News about information systems throughout MIT

IS

Volume 19 • Number 2 November / December 2003

Inside! Schedules of Hands-on Training Courses and Free Computer Events

Information Systems Offers Limited Support for PDAs 2

Software Spotlight
MIT TechTime: Desktop Clients Are Here 3

Network Notes
Keep Your MIT E-Mail Flowing: Use SMTP Authentication 4

Bits and Bytes 4

Publishing Pointers
Secrets of Successful Web Tool Development 5

IS Hosts a Flurry of IAP Events 5

Tech Tips
IS Service Coverage and Advice for the Special Campus Closing 6

Telecom Talk
Caution on Cell Phone Number Portability 7

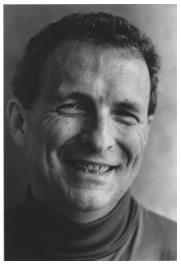
IS Expands Support for Linux 7

Getting Help 8

Surf Sites: Making a Mark 8

Fond Farewell: Perspectives on Leadership in a Changing World

• James D. Bruce



On November 25, 2003, James D. Bruce, Vice President for Information Systems and Professor of Electrical Engineering, addressed the many well-wishers at the community reception honoring his 45-year career at MIT. The following remarks are from his speaking notes.

† † †

"Thank you for all the kind words you have said this afternoon. I also want to thank all of my family for being here today. I am most appreciative of the love and support that you have given me over these years. Your willingness to be part of my commitment to MIT has enabled me to do far more than would have been possible otherwise.

And, I want to express my sincere appreciation to all of you who have worked with me over the past years for the heavy lifting that you have each done. It has been your effort that has delivered the information technology services and support that our clients – the Institute community – have required to do their work. Thank you!

Just over two decades ago, Bill Dickson asked me to talk with him about computing. Three conversations later, I found myself being asked to lead what became known as Information Systems. At that point in time, MIT had no computer network. Its computing environment included some four or five mainframes providing batch and timesharing services and less than 100 minicomputers.

Today, there are more than 30,000 computers on this campus, almost every one of which has more computational capacity than the entire campus had just two decades ago. Today, total network bandwidth going off the campus is about 1.5 billion bits per second. In theory, that is sufficient to transfer the page images of all the books in the world in about a week. Our use of computing seems unbounded – more, different, deeper. Year by year we require more computational capabilities to do our work, we use information technology for purposes that are radically different than anything we have previously done, and our uses of information technology are more deeply ingrained into our work, whether that is teaching, research, or administration. There is no doubt that the forces that propel this technology will continue. Those of you whose work is to provide information technology services will continue to have your work cut out for you.

continued on page 2 ▶

Fond Farewell

continued from page 1

As everyone knows, the next few years are going to be extremely challenging with tensions that cry to do much more with significantly less. Winston Churchill talked about the need for leadership that inspires, leadership that summons people to continue forward in times like these. For me, such leadership is shaped by three words: Be, Do, and Learn. Who am I? What do I do? What do I need to know to continue to be effective? Permit me to expand just a bit as I believe that everyone has some leadership responsibilities.

BE: To be an effective leader you must have character – Who am I? What are my core values? What is my worldview? They all matter!

I grew up in the protestant tradition. Today, you would call me an evangelical Christian. I'm active in my faith and my church. And, I carry with me a set of values and beliefs that are consistent with this tradition. Key among them are the value of people, the concept that you treat others as you expect to be treated, and that your work is a calling and has great dignity.

Followers first and foremost want leaders who are credible; leaders who do what they say they will do. Max DePree, former chairman of Herman Miller, Inc., wrote: "Followers cannot afford leaders who make casual promises; someone may take them seriously!"

Followers expect their leaders to be open, honest, and ethical. Ultimately, followers expect leaders to focus their energy and ambition on the greatness of the work, on the organization, and on helping workers who serve with them, rather than on themselves.

DO: I've come to believe that the leader's work most often focuses on two fundamental sets of tasks: coping with operational complexity and coping with change. Both involve deciding what needs to be done, developing the capacity to get it done, and ensuring that it is done. Leaders must develop and keep to a vision; make that vision real with goals and plans; aggressively communicate the vision to everyone; and ensure that the product or service is delivered.

