

Western's New Homepage Shaped by Usability

by John Farquhar

Web Services has been actively engaged in the design of a new homepage for Western. While the current homepage has served the University well and has received accolades for its visual appeal, user input has long indicated a need to revise the current design to enhance usability and navigation. The new design, therefore, is being reviewed by several audiences who regularly use the main WWU web site, including current and prospective students, parents, staff, faculty, campus web developers, and members of the community. The emphasis of the new design has been on enhancing the usability of the site. That is, we want to direct our users to the tools or information they need as quickly as possible. Our new design also needed to factor in the increasing use of the MyWestern web site by current students – as opposed to use of the main WWU web site – as well as the pending development of a new intranet web site for faculty and staff.

We began the re-design last summer by meeting with a variety of audiences in a process of defining the goals for a new homepage. We also invited a randomly selected sample of the entire faculty and staff to respond to a questionnaire concerning the use of common campus websites and the methods of finding information on our web. A similar survey was made available to students. Follow-up surveys asked audiences to provide further comment on various working designs.

The results of these various surveys have led us to several conclusions about the design of the new homepage, including:

- We will be implementing a new search engine powered by Google. Our research revealed that the Google engine locates and ranks sites better than our existing tool, which was described by many as inadequate.

- In an effort to improve information-finding on our site, many of the most common websites will be directly available — just one click away — from the homepage through a graphically appealing icon bar.
- Our present organization of links will be improved by adopting what we call *Yahoo-style menuing* (i.e., providing easy-to-access sub-links under main page links).
- Furthermore, we intend make greater use of fast navigational tools such as dropdown “quicklinks.”

The overall classification of website links is also undergoing user-testing. Through still another survey, we asked students, faculty and staff to organize over 200 of our existing websites into common categories. Our goal was simply to find the best way to organize and label web information, making it easier for users to go directly to the information they need. In most cases clear trends emerged from this data, making our task of building a new navigation taxonomy quite easy.

Information from the four separate surveys completed by hundreds of individuals has been supplemented by studying current statistics from our existing site. We have analyzed and will continue to analyze statistics revealing the most popular sites and frequent “searched-for” terms by our search engine. Our intention is to build a site which continually adapts to the information-finding needs of our users.

Even though our designs are currently undergoing administrative review, we always welcome additional user input. If you have comments or questions please contact me at 650-6538 or email john.farquhar@wwu.edu.

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Blackboard Utilities Page Available

by Andrew McGlone

The new Blackboard utilities web page provides a central location for WWU faculty members to create new Blackboard courses, recycle a Blackboard course from a previous quarter, and change their existing Blackboard password. It can be viewed at <http://www.wvu.edu/blackboardtools>

Course Creation Wizard

The Blackboard course creation wizard provides ease in creating new course sites, as well as a convenient interface between the Blackboard system and the registration system on Banner. After entering your W number and PIN in the Course Creation Wizard and selecting "Create a Blackboard class from a Banner class," you will be asked to select the quarter the class will be taught. The wizard then returns from Banner all the courses you are recorded as teaching for the specified quarter. Keep in mind that if you are not the official instructor of record for a particular course, it will not appear. From this point, indicate whether to create a single Blackboard course per course CRN or combine the enrollments for multiple CRNs into one course (e.g., a course and lab). Finally, upon confirmation, the wizard creates the Blackboard course and adds all currently enrolled students to the course. Students who add or drop the course after the course site is created will be automatically added and dropped from the list.

Recycle an Existing Blackboard Course

In an effort to streamline the course recycle procedure, we have made the request process simpler for faculty and staff. Located on the Blackboard utilities page, the recycle form allows an instructor to specify a previously taught Blackboard course site and the CRN under which the course will be taught in the upcoming quarter. From there, the request is received by Web Services and the actual course recycle is done manually by a member of our web support team. Be sure to complete this form well in advance of the beginning of the quarter, since requests can tend to accumulate as the first day of classes approaches.

Blackboard Password Change

The Blackboard utilities page also offers a password change wizard. Again, access to the wizard requires a valid W number and PIN. You will need to specify your old password and enter the new password twice. If you do not remember your Blackboard password, please contact Web Services at either 650-3096 or webhelp@wvu.edu.

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New Portal and Email Systems Plus Enhanced Blackboard Coming

by Larry Gilbert

Western's students will begin using a new web email client through a new web portal in July 2003. In addition, the campus Blackboard system will be significantly upgraded for students and faculty, to both improve performance and add new features. You will not experience challenging differences in the function of these systems when you start using the new software as most of the changes are either cosmetic or "under the hood."

