



The official source of news from ITS Information & Technology Services

January 2003

A New Voice, A New Choice

RITSTAFF and ALLSTAFF Options Available to Fill Communication Needs

By Donna Cullen, HelpDesk Lead, dccacc@rit.edu

Communicating with all RIT faculty and staff is now more convenient: the functions of RITSTAFF - communicating important institute information, announcing events and hosting discussions - are being split into two lists.

The RITSTAFF mail list is taking on a new role. Once the sole mechanism for sending communication to all faculty and staff, RITSTAFF is now a mail list that faculty and staff can join (subscribe to) or leave (unsubscribe from). Faculty and staff can do this themselves by going to the web page <http://www.rit.edu/lists>.

Initially all faculty and staff are on the RITSTAFF list. New faculty and staff are added to the list as they begin their careers at RIT. Communications and campus discussions are the intended use of RITSTAFF. The ability to join or leave the list gives you the power to control this portion of your email environment. You can join the list during the academic year and leave it for the summer. You can

leave the list during your busiest times and rejoin when you have the time to participate in a discussion. All faculty and staff subscribed to RITSTAFF can send to the list.

ALLSTAFF joins your communications toolbox

ALLSTAFF is a list for important campus announcements. All faculty and staff are on this list. Announcements of a critical nature (university closings, benefits enrollment, system downtime, construction, etc.) are sent to this list. Communications sent to this list have a high probability of impacting you. Administrators have the assurance that communication of a critical nature is earmarked and delivered to all faculty and staff.

Sending messages to the ALLSTAFF list is restricted to representatives from Administrative Council - the vice presidents of each RIT Division, President Simone, Diane Barbour (CIO) and Robert Finnerty (CCO). They will be able to send messages to the ALLSTAFF list.

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“Regardless of who you speak to, you can be sure to get first class computer/networking assistance at the ITS HelpDesk.”

– Tom Dixon, ITS HelpDesk. See his article on page 4.

For our January issue, **ITS Changes and Improvements** features the ITS HelpDesk. We'll showcase the staff, explain recent system upgrades and improvements and learn how HelpDesk staff can assist you when you call for networking information and technology support.

A New Voice, A New Choice

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The ALLSTAFF contact person (or their assigned representative) has three functions - to serve as a clearing house for messages associated with the division, to determine the appropriateness of using ALLSTAFF for a given message and to send the messages on behalf of the division.

The Choice is yours

You now have a choice:

- * Receive all mailings to RIT faculty and staff (both RITSTAFF and ALLSTAFF mailings)
- * Receive only the critical email announcements made to faculty and staff (ALLSTAFF only)
- * Receive critical email announcements (ALLSTAFF) and opt in and out of RITSTAFF to receive other communications and email discussions associated with the campus community

If you have questions or concerns, please contact the ITS HelpDesk in person in 7B-1113, by phone at 475-4357 or 475-2810 TTY or by sending mail to helpdesk@rit.edu.

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Please welcome the **ITS Web Team** (l to r) our newest member, Ryan Boyd, web architect; Jeremy Trumble, manager and senior web developer, and Mark Maimone, web developer. The team is based in 7A and part of the Customer Support Services team. Their projects are vast and varied, partnering with campus customers to implement projects such as the RIT Events Calendar as well as in house projects like the new ITS web page restructuring.

Check Closings with Campus Cancellations Hotline

An automated call line provides information about cancelled day, evening and weekend classes or special events due to weather conditions or other emergencies. To access this line, dial:

475-7075 (voice)

475-7076 (TTY)

Please share this information with your co-workers and student workers. It may save them a trip to campus while we are in the throes of one of our infamous Rochester snow storms!

Plan Ahead to Migrate to Mac OS X

New software challenges can be headed off with assistance from ITS

By Jeremy Reichman, Software Specialist III, jjracc@rit.edu

In May 2002, Apple announced that new Macs introduced after January 2003 would no longer feature the ability to boot into Mac OS 9. This sounds dire, and in some cases, it may cause some hardship. However, Apple was giving all of us (including Macintosh software developers) a good chance to plan ahead calmly for a migration to Mac OS X.

Your current computer running Mac OS 9 (or earlier) will not magically break overnight if and when Apple releases new computers that run only Mac OS X.

You can still run almost every Mac OS 9 application within Mac OS X. So, even if you are using Mac OS X, you don't necessarily need to boot into Mac OS 9 to run a program that has not been updated yet.

We would certainly be happy to discuss the issues involved with you, as we have done for other areas on campus already. If you are concerned about booting into Mac OS 9 or want a consultation about any aspect of migrating to Mac OS X, please contact the HelpDesk at 5-HELP (4357) or 5-2810 TTY

However, some programs do still require that you boot into Mac OS 9. Any software that needs to access a peripheral or a specific piece of hardware may not yet run in Mac OS X. In cases where you still need to boot into Mac OS 9, you'll want to make sure you have a Mac capable of doing that; any Mac you have today can do that.

