New Administrative Computing Systems Are Dubbed OPUS

If Bloom County cartoonist Berke Breathed permits it, images of a little puffin named Opus will be seen all over campus in the coming months—a reminder that OPUS is coming. OPUS is the name bestowed by Ellen Sayles—a member of the Administrative Computing Advisory Committee (ACAC) and assistant dean of the Conservatory of Music—on the new integrated administrative computing system that the coming Great Migration in administrative computing will leave in its wake. (See related articles in the Observer of February 14 and the issues of November 8, May 24, April 5, and March 1, 1996.)

OPUS stands for Oberlin Project for Unified Systems and is, according to the mission statement announced at a luncheon in the lobby of Philips Gym Monday, a “multi-year project which includes implementation of the SCT Banner integrated client/server system and other auxiliary software.”

Three speakers addressed the 60 or so attendees of the OPUS kickoff luncheon. Most attendees were members of the committees spearheading the changes: the OPUS Executive Steering Committee (a previously unnamed committee—see “Administrative Computing Advisory Committee, and ACAC.”)

The OPUS balloons were a big hit with luncheon guests: John Bucher, Andy Evans, Michael Lynes, Sandra Youngeberg-Fox and Monica Wachter.

Curricular Innovations Surge Ahead with 2 New Arts and Sciences Programs

By Clayton Koppes

Several important new curricular innovations will be funded in the College of Arts and Sciences next year, supported by the reinstated Curriculum Development Fellowship program and a new initiative, the Scholar-in-Residence for Curriculum Development. These faculty initiatives significantly augment ongoing efforts to broaden the curriculum, such as those reported in the Observer of January 31 and February 14 (‘95 New Courses Bring Oberlin to the Cutting Edge in Offerings” and “New Courses in the Arts and Humanities Extend the Evolution of the Curriculum”).

Curriculum-development fellowships provide released time for faculty members to develop new courses. The scholar-in-residence program, begun this year, enables the college to bring new faculty members for up to a year in areas not now represented in the curriculum. Most of the courses supported by the fellowships will make their debuts in 1998-99. Scholars-in-residence will teach at Oberlin in 1997-98.

The Educational Plans and Policies Committee (EPPC) received 18 applications for the fellowship and scholar-in-residence programs. After evaluating them, EPPC chose to fund three curriculum-development fellowships and two scholars-in-residence. College Faculty Council endorsed the choices.

The curriculum-development fellowships go to:

- Bruce Simonson, professor of geology, who will move into the position and develop a new specialty by introducing a new course in hydrology. The geology department has identified this area as a priority for several years; it also has important links to the Environmental Studies Program.
- Michael Fisher, professor of history, who will create a new course, The British Empire in England, 1750 to the Present. A specialist in South Asian history, Fisher will shift his focus to issues about the empire as they are played out in the metropolis.
- Dennison Smith, professor of neuroscience and psychology, who will introduce a new course in neuroscience for a general audience. His course not only will introduce novices to recent advances in the field, but it will help address the need for more science courses for general audiences. Scholars-in-residence will be:
  - History of Science: A two-semester appointment lodged in the history department, this position will offer a way to bring the “two cultures.” The position is designed to include significant coverage of the 19th and 20th centuries in order to have maximum appeal to science students.
  - Dance Pedagogy and Interdisciplinary Performance with an African-American Emphasis: Besides introducing students to African-American dance forms in an interdisciplinary context, this one-semester position will help address rising student interest in teacher certification and also entail further training for Oberlin faculty.
  - Curriculum and faculty development are high priorities for the college. Both programs will be continued next year, subject to availability of funding.

Clayton Koppes is dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.
Robert Gunderson, Former Professor of Speech

Robert Gunderson, who taught speech at Oberlin between 1933 and 1958, died November 24, 1996, in El Granada, California. He was 81.

Gunderson left Oberlin in 1956 to become a professor of speech communication and history at Indiana University (IU). He was the chief architect of several doctoral programs in the IU department of speech and theater. He also directed IU’s American-studies program for 10 years beginning in 1969. In 1976, the year he retired, he received the Distinguished Teaching Award from the IU Student Alumni Association. He was the recipient of the highest honor given by his professional peers, the Speech Communication Association Distinguished Service Award. He was also a prolific writer, published widely, and served his profession in many organizations.