New Student Portal

For the past two years, our students have been using the MyWestern web portal to gain access to their on-campus email, view campus announcements, and access links to pertinent student information. The current version of MyWestern is actually based on a commercial web portal product called *Campus Pipeline*. Although this product has served us well and has encouraged a majority of students to regularly use MyWestern, the product caused serious access problems for students at the start of the fall quarter, and is rather expensive to license and maintain.

For those reasons, beginning in July, MyWestern will be based on a free portal product called *UPortal*, rather than on *Campus Pipeline*. Students will experience little change in the way MyWestern works, although the new student portal may differ somewhat in its visual appearance. Students will still be able to access campus email, link directly to Blackboard courses from their official course list, see campus announcements, and gain access to common campus web links that they use every day. In order to keep the transition as seamless as possible for students, the first version of the new MyWestern will contain only the same features students are accustomed to accessing through the current MyWestern.

New Email Interface To Be Added

It is also necessary to provide a new interface to student email, since the current email interface in MyWestern is part of *Campus Pipeline*. After careful review of a number of free email clients that are widely used on college campuses, ATUS selected the *Squirrel* email client. *Squirrel* was one of only two email clients that provided all of the essential features demanded by students (based on a checklist of more than three dozen distinct mail features). Students in our

test group also found *Squirrel* to be far easier to use and more visually appealing than the runner-up email client that is based on the old *Pine* email system.

Once again, there will be little change in the way student email functions, except for minor differences in appearance. *Squirrel* has the advantage of having easily added features that can enhance student use of email (e.g., a larger and more accessible location for email within the portal and highlighting different types of messages with colors). We'll be evaluating additional email features after the basic email system is up and running.

Blackboard to Be Upgraded

At the same time the student portal and email systems are upgraded, Blackboard will also receive significant enhancement. In order to handle the almost 8,000 student accounts now accessing Blackboard each quarter, two new servers specifically designed to handle Blackboard traffic will be installed. Beginning in March, we will test the Enterprise version of Blackboard 6, bringing this updated software into general use on campus in July. Few changes will be apparent to those who are already familiar with Blackboard; most of the changes operate behind the scenes by updating our software and hardware to handle a higher volume of Blackboard transactions more quickly and efficiently. Both faculty and students will see the same familiar Blackboard interface, the only differences being enhancements in important instructional features such as grading. Many faculty members will be pleased with the enhancements, since the improvements announced by Blackboard in most cases match well with features requested by Western faculty.

Previews in the Spring

It's important that the thousands of faculty and students who use our email, student portal and Blackboard systems not be surprised by the changes reviewed above. For that reason, ATUS will be widely demonstrating prototypes of all three systems beginning in May. All of the new software systems will be brought online in July, beginning with our Summer Start entering students. We hope that you'll take the time to try out the enhanced software and provide us with feedback. We think that you'll find that all of the changes are in the right direction.

Stopping SPAM

by Susan Brown

SPAM – including unsolicited email advertising, promotional material or solicitation – is increasingly becoming a problem. Identifying unwanted messages and deleting them takes time and may also involve exposure to offensive and embarrassing content. ATUS is researching spam filters that would operate on our main campus mail servers, but these filters currently have limited effectiveness. The key problem is that filters on servers often eliminate messages that individual users want to receive. A server simply can't tell which messages might be important to you, since one person's spam may be another's important message.

All is not lost, however, as there are a number of fairly simple steps that you can take to avoid spam or minimize its impact, including using Outlook rules or an inexpensive spam filter for Outlook that's reviewed at the end of this article.

To avoid spam, take steps to make your email address less available. Spammers use automatic programs called *bots* to scour web pages and newsgroups collecting addresses, or buy them in bulk from other companies. They also use name generation programs to guess email addresses and send hundreds of messages that bounce for every valid email generated. To minimize your exposure to spam:

- When filling out web registration forms, surveys, etc., don't type in your email address unless it is required. When it is required, look for a box that asks if it is okay to send similar offers or information and check the "no" option.
- Never reply to spam – it only confirms that your address is valid.
- Minimize the use of your email address on web pages. (Try searching for your email address in Google.com to see how many times it comes up.) You might consider using a departmental email address instead of some individual email addresses. If possible, design your web pages such that email addresses are not listed directly on the page. For example, implement a web form that will send a message to your email address without publicly displaying your address.
- Verify that any email lists to which you subscribe do not make email addresses available to others. The ListProc list software used at WWU, with addresses ending @lists.wvu.edu, is configured so that only the list managers have access to email addresses.
- Consider the use of a temporary web-based email address (e.g., Yahoo or Hotmail) for one-time web searches. This may also help identify the source of some spam.

