



Connections

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Management Council
of the

Ohio Education Computer Network

Providing Technology
Services to Ohio
Classrooms

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From the CEO

It's hard to imagine the impact technology will have on the students entering kindergarten today; however, we can anticipate that technology will have a greater and greater role in education as we enter the twenty-first century. Therefore, the Board of Trustees of the Management Council of the Ohio Education Computer Network want to open lines of communication between the OEON, school districts, legislators, and other interested educators. This newsletter will highlight some of the activities of the OEON and highlight areas where we are working together more efficiently by using technology in our schools. After serving the past 15 years as a superintendent of schools here in Ohio, I recently became the CEO of the Management Council for the OEON. I perceive the Management Council as a support organization to the 23 data acquisition (DA) sites and other member districts around Ohio much like BASA supports superintendents, OASBO supports treasurers and business officials, and OSBA supports board members. We are a service organization that works collectively with the DA Sites, school personnel, legislators, and other technology organizations to promote the use of computers and other technologies in Ohio schools. I welcome your comments and suggestions as we continue to improve the educational environment in Ohio schools.



Tired of hearing about Y2K?

There has been a lot of information in the news media about Y2K. The only certainty is that no one knows exactly the impact it will have on our lives. The Management Council of the OEON has developed a Y2K Survival Kit for schools which includes a PowerPoint presentation about Y2K, a sample checklist of activi-

ties, sample vendor letters, and other pertinent information. These kits will be distributed by your DA Site.

We have divided the Survival Kits into segments: 1) those items which are a safety factor to the children and staff in our schools, and 2) those items which will be an inconvenience and a burden, but not necessarily a safety hazard. If the fire alarm system, heating system, telephones, or water were not available to schools, would it be safe to have students in attendance? What contingency plans have been developed to dismiss school in case of an emergency when backup contingencies such as the telephone system or the local radio station may not be available? If the fax machines and copiers don't work, that would certainly be an inconvenience to our schools, but it probably would not be considered a safety hazard.

In reviewing the information, it is clear

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that the schools should develop contingency plans in case certain problems arise. These plans are part of the overall "due diligence" efforts by which schools will be held accountable. At this point, it is not clear as to the liability schools will have as we face Y2K issues; but it does appear that if we can prove "due diligence" by developing contingency plans and other precautionary measures, we will reduce our liability.

Such issues will be discussed at your DA Site's Y2K Survival Kit meetings. If you have further questions, please contact your local DA Site.

A Chronological Look at an *Impossible Mission*

By Greg Spencer, Director of Data Processing, MEC Data Center

The views in this editorial are not necessarily those of MDECN.



I have been a part of the data processing/technology services for MEC schools for 21 years. Because of this longevity, I have a unique historical perspective of the *impossible mission* facing this particular DA Site, and I suspect, a vast majority of the DA Sites throughout Ohio. This phenomenon is not unique to our environment. It is reflected by the entire technology industry in the number of technology support positions that are currently unfilled nationwide approximately 500,000. However, the problem is more acute in the educational environment for many reasons.

The educational institution is about ten years behind private industry in its attempt to integrate technology into its administrative and production practices. Why is this the case?

- Ohio school districts spend an average of 85% of their General Fund budgets on staff salaries and benefits, leaving very little discretionary spending for technology and its support.

- In general, educational administrators do not understand the extensive support system that is required for successful technology deployment and support.

- State programs aimed at providing technology do not appear to recognize the need for human resources to provide support of that technology. Human resources are the key element in creating and maintaining a *sustainable* technology infrastructure.

- Education is competing with private industry for technology support personnel without the ability to offer competitive compensation packages. This is a product of several factors. First, the voting public is unaware of the salary levels technology professionals can demand. Second, many school districts include technology support personnel on teachers' salary schedules. Lastly, most school districts cannot fathom the idea of compensating a technology professional at a higher level than its top administrators.

Because of this last factor, many school districts select a technology coordinator from its teaching staff most

familiar with computers. Most of the time, there is no formal training afforded to this person for the technical requirements of the position. Even if we assume the person is very qualified in technology and is provided training, often he is now able to find a position in private industry at a much higher salary, with which school districts are unable to compete.

The following scenario will provide a little history in this *Impossible Mission*:

1980 MEC has two employees supporting approximately 40 individual users. The help desk call dubbed "I can't get in!" goes something like this:



User: I can't get in!
MEC: Let's check your dial-up modem, telephone line, and power source.