In his U.S. Army service (1943-1946) he rose to the rank of captain in military intelligence. His wife, Virginia, preceded him in death.

Faculty Meeting

Memorial Minutes, Reports, and Discussion for GF

Meeting February 18 the General Fac-

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itus Professor of Spanish poetry Marjorie "Bud" Price, presented by Professor of Pianoforte Joseph Schwartz, and Emer-

itus Professor of History Barry McDill, presented by Danforth Professor of History Geoffrey Blodgett. John Bucher, di-

rector of computing, spoke on the state of computing on campus.

The minutes were read and approved. The agenda for the meeting was discussed. The minutes were approved.

The meeting was adjourned.

Faculty Senate

Meeting February 18 the Faculty Sen-

ate heard a question by Professor of Politics Benjamin Schaff about College proce-

dure for lodging supporting letters. President Nancy Dye said she would not participate in a "campaign of ways." She told the assembled faculty. A short discussion fol-

owed a question by Professor of Politics Benjamin Schaff about College procedure for lodging supporting letters.

Address correspondence to The Observer, Oberlin College Development Office, Oberlin, OH 44074-1089.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Observer, Oberlin College Development Office, 58 W. Lorain St., Oberlin, OH 44074-1089.

The Observer (ISSN 0325-3890), the faculty and staff newspaper of Oberlin College published 17 times a year, is governed by employees and students. The editor welcomes letters to the editor, published widely, and served his profession in many organizations.

Letters to the editor directly related to campus events are welcome. Letters regarding new programs and students take precedence over those from other sources. The editor reserves the right not to edit letters if time permits, the editor will consult with the campus community about changes.

All Oberlin College Office of Communication photographs, including those from the College Archives Photograph, are available for purchase.

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Catherine McCormick Receives Her Fifth NSF Grant to Study the Ear and Brain

Professor of Biology Catherine McCormick was awarded $125,281 this month for three more years of research on the ear and brain, bringing her lifetime NIH research grants paid out to a billion-dollar mark. The National Institutes of Health and the National Science Foundation have supported McCormick’s studies of hearing in fish almost continuously since 1982.

“People used to think that fish couldn’t hear,” McCormick said. “This is just one example of the kind of thinking that has changed.”

The funding that McCormick received will enable her to continue her work with the auditory receptors in fish, which she says are the closest living relatives of the earliest known auditory receptors. These receptors, she says, “are the first step in the evolution of hearing.”

McCormick’s research is focused on understanding the neural circuits in fish that allow them to detect sound. She says that these circuits are “fundamental to understanding how hearing evolved in vertebrates.”

In the past, McCormick has used microelectrodes to record from individual neurons in the brain of the fish she is studying. In this new grant, she will use optogenetics, a technique that allows her to stimulate individual neurons with light. This will allow her to see how the different neurons in the fish’s brain are connected and how they contribute to the fish’s ability to hear.

This research is important because it can help us understand how hearing evolved in vertebrates. McCormick says, “We are trying to understand how the brain is able to process information from the ears.”

The grant will also allow McCormick to continue her work with the Allen Memorial Art Museum and the Visual Arts Center at Oberlin College. She says that her work with these institutions is important because it allows her to bring her research to a wider audience.

McCormick is a member of the Oberlin College faculty since 1980. In 1995 she was named the JCPenney/Georgia Institute of Technology Professor of Biology Catherine McCormick, and in 2000 she was elected as a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. She is also a member of the American Society for Cell Biology, the Society for Neuroscience, and the Society for Integrative and Comparative Biology.

The grant will run from February 21, 1997, to February 20, 1999.
Observations

Breathless in Oberlin*

(*and Seattle, and New York, and Podunk)

The Aftermath of User Friendliness

By John Bucher

By John Bucher

The technological revolution has brought new service demands to all sectors of society. With increased capabilities come increased expectations, and there is an industry (in general) to artificially engineer any new technology (for example, E-mail). This group of users increases at a relatively constant and exponential rate. People who investigated the manner in which communication flows through populations.

M. Rogers, a communications researcher, has thrived and to which new technological infusion into the world. “Clicks” transfer mounds of data across the Internet.

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