- Read the privacy policy on pages you visit. Most reputable sites won't share your information and the privacy policy may help you decide whether to trust a site with your personal data.

Doing business on the web does require some exposure to spam. Once it arrives in your Inbox, *filters* in some email programs, including Outlook, can identify and move or delete the unsolicited messages automatically. Instructions follow for configuring and using the Junk E-mail filter in Outlook; as well as for obtaining an Outlook add-in with even more capability.

To activate the Outlook Junk E-mail filters:

1. From your Outlook Inbox, choose *Tools, Organize* or click the *Organize* button on the Outlook toolbar.
2. Click the *Junk E-mail* link.
3. Use the drop-lists to identify, move or delete junk email or adult content messages.
4. Click *Turn On* to activate the Outlook spam filter.
5. To fine-tune the Junk E-mail options, click *For more options, click here*.

When you receive unsolicited messages that are not automatically filtered, right-click the message in your Inbox and choose Junk E-mail to add the sender to your Junk Senders list. You can also choose Tools, Rules Wizard and edit the Junk E-mail rule. This is where you can add exceptions – for example, add @wvu.edu so that any messages originating with wvu.edu in the address would not be treated as junk email.

Outlook uses a file called filters.txt to store key phrases in the message subject or body to identify spam email on arrival, such as *Subject contains "\$\$."* You can edit this file to add or remove phrases used to identify spam.

One of the most promising spam filters we've reviewed is an add-in for Outlook and Outlook Express called *iHateSpam*. In addition to built-in spam recognition rules that are more comprehensive than those used by Outlook and updated automatically, it is very easy to use this product to mark incoming messages as "Enemy" so that they are always blocked or as "Friend" so that they are never blocked. The default settings send spam email to a Quarantine folder so that you can inspect messages before they are deleted. Additional options are readily available on the iHateSpam toolbar that is automatically added to your Outlook program.

ATUS Training Goes Wireless

By Susan Brown

ATUS Training will now offer most workshops on wireless laptops in our new training room, Miller Hall 154. The hands-on workshops are limited to five participants, so look forward to personalized sessions focused on your issues. It is also easier now to schedule customized training sessions for small groups. Special requests have led to new class offerings, including our PageMaker and Photoshop workshops.

Five Brown Bag lunchtime sessions are scheduled to share technical information in a casual and enjoyable format. Bring your questions and your lunch. Check www.acadweb.wvu.edu/atus/class for full workshop & Brown Bag information and registration. For more information or to schedule a training session, email ATUSTraining@wvu.edu or call Susan Brown at x7222.

Brown Bag Sessions

Noon – 12:50 pm – no registration required
Introduction to Classroom Technologies

Feb. 27, MH 163

What's New in Classroom Technologies?

Mar 6, MH 163

Record Your Whiteboard Notes

Mar 12, MH 154

Workstation Tune-Up Apr 10, MH 154

WWU Networks Demystified

Apr 22, MH 154

Workshops

Course Development with Blackboard

3/11, 2-4pm; 4/17, 2-4pm; 5/16, 2-4pm

Exploring Office XP

3/18, 2-3:30; 5/14, 2-3:30

Outlook Basic Training 4/8, 2-4

Outlook Web Access 3/4, 2-4; 5/15, 2-4

Managing Your Outlook Mailbox

5/6, 9:30-11:30

Web Essentials with FrontPage

4/15, 9:30-11:30

PowerPoint Basic Training 3/5, 2-4

PageMaker Basic Training 3/6, 10-Noon

Access Basics 3/13, 2-4

SAS Volume License

With few departments participating in the use of the SAS statistical software, ATUS was unable to purchase the volume license for the year 2003. However, in order to continue to provide SAS to WWU users at the lowest possible cost, we will gather as many interested parties together as possible to provide the best volume pricing with SAS. Please contact Jim Ullin for assistance at 650-3159.

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EndNote Software is a Hit

by Rob Galbraith

EndNote is a bibliographic database software that facilitates faculty research by allowing journal articles and manuscripts to be easily organized and cited in published works.

ATUS has recently negotiated a purchase of 50 EndNote licenses, available to faculty members for \$100 each. Faculty members interested in trying out the software can download the 30-day trial version from www.endnote.com; if you decide to purchase a license, it is then possible to simply upgrade the trial software to a fully licensed version.