LEARN: To lead effectively, you must face each day as an active learner. DePree also wrote: "The rate of change today requires that each of us become a frantic learner. Leaders respond to change by learning something." Being a learner begins by being willing to admit "I don't know" and by being willing to allocate time to learning. It has to be continuous and it requires complete openness. For me, this has meant approaching each day as a learning opportunity. Everyday, I have had to learn about technology, about organizations, and about people (including myself).

About 1973, Soichiro Honda, the founder of Honda Motors, visited Boston to receive an honorary doctorate from one of our sister institutions. As his entourage was driving past the campus one of the aides indicated that this was the famous MIT and Mr. Honda said that since there was time, he wanted to visit. I happened to be the available person tapped to welcome him and talk about the Institute. As I was talking about our teaching and research programs, Howard Johnson – who was then Chairman of the MIT Corporation – joined us. As he was introduced to Mr. Honda, Howard remarked that his wife drove a Honda and was extremely pleased with the car. In response, Mr. Honda rose from his chair, and with great dignity bowed deeply and said, "It is my privilege and honor to serve you." I can think of no finer words with which to end my career at MIT. It has indeed been my privilege and honor to serve you."

Information Systems Offers Limited Support for PDAs

IS has been investigating support for Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs) and is now offering limited support for wireless connectivity for PDAs. IS is *not* making specific product recommendations for PDAs and can't offer Computing Help Desk support beyond that for wireless connectivity.

The limits on IS support for PDAs result from the complexity of the PDA product space – one crowded with devices using a variety of communication methods and little standardization among manufacturers.

Testing the Limits

IS has tested how various PDAs that use the PalmOS and PocketPC operating systems interact with the MIT wireless infrastructure. As a result, IS is now able to support wireless connections for PDAs using the 802.11b standard. There are other limitations as well:

- PDAs are more sensitive to variations in signal strength than most devices; connections from any given location cannot be guaranteed.
- For technical reasons, MIT certificates aren't being issued for PDA browsers.
- Support for PDA clients that synchronize with TechTime (MIT's enterprise calendaring system) is under development.
- IS is not supporting any e-mail clients at this time. MIT WebMail can be accessed with some PDA browsers, but the user experience may be less than optimal.

For more information, including how to obtain a wireless connection and general advice about buying a PDA, see

`http://web/is/services/other/pda.html`

Questions?

If you have questions about wireless support for PDAs at MIT, contact the Computing Help Desk at 253-1101 or <computing-help@mit.edu>.

MIT i Information Systems

Managing Editor
Robyn Fizz

Writer/Editor
Lee Ridgway

i/s is published six times a year. MIT faculty and staff receive copies through campus mail; *i/s* is also available in lobbies around campus. Individuals at MIT may subscribe by contacting the managing editor.

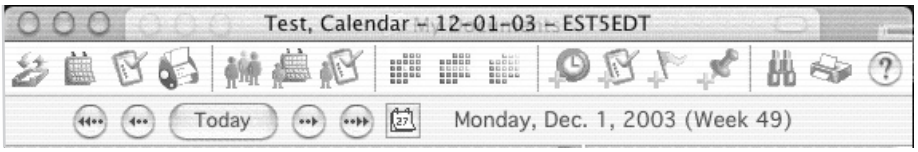
Send comments or subscription requests to:
MIT Room N42-290B, 77 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02139-4307
Phone: (617) 253-0540
Electronic mail: <fizz@mit.edu>

i/s is published online at
`http://web.mit.edu/is/isnews/`

The IS web site also offers frequent news updates on its home page or at
`http://web.mit.edu/is/news/`

MIT TechTime: Desktop Clients Are Here

• Lee Ridgway



Desktop client toolbar and navigation buttons

Last January, Information Systems announced the availability of TechTime, MIT's personal calendaring system using Oracle Calendar. The initial launch focused on the web client only. IS now also supports the MIT TechTime desktop clients for Macintosh and Windows (Linux and Unix clients are available; for details, contact the TechTime Release Team at <techtime-release@mit.edu>). The desktop clients are provided at no cost to the MIT community through an MIT site license.