The potential limitation applies only to new computers you may buy after January 2003 — and since the change hasn't happened yet, we don't know whether it will apply to every new computer, or just certain models Apple ships at that time. However, it is certain that the Macs you have today will still boot into Mac OS 9 should you need to do that.

There are compelling reasons to run Mac OS X. Apple is moving forward with Mac OS X now that it is well over a year and a half old. It will take some planning to determine how to best move you or your department to it when you decide to do that. With the Apple Technology Assurance Program (TAP) license, we also have low-cost upgrade options for getting Mac OS X on existing computers.

Newest Wireless Sites Installed

By Patrick Saeva, Project Manager, pjsits@rit.edu



At this point in time, there are close to 50 wireless locations in 19 buildings at RIT that range from full building coverage in areas such as the library to partial building coverage like the first floor of the RIT Inn and Conference Center. The wireless antennas often allow for connectivity into many areas outside of buildings as well.

The most recent phase of the wireless project includes coverage in all auditoriums as well as Gracies' and the Hettie Shumway Dining Commons. All wireless areas across RIT can be recognized by the "Blue Dot" posters that symbolize network connectivity.

A full list of wireless locations on campus is available on the ITS website at <https://www.rit.edu/network/wireless/wireless.html>. For any questions on using the wireless network, please contact the ITS helpdesk at 5-HELP (4357) or 5-2810 TTY.

NOTE: In April of 2001, a team was put together to start investigating the implementation of wireless connectivity at RIT. This team looked at several different technologies, studied floor plans of all buildings across campus, and worked with vendors and several universities to understand best practices. After weeks of testing, the team started building a plan for implementation of wireless networking in group study areas, student congregation areas, dining halls, and auditoriums across campus. ITS can help answer questions about individual requests for customer-funded locations. For such requests, please contact me. – P. S.

Upgrades of Services and Staff Expertise Lead to Improved Customer Experience at the ITS HelpDesk

By Tom Dixon, ITS HelpDesk Analyst III, trdhelp@rit.edu

It seems with every issue of the ITS News we inform the community of something new in the ITS Department. While this is also true in this article, it is also comforting to know some things never change, like our continued dedication to customer satisfaction here at the HelpDesk.

At one time or another I assume everyone has called the familiar number 5-HELP. Many of our customers have their favorite “Staffers”. Some of you like the “security blanket” of the HelpDesk, and some-one like Donna Cullen who has been with ITS since we were ISC! Some look for the soft-spoken, fatherly type, Mike Mistretta. You may call hoping to speak with yours truly, Tom Dixon. You may even want the new voice of Omar Phillips. The fresh perspective of our student staff is also welcomed.

Regardless of who you speak to, you can be sure to get first class computer/networking assistance at the ITS HelpDesk. – T. D.



Full-Time ITS HelpDesk Staff:
(from L to R) Omar Phillips, Mike Mistretta,
Donna Cullen, Tom Dixon

“The inclusion of the HelpDesk staff on projects was put in place with the hope that first hand experience with the product will aid in the solution of problems during the first contact with the customer.”

The ITS HelpDesk over the years has undergone many improvements, changes and upgrades. In past issues of the ITS News, we’ve written about the HelpDesk, how the HelpDesk works, and how to help us help you. Early in the history of the ITS, HelpDesk staff acted as dispatchers to other technical staff, taking calls from customers and handing off problem reports for resolution.

The organization has come a long way and integrated improved operational processes including the addition of web applications for customers, upgraded software and staff expertise.

Process Improvements and Web Applications

It seems like only yesterday that we informed our customers that we were upgrading our current tracking software program to allow ITS staff to track your problems more closely, and therefore, fix problems quickly. At the time the call is created it assigns a HelpDesk staff member as an owner. By creating an “owner” in the process we are able to track calls

better. What this means to our customers is quicker turn-around and better overall service.

To improve the process of resolving problems better, ITS has developed a web incident reporting page. This interface will allow you, the user, to go to the web page and submit your concerns electronically to the HelpDesk. This web interface will make the process of submitting a problem via email much easier.

At the present time, in order to log a problem to the HelpDesk you must either call the HelpDesk or send an email. Although both of these functions will continue to exist, the web form will make it much easier to submit a concern to the HelpDesk. This web form will allow us to get more pertinent and complete problem information and more complete contact information. This will help eliminate callbacks and the need to return mail for more complete information.

You will also have the final word. With every closed problem notice will be a link to a Customer Service Feedback

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ITS News

Improved Customer Experience at the ITS HelpDesk

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Form. We have included this form so that we may get a better idea of what our customers expect, and what we can do to make your experience with ITS even better.