According to David Hirsch, Geology, options for organizing information extend both to electronic articles and physical filing systems in one's office, allowing quick retrieval of articles on the basis of a keyword, a publication date, an author's name, or other item. The citation benefits are significant in the prepress stages of authoring, providing formatting in differing bibliographic styles (including html) and the ability to create custom styles. EndNote can also exchange data with other bibliographic software and is available for both Windows and Macintosh computers.

Contact Jim Ullin, ATUS Software Services at 650-3159 to obtain a license for EndNote.

Stopping SPAM

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The important thing is that iHateSpam puts spam control in your individual hands. In the Admissions Office, for example, iHateSpam was recently used on a shared Outlook mailbox that receives a large quantity of unsolicited email. Brenda Riseland is very happy that her staff did not have to deal with the 358 spam emails quarantined in three weeks by iHateSpam.

A 30-day free trial of iHateSpam is available <http://www.sunbelt-software.com/download.cfm?id=930> and individual iHateSpam licenses are available through ATUS Software Support, x3159, for a minimal cost of about \$15 per license.

If you want to help rid yourself of Spam, consider taking some of the steps outlined above. If you receive a lot of spam email in your Outlook account, iHateSpam may be worth a look. Your Spam won't instantly disappear, but over time you should see a significant reduction in the frequency of time-consuming and frustrating spam messages.

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Record Your Whiteboard

by Larry Gilbert

ATUS rarely touts the virtues of specific products, but I'm so enthusiastic about a new whiteboard recording product I've tried that I wanted to inform the campus about it. Have you ever written some complex notes or diagrams on a whiteboard – and then had to immediately erase it? Ever had to copy whiteboard notes by hand to retain them? Ever wanted to make your whiteboard notes available to students or colleagues?

Up to now, these problems could only be addressed through purchase of prohibitively expensive special whiteboards with built-in recording and printing. An innovative new approach provides a simpler and far less expensive option. In the new approach, a light-weight 18" X 3" plastic device costing from \$400 to \$700 is simply attached to the upper left corner of any standard whiteboard. When board markers are used with special pen holders that come with the system, anything that is written on the board is recorded by the device mounted on the corner of the board. You don't even need to be attached to a computer, as the device has its own memory for recording 'strokes' on the whiteboard. There's even an electronic eraser that records board erasures. Iterative board images may be captured so that you can actually playback multiple screens showing how you built your text or diagrams on the whiteboard.

By connecting to a computer – either live or after-the-fact – the screen images can be easily stored on the computer for sharing or later use. Separate software available for the system can also:

- Provide for handwriting recognition so that you can store actual text files of what you write.
- Allow for broadcast of whiteboard notes you write to all students in a computer lab.
- Provide sequential recording of whiteboard information with accompanying audio dialogue, with subsequent placement on a streaming server for later use on-line.

If you would like to see a brief demo of this new system, just go to www.mimio.com where you'll find an interactive demo on the Mimio web page. ATUS has one Mimio system available for checkout from Classroom Services. Call 650-3300 to reserve the unit.

Although we're excited about the potential of this product, we're a little unclear as to exactly how it might be used in classroom instruction. We'd love to have faculty members try the new Mimio system out and tell us what they think about classroom applications. Please feel free to call me at 650-2272 with your comments.

The Importance of Passwords

by Linc Nesheim

The internet is in the news a lot these days and recently it seems that internet security is the most common topic. There are lots of particular recommendations about things like firewalls, encryption, switches, 'sniffers,' and various other complicated security technologies. Fortunately, one of the most effective methods for increasing security is also one of the simplest methods - choosing and using a good password.

Many of us use a password that is easy to remember, but passwords that are easy to remember are also the easiest for someone (or some computer) to guess. Tests performed on our own computers show that insecure passwords that don't follow the guidelines below can be cracked in just a few seconds! We must all keep in mind that our access to things on computers and on servers is privileged and is based on our username and password combination. By following a few simple steps, each of us can do our part to maintain the security of the Western computer network.

Here are some guidelines to follow when considering a password:

1. Don't choose a word that is in the dictionary – not even with numbers added before or after it.
2. Choose a password that is at least 8 characters long – computers 'think' in words that are 7 characters long, so a minimum 8 character password is best.
3. Don't choose something with your name or your username as part of the password – not even with numbers added before or after it.
4. Don't choose the word 'password'
5. Do choose special characters (the shift-keys above the numbers and symbols on the right side of the keyboard).
6. Do combine letters, numbers, and special characters.
7. Do change your password every so often.
8. Never share your password with anyone – everyone who needs to use a computer on campus has their own account and password.