MIT TechTime is an enterprise-wide calendaring solution, running on a central, secure server. With TechTime you can manage your schedule and coordinate easily with the schedules of other MIT TechTime users. TechTime is available to any member of the MIT community with a Kerberos username and password. You can access TechTime through the web client or desktop client, and both provide secure authentication and data encryption.

You can download the installers for the TechTime desktop clients from the MIT Software Distribution site at

http://web.mit.edu/software/

Account Activation

Before you can use TechTime, you must activate your account. To do this, use a web browser on which you have an MIT personal certificate, go to

http://calendar.mit.edu/register

and click on the Activate button. Your account is activated immediately.

Desktop Client Requirements

IS support for the Macintosh client is limited to Mac OS X 10.2 or higher. (IS does not support the Mac OS 9 client.) Authentication to the MIT TechTime server is with Kerberos. Kerberos comes as part of Mac OS X, but you must install Kerberos Extras. You can download Kerberos Extras from

http://web.mit.edu/software/mac.html

IS support for the Windows client is limited to systems running

- Windows 2000 Professional with SP4 or higher
- Windows XP Professional with SP1 or higher.

Authentication of the Windows desktop client to the MIT TechTime server requires that Kerberos be installed on your Windows system.

Features: Desktop Clients Only

Most of MIT TechTime's features are common to both the web and the desktop clients; however, the following are available only in the desktop clients.

- Printing options include a variety of formats and easy setting of date and time ranges. You can set different printing preferences for different views.
- Search lets you set several criteria when searching your own or other people's agendas.
- The In-tray lets you list and manage new entries to your calendar, and keep track of entries you have sent out, accepted, and refused.
- Using the Address Book you can create entries in several categories, including ones you devise yourself, and each entry can include a wide range of information.
- You can download and upload calendar information to local files on your computer, as well as import and export information to e-mail and other applications.

Built-in Help

Both the desktop and web clients provide comprehensive online help about procedures for the various Oracle Calendar features. In the web client, click on the question-mark icon to the right of the toolbar; in the desktop client, go to the **Help** menu. Context-sensitive help is available in the function windows of the desktop client: click on the question-mark icon (Macintosh) or press **F1** (Windows).

Working Offline

The desktop client offers the option of creating an offline agenda, which is a local snapshot of your calendar data stored on the TechTime server. The offline agenda lets you work with your calendar even when not connected to the Internet. The first time you log in to TechTime with the desktop client, you will prompted for an offline password. **Note:** On Windows, you will first be asked if you want to create an offline agenda. IS recommends that you set a blank, or null, password by pressing the Enter key at the two password prompts. If you do decide to set an offline password, IS recommends that it not be the same as your Kerberos password!

When you are logged into TechTime, you are working interactively with the TechTime server, and any changes made to your calendar during the session are immediately reflected on the server. The desktop client synchronizes the online and offline versions of your calendar when you log into MIT TechTime. If you work offline, any changes made to your agenda will be reconciled with the online version when you next log into MIT TechTime.

For more information about MIT TechTime on Oracle Calendar, including known issues, go to

http://web.mit.edu/is/services/calendaring/techtime.html

Support

The Computing Help Desk provides full support for both the TechTime web and desktop clients. Contact the Help Desk at 253-1101 or <computing-help@mit.edu>. IS Training offers a Quick Start on the features and functions of TechTime. For upcoming classes, check the Computer Events calendars in this issue of *i/s*, or go to

http://training.mit.edu/tr?courseid=11850

PDA Synchronization Clients

This initial release of the TechTime clients does not include support for synchronization of TechTime with PDAs or Outlook Connector. A release effort to evaluate effective support for PDA synchronization is under way. Members of the MIT community interested in participating in this release effort should contact the TechTime release team at <techtime-release@mit.edu>.