User: The modem lights are correct, the phone line

works, and my terminal is on.

MEC: While you were checking your end, I reset the modem bank. Try it now.

User: I'm in, thanks. Bye.

During this two-minute call, two staffers could support forty users.

1995 SchoolNet has arrived and districts are building LANs. Now there are approximately 4,000 potential users with three MEC staff members providing technical support. Now the call looks a bit different.

User: I can't get in!

MEC: Are you using a terminal, Mac, or PC?

User: I don't know. How can I tell?

MEC: Does your monitor have the letters VT"xxx" on it?

User: No, it has NEC on it.

MEC: O.K. that is a PC. What terminal emulation package are you using?

User: What do you mean?

MEC: (A lengthy explanation ensues about terminal emulation software and it is determined the user has



Reflections software.)

Let's go through the right settings. (Another lengthy session ensues. At its conclusion, it is determined all is well with Reflections.) Let me look at the router and the leased line.

User: What is a router?

MEC: Your communication box. Everything looks O.K. to me. What kind of network are you on?

User: I have no clue. Let me get my tech coordinator.

This call can now take more than an hour to diagnose and correct or may even require an on-site visit.

1998 MEC still has the same three staff members from 1995. The PC/Mac count is up to 35,000 in the five county service area. MEC has built a WAN of more than 150 buildings. Users are using the web and e-mail services at a record level and video is now the hot item. The correction time for each call has grown exponentially and the three staffers are exasperated!

This ill-staffed situation is rampant throughout Ohio's K-12 community. There is no quick fix. The answer is education - education of administrators and legislators. Taxpayers are told, "We are raising our educational standards through technology." At this juncture, teachers do not feel they can rely on classroom technology to work... the book, blackboard, and chalk never "go down". Teacher groups rank support of the technology infrastructure as the number one need when asked about the use of technology in the classroom. We have programs that focus on professional development, but if technology is not reliable, what is the use in knowing how to utilize it in the classroom?

As we continue to deploy technology across Ohio's K-12 community, legislators and administrators have a responsibility to provide the human resource infrastructure for the technology.

We must remember, in a world of technology, **PEOPLE MAKE THE DIFFERENCE!**

Cisco Academy

By Andy Qaltire, Executive Director, MCOECN

The MCOECN accepted the invitation of the Cisco Equipment Corporation to sponsor the Cisco Academies for high school students in the state of Ohio. Cisco Equipment Corporation is the world's leading manufacturer and distributor of telecommunications equipment. Andy Qaltire, Executive Director of the MCOECN along with Doug Staggs, then chairman of the MCOECN, and Duane Baker visited the Cisco headquarters in San Jose, California for the first preview of the curriculum that was to be offered at the Cisco Academies.

The Academies consist of a regional site that supports ten classrooms located in the local schools. The regional academies must provide a person that is trained at an authorized Cisco Training Center, who, in turn, trains the local teacher in the classroom. The Regional Academy must also provide support to the classrooms in the form of supervision and evaluation.

The MCOECN divided the state into four regions covering the entire state. Each region was given ten classrooms of

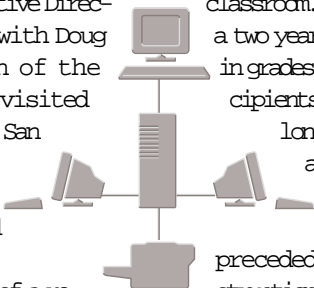
free lab equipment donated by Cisco. The local district provided the teacher and the classroom, and the Regional Academy provided the trainer support, evaluation, and technical support.

The curriculum is electronically provided by downloading it to a server at the classroom. The curriculum consists of a two year semester course. Students in grades 11 and 12 are the primary recipients. Classes are sixty minutes long and include experiences in a lab that allows the students hands-on experience in troubleshooting. All this is preceded by intense classroom instruction on the basics of networking.

In the final weeks of the second semester, the students must go to a school and wire the building or classroom for a network.

At the present time, the MCOECN has four Regional Academies and 42 local academies serving over 400 students.

Phase two of this program is about to begin which includes the expansion of the number of academies and the inclusion of the Tech Prep program as well as colleges and universities.