Four Years of Planned Classroom Renovations

by Larry Gilbert

The previous renovation and mediation of nearly one-half of our general university classroom (GUC) pool has demonstrated Western's strong commitment to enhancement of its teaching spaces. The development of a comprehensive plan to continue classroom renovations over the next two biennia further emphasizes that commitment.

ATUS has conducted three surveys of faculty priorities for further renovation and mediation of our general university classrooms. This faculty input was used to build a list and schedule that details which classrooms are planned for renovation from July 2003 through June 2007. Working with Western's Space Administration, Facilities Management, and Capital Budget offices, we're mesh-

ing information about logistics, funding, planning, and construction into a cooperative and realistic plan.

The preliminary list below indicates the classrooms that are currently included in the renovation plan in each year of the biennium, by category of renovation (e.g., Level 3, physical renovation only, etc.) Within each category, the classrooms are listed in priority order. The year listed is the year in which we hope that renovation will be completed. Please keep in mind that schedules are tentative, in that they can be influenced by many factors.

We hope that you'll find that this plan will have a significant and positive impact on the teaching spaces you and your students use every day. If you have comments or questions, please call Larry Gilbert at 650-2272.

N = 69 Classrooms	2003 (Last Half)	2004	2005	2006 (First Half)
Level 3 Mediation Prior to Full Renovation N=4	CB 485 AH 15 AH 18 AH 6			
Level 3 Mediation & Renovation N=15	MH 162 MH 164	HU 106 HU 107 (AH 6, AH 15 & AH 18 complete physical renovation only)	CB 385 HU 101 CH 135 HU 103 ES 70 BH 106 ES 74 BH 110 ES 78 OM 585 ES 418	
Level 4 Mediation & Renovation N=4		AH 102 OM 483 FR 2		FR 4
New Bond Hall Level 3 Mediated Classrooms N=7		BH 415 BH 417 BH 419	BH 104 BH 114 BH 217 BH 317	
Level 3 & 4 Communications Building Classrooms N=10		3 Auditoria Lev 4 3 50+ seat Lev 4 4 30+ seat Lev 3 (number dependent on building equipment funding)		
Level 4 Media Replacement & Minor Renovation N=12		SL 110 SL 120	BH 105 BH 109 SL 130 SL 140 SL 150 AH 100	HH 153 HH 253 HH 345 HH 353
Level 1 & 2 Physical Renovation Only N=17		BH 173 BH 175 MH 173 MH 263 AH 6	BH 108 BH 111 BH 422 BH 428 BH 437 (future Lev 4)	MH 230 MH 336 BH 103 BH 219 BH 221 BH 223 BH 225 (June)

LabView Shows Computer Availability

by Rick Nichols

According to a survey conducted by a CBE Marketing class last year, the number one student concern regarding technology on campus was the difficulty in finding available computer lab seats. ATUS has worked hard to bring forth a valuable new service that makes it markedly easier for students to find open seats among the 392 Windows workstations in computer labs across campus.

A large video monitor at the Red Square entrance to Haggard Hall now provides nearly real-time information regarding available computers in all general university and shared computer labs. The display indicates the location and number of unoccupied computer lab seats so students can more readily find an available computer instead of waiting in line in the most popular computer labs.

The new system also provides a graphic display of each lab's schedule of classes for the next four hours so students can better plan their computer usage. Finally, the system has the ability to display emergency announcements related to student technology support (e.g., Internet connection down).

While we continued to increase the number of lab seats available for general use, we also recognized that a large number of seats were going unused because students didn't know about them. Future plans for this service include expanding the number of LabView kiosks to other locations so more students will be able to easily identify vacant lab seats.

Most students will use the new service by viewing the up-to-the-minute information on our LabView kiosks. However, they can also check the same information on the web by going to www.wvu.edu/labview. You can view that site, too, if you'd like to see the lab availability information now available to students.

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To request this newsletter in an alternative format, call 360.650.3572

Personalizing Classroom & Lab Computers

by Linc Nesheim

ATUS is often asked whether there are ways to make classroom computers look and act more like individual faculty office computers. The answer is 'yes,' but solutions are complicated by the fact that there are hundreds of individual computer configurations that faculty bring to their work in the classroom. ATUS has devised two solutions to this problem that can be used immediately. We are working on a third solution that we hope will be available by the end of this school year.