Keep Your MIT E-Mail Flowing: Use SMTP Authentication

• Jag Patel

In Spring 2003, Information Systems updated MIT's e-mail system to include secure Simple Mail Transfer Protocol (SMTP) authentication for outgoing e-mail. SMTP authentication adds a layer of security to sendmail, the popular Unix mail transfer agent. To take advantage of this extra level of security, users need to configure their local e-mail client for SMTP authentication. (More on this later.)

The benefits of SMTP authentication include reducing e-mail abuse, protecting the transfer of e-mail messages, and addressing the concerns of Internet Service Providers (ISPs) who filter or disallow unauthenticated SMTP traffic.

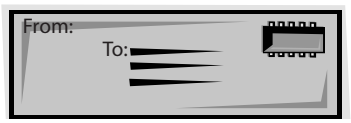
IS encourages all MIT e-mail users to use SMTP authentication to take advantage of these benefits. While SMTP authentication is not required today, IS expects that this will become a requirement in the near future. IS is therefore encouraging users to configure their e-mail clients for secure SMTP authentication as soon as possible.

The Need for Change

Currently, IS allows many people inside and outside MITnet to use the mail server, outgoing.mit.edu, to send e-mail. This open practice needs to change since MIT's high-bandwidth mailhubs are being used as relays for messages from spammers. Spammers can use MIT's e-mail servers to send e-mail, despite not having e-mail accounts on those servers.

MIT has already been blacklisted by various Internet Service Providers (ISPs) for being a spam source because of its traditionally open mail system policies. For example, in October 2003, AOL decided to block all e-mail originating from MIT's mail servers destined for their customers. The four-day AOL mail block caused 14,000 MIT e-mail messages to bounce back undelivered. Staff from IS Network Operations worked with AOL executives to resolve this issue, but other ISPs may not be as accommodating.

Information Systems would like to restrict the outgoing.mit.edu server to prevent this type of abuse from continuing. Part of the solution is to require everyone sending e-mail through the outgoing.mit.edu server to use SMTP authentication, meaning only authorized MIT users would be allowed to submit e-mail for delivery. This would allow IS to further tighten relaying through the MIT mail system, significantly decreasing the chance that MIT's outgoing mail servers would be blacklisted by other ISPs.



How to Use SMTP Authentication

In the past, most outgoing e-mail was not authenticated, and it was sent through a default port (port 25). Many e-mail clients are still configured to use this port to send e-mail. MIT e-mail users who use Eudora, Entourage, Outlook, Outlook Express, or AppleMail can now enable SMTP authentication by configuring their e-mail client to use SSL (Secure Sockets Layer) on an alternate port (i.e., port 465 or 587). Configuration instructions for these e-mail clients are available from

http://web.mit.edu/is/topics/email/smtp/

This web page also links to a quick reference for advanced users, such as system administrators.

Note that Athena e-mail clients (i.e., Evolution and Pine) are automatically configured for SMTP authentication.

Support

For more technical information about SMTP authentication and the MIT e-mail system, visit

http://web.mit.edu/systems/mail/update_030701/

Other general information about e-mail at MIT is available from

http://web.mit.edu/is/topics/email/

If you need help configuring your e-mail client for SMTP authentication, contact the Computing Help Desk at 253-1101 or <computing-help@mit.edu>. Be aware that Eudora is currently the only e-mail client fully supported by Information Systems. Help with other e-mail programs is provided on a "best-effort" basis.

This column presents announcements about IS-supported software. For more information about recent releases, see http://web.mit.edu/swrt/

Gearing up for Mac OS X 10.3 Support

Information Systems has begun gearing up to support Mac OS X 10.3 (Panther). Users who buy new machines with Mac OS X 10.3 preinstalled will be able to receive support for configuring their machines to connect to MITnet, print to networked printers, and connect to file servers.

However, IS recommends that users who require a greater level of support than is available through self-support resources, such as e-mail lists, should delay upgrading to Mac OS X 10.3 until IS announces test results and additional support resources. The e-mail list, macosx-help@mit.edu, is one example of a public list where users help each other; members of private lists such as Mac Partners may seek help there.