We encourage every user to provide feedback of their experience so that we may continue to improve. Look for this link in your next closed call!

Our staff has more experience, we have upgraded equipment, and we increased our involvement in new projects. The ITS HelpDesk staff has been taking a more active role in new projects. This involvement has also allowed the staff to be more familiar with the newest systems on campus, such as VPN, wireless networking, *myRIT*, and *myCourses*. A recent project management change has required that at least one HelpDesk staff member become involved in every new project rollout. In this way the staff have gained experience with the inner workings of many of these new systems on campus. The inclusion of the HelpDesk staff on projects was put in place with the hope that first hand experience with the product will aid in the solution of problems during the first contact with the customer.

Becoming involved in the development process of these new technologies has also allowed us to become the customer's voice. Our involvement in project development has added to



our first hand experience with the technology. Now we can predict possible customer problems before they appear. This involvement has aided the development teams to fix "bugs" in new systems before they go to production.

As testimony to these recent HelpDesk improvements, independent focus groups have shown a marked improvement in overall customer satisfaction when dealing with the HelpDesk and ITS as a whole.

In just three years, the ITS HelpDesk has improved first re-

sponse closures (calls that are closed on first contact with the customer) from 22.2% in 1999 to over 75% in the fall quarter 2002! This substantial improvement has been due to several factors including the staff's increased technical expertise, improvements to core systems (email, etc.) and our ongoing commitment to customer service. The chart below shows the increase in call volume, along with the increase in the percentage of call closures.

	2001	2002
Calls Logged	6281	17,189
Calls Closed	6325*	17,157

* Includes some outstanding calls closed during the 2001 academic year.

The statistics above for 2002 reflect approximately 28 additional calls **per day** as compared to last year's numbers. In addition, some comparative data for 2001/2002 indicates several increases in service calls, closing and percentages:

	Fall 2001	Fall 2002
Calls Closed in <2 days	2619 (69%)	5203 (81.7%)
Calls Closed in > 5 days	767 (19.9%)	739 (11.6%)

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ITS HELP DESK IMPROVEMENTS:

YOU CAN NOW DO ALL OF THIS...

MAKE A HELPDESK CALL/REPORT

CHECK THE STATUS OF YOUR OPEN CALLS

GIVE US FEEDBACK THROUGH OUR NEW WEB-BASED SURVEY

...ONLINE

myCourses: Successful Rollout and Continuing Improvements

By Lynn Wild, Assistant Provost for Teaching and Learning, lawetc@rit.edu, and
Joeann Humbert, Director of Online Learning, jmhetc@rit.edu

Online Learning, ITS and the Wallace Library helped roll out myCourses to the RIT campus at the beginning of the fall quarter. This is the course management tool you can use to create a web presence and improve communication for your courses. We are pleased to report that faculty in more than 525 courses and 8,800 students actively used myCourses this fall.

More than 500 faculty participated in the 138 training sessions taught by Online Learning and Wallace Library staff. Faculty most often used the following features of myCourses: Syllabus, Messaging, Grade Book and the Outline feature.

Your Input Made a Difference

Your feedback helped us identify, address and solve specific issues. We took action to improve performance and stability including upgrading the server, improving load balancing, reporting bugs to the software provider and implementing their patches. We will continue to immediately address any issues that impact performance.

Issues Affecting Faculty:

Class Rosters. Students will not appear in the myCourses student roster if they do not have a DCE account. Students should check that their preferred email address is entered into the LDAP directory and access their RIT email periodically.

Grade Book. Grade Book performance can be increased by using the “grade by assignment” feature, disabling math, resizing the Grade Book, or using Internet Explorer.

Online Learning is working hard to improve your instructional experience with myCourses. (A list of helpful strategies can be found with this article.) There are regularly scheduled myCourses Open Forums where you may have your questions answered, provide feedback and offer suggestions to us. You can also take advantage of the training that is offered continuously throughout the quarter.

Learn more and register for training at <http://tlt.rit.edu>. Online Learning partnered with ITS to help deliver technical support for students and faculty using myCourses. If you or your students are experiencing difficulty, please be sure to contact the ITS HelpDesk at 475-HELP or 475-2810 (TTY)

Tips and Strategies to Improve myCourses Performance

By Bob Ertischek, Instructional Technologist
rseetc@rit.edu,

The list below is the first in a series of tips and strategies designed to improve your experience using the myCourses courseware. You can access full details for each tip at <http://tlt.rit.edu>. Each quick tip includes step by step directions and a screen shot to help you follow the instructions.