The two solutions currently available are:

Individual Internet Favorites Now Available in Classrooms and Labs

Because ATUS strives to provide a consistent and reliable configuration of general university classroom and lab computers for faculty, all of the workstations are protected from permanent changes by automatically returning to their standard configuration at each

restart. While this protects the predictable appearance and function of each computer, it has, in the past, limited the ability to retain Internet Explorer "Favorites" in these locations.

In response to faculty requests for more personalized resources in classrooms and labs, the general university classroom and lab computers were recently configured so that IE Favorites saved in class are now retained in a folder on the U: drive, available automatically after login.

In addition, the Favorites located on an office computer can be copied or automatically saved to the U: drive. Contact the Help Desk, x3333, if you are interested in implementing this option.

Remote access to your desktop

Another exciting feature within Windows XP allows you to access your personal office

workstation from a classroom or lab computer. This is especially helpful if you are running some specialized software that has difficulty functioning on workstations designed for public access, or is licensed only for your departmental computers. Additionally, it allows you to use the familiar configuration you have already selected for your own desktop. Classroom Services can assist you in enabling this feature on your office workstation if you are using Windows XP. Call Nancy Grayum at 650-3572 or Diane Smith at 650-2857 to inquire.

Finally, ATUS is exploring a Microsoft technology known as 'roaming Windows profiles' that will continue to enhance the personalization features available on general university classroom and lab workstations. We are working through the complex issues required to make this new feature available campus-wide and will announce availability as soon as possible.

STF Committee Reviews Proposals

Since 1996, the Associated Students and Western's administration have joined in managing funds specifically designated to meet the need for students' access to technology. A portion of the funding is provided by the Student Technology Fee (STF), currently \$15 per quarter. WWU does not directly contribute to the Student Technology Fee; however, in the history of the Student Technology Fee at WWU (the last six years), nearly every dollar of Student Technology Fee funds have been matched by University and departmental funds.

The STF Committee responsible for the allocations consists of two students from the AS Board, two additional students appointed by the A.S., the Vice Provost for Information and Telecommunication Services, and two faculty members. All students and faculty have opportunities for input on the decisions.

This year's STF Committee is now reviewing 33 proposals that were submitted for consideration for the 2003 - 2004 academic year. All of Western's colleges are represented in the range of proposals, in addition to student clubs, resource centers, libraries and University Residences. View these proposals and more comprehensive information about the STF program at <http://www.wvu.edu/depts/provost/stf/>

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Backup Options Zip Drives, CD/RW, or USB Drives?

by Fred Robson

"Zip drives" from Iomega have been around for a long time in 100 Mb and 250 Mb formats and many of us use them regularly for backup or portability of files. Now, Iomega has a new 750 Mb zip disk which provides as much storage space as a CD. Western's standard desktop computer, the Gateway E-4000 series, now includes a 1.44 Mb floppy drive, the 750 Mb zip drive and the DVD/CD/RW combo drive.

Each storage medium has certain advantages over others. One advantage of a zip disk is ease of use. Just drag and drop in the Window's file system and you're done. Creating a CD requires a little more work because additional software is needed to create and move files, but it's easy enough to figure out. Another choice is the USB Drive. These small devices are becoming less expensive and more popular. They typically come in a "keychain" size and can hold from 16 Mb to 512 Mb of data. The 1 gigabyte size will be out soon. The USB drives offer very easy use, (just plug it in and drag and drop as if it were an internal disk drive) as well as great portability. One disadvantage of the USB drives is the cost: a 256 Mb drive costs

about \$135.00, although a small drive can be had for under \$50.

In comparing the cost of disks for each drive, you will find that re-writeable CD/RW disks currently cost about \$.25 each in packs of 100. The disks for the 750 Mb zip drive are about \$13.00 each, while the 250 Mb zip disks are about \$10.00 each.

Classrooms and computer labs on campus currently have 250 Mb zip drives installed in computers; some computer lab machines still even have the 100 Mb zip drive. These older drives will not read 750 Mb disks. The 750 Mb zip drive will, however, read and write to the 250 Mb disk, but will only read the 100 Mb disk, not write to it.

As a general rule, it is good to have a backup of your important data in at least three locations: a hard drive, a network drive, and a portable disk. So take your pick from the above options and back up often! It may save a lot of anguish later.

For assistance in selecting the best combination of drives for your workstation, give me a call at 650-7737.