For information about using Mac OS X 10.3 at MIT, see

http://itinfo.mit.edu/product?vid=592

If you have questions or comments, or would like to participate in the release of Mac OS X 10.3, contact the team at <macosx-release@mit.edu>.

New TSM Versions for Macintosh

Tivoli Storage Manager (TSM) software lets you back up and restore files from and to your computer over the MIT network. IS is planning the release of TSM 5.2 for Mac OS X and TSM 5.1.5 for Mac OS 9 for December.

The new version of TSM for Mac OS X has two important benefits:

- Data can be transferred over the network more efficiently because of changes in the way TSM uses TCP/IP.
- Unicode support now enables backup of files with names containing foreign or non-English characters.

The version of TSM 5.1.5 now being released for Mac OS 9 has a new appearance, but **Backup** and **Restore** operate just as they did in previous versions.

TSM's vendor no longer supports 4.x versions, so IS strongly urges those using older versions of TSM to upgrade.

To learn more about the fee-based TSM service that IS provides, see

http://web.mit.edu/is/topics/backup/

Secrets of Successful Web Tool Development

• Mark W. Brown

Developing custom web applications, such as scheduling or survey tools, can be a risky proposition. One of the greatest risks is that the final product does not match the client's expectations. This outcome can have significant costs, including loss of goodwill and trust, but also the losses associated with iterative fixes.

In the real world, the client and development team often have difficulty defining the final product until it's actually built. Moreover, many such projects fall victim to a desire to rush into production.

A Method for Success

One proven method to avoid costly mistakes, used successfully by MIT's Academic Media Production Services (AMPS), involves two basic rules:

1. *Create paper prototypes*: A well-defined set of prototype documents can easily substitute for the real thing. The client and development team use this set of core documents to discuss ideas and goals, and move toward a mutual understanding of the final product.
2. *Focus all effort into the prototypes*: It's essential to agree to concentrate all development activity into these documents and delay production until everything has been defined on paper. This rule helps the client and development team reduce surprises and unite as stakeholders.

This simple method can have substantial benefits. First, all key decisions are concentrated into the early development stages, so production time is significantly accelerated and the overall project time line is often shortened. Second, the prototype documents help the developer to solicit valuable client feedback, so that the final outcome represents a collective agreement.

More on Prototype Documents

Although most web-based applications are relatively complex, prototyping them does not need to be difficult. By concentrating on three specific aspects of features and functionality, a reasonable low-fidelity facsimile can be produced. Each of these aspects becomes a document:

1. *Overview*: An overview document maps a bird's-eye sense of how the application works. This "task flow map" or "site map" shows the movement of a user through an application screen by screen.
2. *Model*: A model is a series of low-fidelity sketches of the various interfaces encountered by a navigating user. These "wireframes" or "screen shots" allow the user to imagine clicking through the application.
3. *Details*: The details offer a complete description of what's happening behind every page. These "page specifications" or "functional specs" ensure that all interactions are documented for the development team.

For examples of prototype documents, go to

http://web.mit.edu/amps/process/webtool-prototypes.html

IAP Course

Mark Brown of AMPS will offer an IAP course on web tool development on January 20 from 2–3pm in 9-057. He can be reached at <mwbrown@mit.edu>.

IS Hosts a Flurry of IAP Events

• Robyn Fizz

Information Systems is once again sponsoring a flurry of IAP events. The sessions described here are just a small sampling. Unless noted, no preregistration is required. For a complete listing of IS-sponsored events, see

http://student.mit.edu/iap/nsis.html

Introduction to Web Usability

Jan 6, 1–3pm, 3-133

Usability testing is an effective way to evaluate web and application interfaces. This session presents usability concepts, guidelines, and testing techniques using practical exercises. You'll also learn to write user scenarios and test tasks, and facilitate actual tests.

This session is presented by the MIT Usability Team. For details on their usability series (four sessions), see the IAP web site mentioned above.

Getting to Know SAPweb

SAPweb lets authorized users transact MIT business over the Web. Three separate sessions (the first one repeats) cover basic business rules and how to complete specific tasks via SAPweb.