Fact Sheet

1. The OECN (Ohio Education Computer Network) has been in existence for nineteen years and currently provides computer services to virtually every school district in the state of Ohio.
2. The OECN is based on the concept of local control. The majority of the governance of the 23 DA sites rests with the superintendents who receive direct services to their districts. This local control concept provides ownership so the needs of the customers in those districts can be met through up-to-date technology.
3. The OECN provides primary support for the following applications: budgetary, payroll, grade reporting, student scheduling and GAAP accounting.
4. The OECN has played a vital role in helping districts to implement EMIS, in providing support for administrators, faculty and students.
5. The OECN is the electronic network backbone of Ohio School districts.
6. The OECN provides internet connections to the vast majority of Ohio's schools.
7. The OECN supports the Information Network for Ohio schools which provides the K-12 community the ability to obtain reasonably priced state-of-the-art library automation software and support.
8. The OECN assists local school districts in the planning and implementing of video-conferencing, video streaming, and other uses of information gathering such as the internet.
9. The OECN provides technical support for the rapidly expanding hardware and software needs of Ohio's school districts.
10. The OECN assists local school districts in planning, implementing, and evaluating technologies to support their voice, video, and data networks.
1. The OECN provides staff development for the effective use of technology in Ohio's schools.

MCOECN Software Services

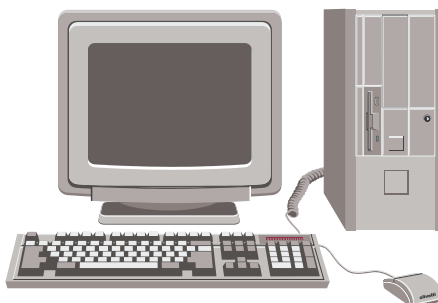
By Andy Qaltire, Executive Director, MCOECN

The POISE/SIS software for student services has been widely used by most DA sites for over fifteen years. In early 1998, when Campus America announced that they would no longer be able to service the K-12 market, MCOECN purchased the student services portion of that software and gained exclusive rights for the state of Ohio. It was renamed MCSIS.

The Ohio Department of Education has recently bid a new student services software, Student Management Record System (SMRS) from AAL. It is presently being piloted at five DA sites: LEECA, LGCA, NEOMIN, NWOCA, and SPARCC.

In early 1995, MCOECN became a Value Added Reseller of Digital Equipment Corporation. This partnership has been a successful operation and provided a service to school districts throughout the state.

Compaq's recent acquisition of Digital will greatly enhance the VAR's ability to offer a more expansive line of products. Now schools will be able to purchase such items as personal computers at competitive pricing.



The highly regarded **Encyclopaedia Britannica Online** is now available at Ohio's public libraries and in all Ohio schools. Encyclopaedia Britannica Online will also be available at home through the World Wide Web with authentication by a valid Ohio public library card. Such access is being rolled out gradually, and should be widely available by the 1999-2000 school year.

Besides the full text of Britannica's well-known print set, Encyclopaedia Britannica Online also features:

- 6,000 additional articles
- 12,000 digital images
- Over 144,000 editorially screened Internet links tied directly to the articles
- Statistics on over 190 nations
- Britannica "Spotlights," special databases such as Britannica Guide To Black History, American Presidential Elections, and Women in American History
- Video and audio clips
- Merriam Webster's 10th Collegiate Dictionary
- Natural language or advanced searching
- Browsing alphabetical lists of topics such as Biographies, Images, Maps, and Flags

This project is the first joint contract involving Ohio's major library networks for school library-media centers (INFOhio) and public libraries (OPLIN). It is part of the State of Ohio's ongoing

commitment to provide equal access to current, high-quality electronic resources for all Ohio residents. INFOhio recognizes the Ohio Educational Library/Media Association (OELMA) for its members' efforts to obtain necessary funding for Britannica Online.

INFOhio will provide the Encyclopaedia Britannica Online to all K-12 schools, public and private, in cooperation with the

Ohio Department of Education and the Management Council of the Ohio Education Computer Network. This resource is delivered through the Ohio Education Computer Network. INFOhio is part of the Ohio Legislature's overall plan to create an integrated system of library and information networks for all of Ohio's citizens. As a growing information network for school libraries, INFOhio strives to enhance curriculum and instruction of information literacy by

providing greater access to resources for all of Ohio's students and teachers. INFOhio believes every student in Ohio needs equity of access to information to fully participate in the information age, enhance their education, and be prepared for the future.

Two Tiffin Columbian High School students are pictured above utilizing Britannica Online accessed from the INFOhio home page located at <http://www.infohio.org>.



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