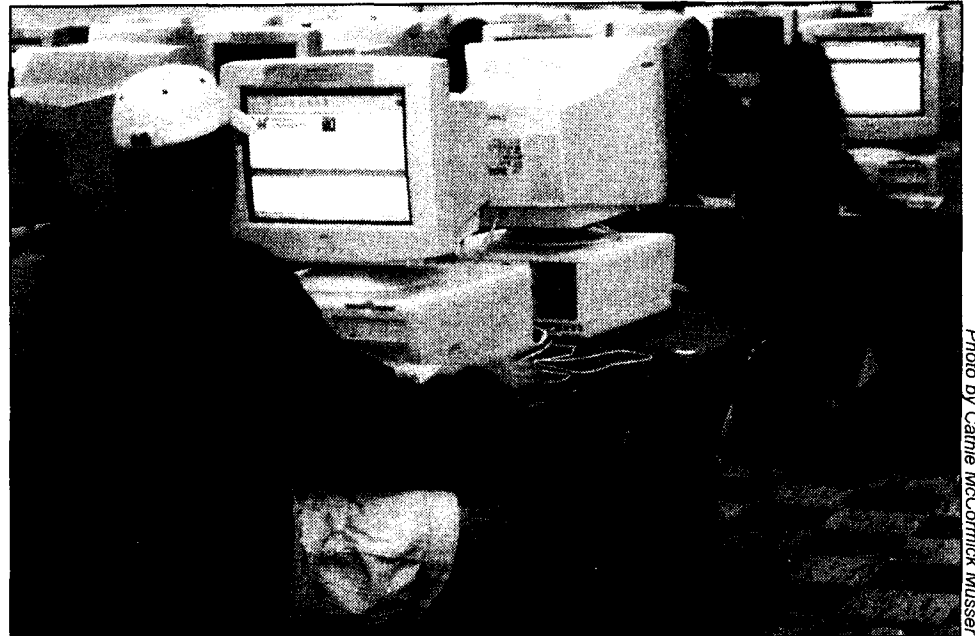"The LAN issues have a slowdown effect for students, faculty and staff,

Photo by Cathie McCormick Musser

Students surf the internet in the PSH computer center.

University Monitors Internet Usage

By Jessica Schmidt
For the Capital Times

All over the country, people are swapping and downloading free music onto their computers thanks to the Napster revolution. Many of these people are college students, getting free music through their respective school's Internet service.

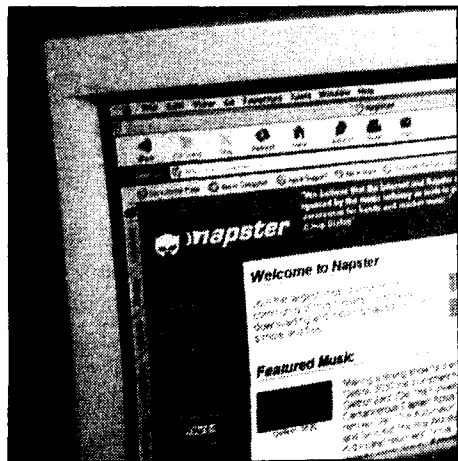Twenty universities have been asked to unplug access to Napster by Los

Photo by Cathie McCormick Musser

Napster home page still found at PSH.

Angeles lawyer, Howard King. Penn State was one of the universities that received King's letter at the beginning of the school year. Although King's letter served as a reminder rather than a threat to the school, a response regarding Penn State's plans about its Napster access was requested by Sept. 20.

In his letter, King noted that many local colleges and universities in Pennsylvania, such as Shippensburg University and Lebanon Valley College, have banned Napster altogether. He added that the University of Southern California, Yale University and Indiana University banned student use of Napster after King's law firm sued. Penn State, King alleged, is too lenient in its policy, allowing students to download their music from Napster. Napster is used to swap copies of MP-3 formatted songs through the Internet. Because many college students have access to Napster through their school, they are receiving CD-quality music through their computers or stereo devices.

In April, King's firm sued Napster on behalf of Dr. Dre and Metallica. The judge ruled Napster shut down in August, but the company appealed this ruling and Napster has been able to remain online. Dr. Dre and Metallica argued that Napster allows people to steal copyrighted music. This, in turn, hurts the music industry. Lawyers for the record industry point out that allowing Napster to thrive makes people more inclined to download music illegally, rather than buying the CD.

After reviewing King's letter, Penn State lawyers said they had no plans for changes at this time. Steve McCarthy, a university spokesman, said that Penn State complies with the Digital Millennium Copyright Act, which requires the university to block access only if it receives a specific complaint about an individual student. Before they are granted Internet access from the school, Penn State students are required to sign a written policy regarding copyright violations. This written policy specifically mentions Napster.

In response to the Sept. 20th deadline, Penn State decided to compromise rather than ban Napster altogether. The university plans to review patterns of how people use the computer network. If Penn State finds anyone consistently moving big files around, that person must provide an explanation of what they are doing. The university has already notified 80 users who were allegedly using the network heavily. These students were given seven days to provide the school an explanation of their computer use. If it is proven that they have been illegally copying copyrighted material, they may lose access to the network.

McCarthy said that because there are some legitimate uses for Napster which are legal, the university has not banned it completely. McCarthy added that "The policy isn't any different. Doing anything illegal on Penn Sate computers is always prohibited."

Grace Under Fire

By Steven E. Moses
Capital Times Staff Writer

On Sept. 23, the Student Government Association and Student Activities Office co-sponsored "Grace Under Fire," a leadership workshop about conflict resolution. The workshop was presented by the Institute of Cultural Partnerships.

The ICP was founded in 1995 as a non-profit organization based in Harrisburg. ICP's purpose is to provide a wide range of programs and services to communities and institutions on preventing misunderstanding, prejudice and cultural differences.

Everyone has been involved in a conflict whether with a boyfriend or girlfriend, spouse, friend, boss or professor. The bottom line is that conflict exists in our lives.

In the workshop, ICP presented strategies for how to achieve a win/win result to conflicts. The main strategies taught in the workshop were:

(1) Be concerned with the perspective of others when dealing with conflicts.

(2) Understand how you deal with conflict and relate it to your style of communication.