SAPweb: Purchasing on the Web
Jan 8, 12–1:30pm, N42 Demo Center
Jan 21, 12–1:30pm, N42 Demo Center

SAPweb: Journal Vouchers
Jan 13, 12–1:30pm, N42 Demo Center

SAPweb: Approve Requisitions
Jan 29, 12–1:30pm, N42 Demo Center

Tour of MIT's Data Center – W91

Jan 8, 12–1pm, W91 Lobby

MIT's Data Center houses enterprise-wide administrative servers and selected departmental servers. Hardware ranges from high-speed Storage Area Networks (SANs) to large Unix servers and robotic tape libraries. Come see it all on this tour (limited to 25 participants). You can preregister at

http://training.mit.edu/tr?courseid=11460

Tools for a Less Stressful Computing Experience

Jan 14, 12–2pm, 7-143

At this event, the ATIC Lab and Environmental Health and Safety showcase alternative keyboards, pointing devices, break software, mouse-clicking software, and ergonomic training tools. Find out how to set up your workstation to minimize stress and how an alternative device may help to alleviate or prevent a repetitive strain injury. For details on other ATIC Lab events during IAP, go to

http://web.mit.edu/atic/www/iap2004/

Using MathML to Represent Mathematical Equations on the Web

Jan 21, 10am–11am, 3-133

This presentation shows examples and reviews what you need to know to start using MathML (Mathematical Markup Language). This XML-based standard describes mathematical notation on the Web and captures both its structure and content.

IS Service Coverage and Advice for the Special Campus Closing

• Robyn Fizz

From December 25 through January 4, in accordance with the special campus closing, Information Systems will provide service levels similar to those offered on weekends and holidays. For most services, this means that designated staff are on call to deal with outages and other emergencies.

This article details the levels of coverage you can expect from IS during this period. If your department is supported by an IT colleague, you may want to confer with him or her beforehand.

IS also has some important advice to pass on to computer users before leaving campus – see the box below.

Network and E-Mail

MITnet, MIT's e-mail system, WebMail, and Tether will continue to be available, with staff on call to handle outages. Before leaving for the extended closing you should check your e-mail quota and, if your e-mail quota is close to full, you may want to delete some mail. For details, see

http://web.mit.edu/is/topics/email/manage.html

Athena and win.mit.edu

Due to the possibility of power fluctuations during upgrades at MIT's Cogeneration Plant on December 26 and 27, all Athena clusters and the Building 37 Windows cluster (37-312) will be shut down starting at 10am on December 24. Selected clusters will be reopened beginning at 10am on December 28: these include the clusters in W20, 1-142, E51-090, 56-129, 12-182, and 37-312. All Athena network services, such as Zephyr and AFS, will continue to operate and locker software will be available.

Similarly, the win.mit.edu domain will be available, but users should plan container requests accordingly since it might take several days to process them during the closing.

Telephones and Voice Mail

Telephones and voice mail will operate as usual during the closing; a telephone auto-attendant will handle calls normally taken by MIT operators. The campus's 5ESS telephone switch is monitored around the clock by Lucent Technologies, and MIT and Lucent staff are on call to address phone-related emergencies. To report a problem, call the Telephone Repair Help Line at 253-HELP (253-4357).

W91 Data Center

During the closing, staff in the W91 Data Center will provide limited coverage that will primarily focus on critical mainframe batch production processing and critical production printing such as Payroll. In addition, TSM and other system backups will be available.

Data Center staff will be on call during unstaffed periods. To view the staffing schedule during the closing, see

http://web.mit.edu/is/dost/

In-Person Services Closed

The following in-person services will be closed from December 25 through January 4:

- **N42** Computing Help Desk's walk-in service, Unix Help, and Accounts
- **W20** MIT Computer Connection, PC Service, and Volume License Software Distribution
- **7-143** ATIC Lab

No classes will be held in the Professional Learning Center in W89.

Help Desk Coverage

The Computing Help Desk, Business Liaison Team (BLT), and Athena/Residential Computing Consultants (RCC) will be minimally staffed remotely during this period. Staff will be checking voice mail, Casetracker, and RCC database queues periodically and will respond to urgent issues. The Help Desk will address non-urgent requests – i.e., routine business that can reasonably be handled during normal business hours – when MIT reopens on January 5.