Tips and strategies now available include:

- Adding Features to myCourses
- Speed Up the Grade Book
- Make Life Easier....Use the Offline Viewer to Work in Discussions
- Have You Tried Content Modules?
- Customize Session Names in Your Outline
- Reorder Your Sessions
- Suggestion for Copying and Pasting into myCourses
- Stay One Step Ahead of Your Students. Hide Future Sessions
- Try Chat for Virtual Office Hours
- Add Your Signature to myCourses Email
- Snow Day? Let Your Class Know...Use Broadcast Email
- Answer Common Questions Once...Create a Q&A Category in Discussions
- Simple HTML Tags to Spruce Up Your Text
- Use .zip Files for Mass File Upload
- Link to a Web Site in a New Browser Window

If you have any of your own tips you'd like to share with other faculty, please forward them to myCoursesTips@firstclass.rit.edu.

ITS HelpDesk Improvements

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This is not the end. Our goal is to increase our productivity to “world class” HelpDesk standards* closing 90% during first customer contact. That means less “phone tag,” callbacks and, most important, less frustration for our customers!

As you can see we have worked diligently to bring customers new features and improve customer satisfaction. You can be assured we will continue to do everything we have done in the past, and continue to improve on those things you have come to expect. You will continue to find an ever-improving staff dedicated to kind, courteous and knowledgeable customer service.

* ITS has set its customer satisfaction standards high. One of their many resources for industry standards can be found at the Help Desk Institute: www.thinkhdi.com

(The Help Desk Institute (HDI) leads and promotes help desk and support professionals by empowering its members through access to timely and valuable industry information, encouraging member collaboration, and establishing open standard, globally recognized certification and training programs.)

Anatomy of a HelpDesk Call

Below is the short version of what happens when you contact the ITS HelpDesk.

Information Needed from You:

- **Define Request:** problem description including error messages or details concerning training or services requested.
- **Computer:** What kind of computer you are using (PC, MAC)
- **Contact Methods:** how to contact you (phone, email, other)
- **Availability:** the best time to contact you with questions or status.
- **HelpDesk Response:** Often you receive an answer immediately, otherwise your request is referred to the appropriate ITS support staff for action.

If Your Request is Logged and Referred to Support Staff:

- **HelpDesk Logs Request:** staff log request on tracking software
- **Tracking Number and email confirmation:** You receive an email confirmation with the tracking number. Save this number until request is resolved.
- **Triage:** HelpDesk staff refers request to the correct support area. If it appears to be a system-wide problem, it is investigated and escalated to the proper ITS group for resolution.
- **Logging of Steps Taken:** ITS staff update the request’s “diary” with the steps that were taken to resolve the issue.
- **Email Confirming Request Resolution:** You receive an email confirming that your request is resolved.

Tom’s Tidbits Column to be Added to ITS News

ITS News will be the new home of Tom’s Tidbits, by HelpDesk staffer, Tom Dixon. This feature of the ITS News will allow you, the customer, to ask any question you would like about computing, networking and the internet/email.

This is not a replacement for contacting the HelpDesk. All of your everyday problems should always be directed to helpdesk@rit.edu or 475-HELP (2810 TTY). *Tom’s Tidbits* is designed to answer questions or comments about computing right here in the ITS News. Look for it each month!

You may submit your questions/comments to tomsbits@rit.edu. Tom will pick the most relevant and interesting questions for each issue and answer them right here. “I hope this feature will be something you will look forward to reading each month. I hope to make this spot fun and informative for all of us!”

ITS Update

New RIT Messenger Subscribers: Training sessions

Voice/TTY messaging training sessions continue this winter for all new on-campus users. The following is a list of January training sessions available for new faculty and staff.

Date	Voice Mail- box	Dual Language Mailbox*
Jan. 8	10 a.m.	11 a.m.
Jan. 13	2 p.m.	3 p.m.
Jan. 17	10 a.m.	11 a.m.
Jan. 21	2 p.m.	3 p.m.
Jan. 29	2 p.m.	3 p.m.

**Dual language mailboxes can accept voice and TTY messages*

Classes will be held in building 99, room 1285
Please call Char Ipacs at 5-5858 to register for training.

ITS Contact Information

DSS Computing Labs

Hours, locations, hardware, software, and reservations information available at:
http://www.rit.edu/its/services/computer_labs

Telecommunications Services

Located in the Facilities Mgmt. bldg. (99)
To contact the Telecommunications Services call 475-5800.

ITS HelpDesk

Located in the Gannett building, rm. 7B-1113

To contact the ITS HelpDesk

- Call 475-HELP or 475-2810 (TTY)
- Use ASK, selecting Information & Technology Services
- Send e-mail to helpdesk@rit.edu

Regular hours

Sunday	12 p.m.–6 p.m.
Monday–Thursday	8 a.m.–8 p.m.
Friday	8 a.m.–5 p.m.

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