You can still submit problems or questions through the usual channels: e-mail, phone, and Web (Casetracker). For a full listing of help contacts, see the "Getting Help" section on the back page of this issue.

Last-minute Updates

For up-to-date information about IS service coverage during the closing, see

http://web.mit.edu/is/

Quick Fix on the Closing

Available MITnet, e-mail, phones, voice mail, TSM backup, Athena and win.mit.edu network services

Closed Walk-in services: Computing Help Desk, Accounts, Unix Help, MIT Computer Connection, PC Service, Volume License Software Distribution, ATIC Lab

Computer Tips for the Campus Closing

Back Up and Shut Down

Before leaving campus, IS recommends that you back up your data and shut down desktop machines, private Athena workstations, and monitors. The rationale is that turning off these machines will save electricity and ensure that they are not compromised by a computer virus or worm during the campus closing. In addition, there is the possibility of power fluctuations during an upgrade of MIT's Cogeneration Plant. **Note:** Shutdown of private Athena workstations should be coordinated with your site's system administrator. For instructions on shutting down an Athena workstation, see http://web.mit.edu/olh/Private/Private.html#HDR2.3.

Provide Contact Information for Servers

Departments with servers that need to stay online during the closing should ensure that accurate contact information is given to Information Systems for those servers. To check and update contact information, go to https://nic.mit.edu/bin/hostupdate (certificates required).

You Can Say You're Away!

Don't forget that you can leave an extended-absence greeting in voice mail and set an automatic reply to mail sent to your MIT e-mail address. Instructions for extended-absence greetings are at http://web.mit.edu/is/tel/userguide.html#changegreet. To set up an automatic e-mail reply, start at http://web.mit.edu/is/services/email/autoresponder.html.

Caution on Cell Phone Number Portability

• Lee Ridgway and Joan Cyr

As of November 24, 2003, Wireless Local Number Portability (WLNP) became available to cell phone users in the top 100 greater metropolitan areas in the U.S., of which Boston is one. This means that you can transfer your current personal or MIT wireless number or home phone number from your current vendor to another wireless vendor. Doing this is called "porting your number."

As this new service gets off the ground, you may need to exercise caution and patience if you decide to port your number. Here are steps to take if you are considering a switch:

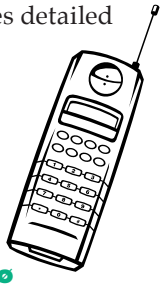
- Check your potential vendor's web site to see if your number is eligible to be switched. Not all numbers may be eligible at this time.
- Because phone numbers are assigned to a local geographic area, your number must remain with the same area where it is currently assigned.
- Check your potential vendor's web site for all of the details and "fine print" of the agreement you'll be signing.
- Check your current vendor's agreement to make sure you have fulfilled its agreement terms, and that the money saved by changing to a less expensive vendor will offset any termination charges you may incur.
- Changing vendors requires that you get a new cell phone, so consider its cost or any special offers that might be applicable.
- If you use your wireless for more than just voice functions – e-mail, calendar, address book and contact lists, MP3 files, and so on – you will need to plan how you are going to transfer those applications and their data to the new handset.
- Find out about your potential vendor's customer service options, and also check the vendor's warranty.

If you do decide to transfer your number to another wireless service:

- Don't cancel your current service before applying to be switched; your current number must be active.
- Make sure you have a copy of your current contract and most recent bill at hand when communicating with your new vendor.
- In case the porting takes longer than expected, have an alternate phone number to give out for emergencies.

For information other than what is provided by the vendors, look for news articles and consumer reports about WLNP. Also, the Federal Communications Commission provides detailed information at

`http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/NumberPortability`



Questions?

If you have MIT-related questions about WLNP, you can send e-mail to <cell-feedback@mit.edu>. ⌀

IS Expands Support for Linux

• Heather Anne Harrison and Bill Cattey

Information Systems recognizes the demand for support from the growing Linux community at MIT, and is actively taking steps to meet these customer needs. Support has evolved from informal user groups to formal support for Linux Athena, and is now expanding to include a wider range of formally supported products.

The new offerings include:

- Support for stand-alone Red Hat installations
- Documentation and downloadable software for the Linux platform alongside the Macintosh and Windows offerings at `http://web.mit.edu/software/`
- Expanded application support through the Athena consultants and the Computing Help Desk.

In the past, the only fully supported Linux operating system was Linux Athena. Linux Athena is based on Red Hat 9 and contains many packages specific to MIT and the Athena environment. While Linux Athena's central maintenance and update system is excellent for responding to security vulnerabilities, many in the MIT community have asked for Linux without Athena. IS is expanding operating system support to include stand-alone Red Hat 9, while continuing its support for Linux Athena.

Application and Update Support

Previously IS offered little to no application support to users of versions of Linux other than Linux Athena. IS is now providing support for the Linux software on the download page via the Computing Help Desk (253-1103 or unix-vms-help@mit.edu).

Athena consultants (253-4435 or olc@mit.edu) will increase their efforts to help with applications supported under Linux Athena. For a list of supported applications, see

`http://web.mit.edu/acs/www/whereruns.html`

Users of flavors of Linux other than Red Hat 9 (Debian, Suse, etc.) will receive best-effort application support, with the understanding that consultants may not be able to assist with operating system-related issues.

IS strongly urges all users of Linux to keep up to date with security fixes to reduce the probability of break-ins that could cause significant loss of data, time, and effort. One way to do this is through the use of Athena with its automated update service. For stand-alone Red Hat users, an upcoming software release effort will make the Red Hat Network more easily available to the MIT community.

Other Improvements

IS expects to offer other improvements in Linux support in the future.

- The Athena packaging of Red Hat Linux will become more responsive to customer requests.
- IS will release a fully supported installer for Open AFS for stand-alone Red Hat 9. It will simplify installation and configuration so that users can access the AFS file system directly from their Red Hat machines.
- Updated web pages, policies, and procedures will reflect these new areas of support. ⌀

Getting Help

If you don't know where to get help for your computer, network, or telephone problems, dial one of the help lines listed to the right.

If you prefer to use e-mail, you can send your questions to the corresponding e-mail addresses on the far right. (When logged into Athena, you can also use the `olc` command to send questions to Athena's online consultants.)

To submit a problem or question via the Web, use the Casetracker system at

`http://casetracker.mit.edu`

For help with...	Dial...	Or send a message to...
General computing questions (Macintosh, Windows, and network/connectivity)	253-1101	computing-help@mit.edu
Administrative applications	252-1177	business-help@mit.edu
Athena Computing Environment	253-4435	olc@mit.edu
Computer and printer repairs	253-0815	pcservice@mit.edu
Computer pre-sales consulting	253-7686	mcc@mit.edu
Disabilities and computing	253-7808	atic@mit.edu
Telephone repairs	253-4357	3help@mit.edu
Unix (by subscription)	253-1103	unix-vms-help@mit.edu
Voice mail	253-3677	telecom-csr@mit.edu

For information about...	For...	See...
Special campus closing	IS	`http://web.mit.edu/is/`
	MIT	`http://web.mit.edu/finances/services-available.html`

Surf Sites: Making a Mark

In his 20 years as Vice President for Information Systems (see lead article), Jim Bruce has been involved in everything from the launch of Project Athena, to the formation of NEARnet, to the installation of SAP on campus. Beyond his remarkable role at MIT, Jim has been a leader in many high-profile educational and computing initiatives. The listing to the right highlights some of the groups that have benefited from his guidance.

Athena
`http://web.mit.edu/is/topics/athena/`

Common Solutions Group
`http://www.stonesoup.org/`

Educause
`http://www.educause.edu/`

Internet2
`http://www.internet2.edu/`

IvyPlus
`http://www.mit.edu/afs/athena/org/i/ivyplus/`

MIT Information Systems

i/s is printed with soy inks on recycled paper, and can be recycled in MIT's "mixed paper" bins.