

Proposal:

MANN LIBRARY INSTRUCTIONAL COMPUTING FACILITY

Submitted to the College of Agriculture
and Life Sciences, Cornell University

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reviewed and approved by
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Introduction

In his 14 June 1983 report to the members of the Ad Hoc Committee on Instructional Computing, Professor N.R. Scott, of the Department of Agricultural Engineering, identified, as one conclusion of the committee, a resolve to fund and create microcomputer facilities within the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Cornell:

The Committee recommends.... That the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences establish a minimum of three microcomputer "centers" by Fall 1983 or Spring 1984 at the latest. It is recommended that a center be established in Riley-Robb 15 for 30 microcomputers, in Warren Hall 160 and 60 for a minimum of 40 microcomputers, and a laboratory be established in the Library for 20 microcomputers. It should be noted that there are substantial differences of usage anticipated for these three centers. The courses in Agricultural Engineering will focus much more on the use of the computer for programming (i.e. AE 151, AE 152, and AE 304) and in design in the upper-level courses. The machines in Warren Hall will be utilized more with software packages for data manipulation, statistical analysis, text processing, graphic file creation and display, etc. The laboratory in the Library will have two functions: a) for the utilization of microcomputers to conduct computerized literature searches, and b) for a central location allowing students to utilize microcomputers and software which can be checked out much as a book for computing applications.

The present report details Mann Library's proposal for a microcomputer facility in what is now the Informal Study Room on the first floor of the Library. This facility would be somewhat more ambitious than the one mentioned in the report of the Ad Hoc Committee: we suggest the installation of 38 microcomputers, rather than the original recommendation of 20, and the addition of two full-time employees to the Mann Library staff. We believe, however, that our proposal fully justifies this level of commitment by the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.

The Mann Library Informal Study will provide a highly visible computer facility at a central location on the campus of the College. The microcomputer rooms, and the instructional program that we plan to undertake there, will have a number of benefits to the College of Agriculture and to Mann Library:

-- The Mann computer facility would give all CALS students an opportunity to gain exposure to microcomputers and to the most common types of software currently available.

-- The classroom within the facility will support two programs of

workshops, to be taught by library personnel. One will center on the techniques of searching online databases (just as the Reference Department has traditionally taught students to use the card catalog and the reference room). The second will consist of introductions to different types of microcomputer software. Some of these workshops will be open to the general student public, others will be undertaken at the request of CALS faculty who want to include a unit of computer work in their courses.

-- In the next year, the classroom may also support specific CALS computer courses such as Agricultural Engineering 151. If this is the case, the Mann computer staff will assist Professor Robert Cooke and other members of the CALS faculty by scheduling classroom time, maintaining whatever software is necessary, and providing general supervision in the computer facility.

-- The online bibliographic search microcomputers in the general-use area of the computer facility will make available an innovative reference service to Mann Library patrons.

-- The addition of computer personnel to the Mann Library staff, though their main commitment will be to the new Instructional Computing Facility, will provide impetus to Mann's overall automation plans.

-- The software collection at the instructional facility will represent the beginning of what we anticipate will become an important aspect of library acquisitions in years to come.

We at Mann Library have undertaken the planning of the proposed Instructional Computing Facility with considerable excitement and the sense that--though a computer facility represents a new endeavor for the Library--we are moving in the right direction. We believe that this computing center will ultimately play an important role in developing computer instruction within the College, and in helping Mann Library to modernize itself as a provider of information to the academic community.

A primary function of the Library is to teach members of the College community to access and organize information, in support of education, research, and administrative decisionmaking. Microcomputer technology represents a revolution in this field. We look forward to working with the administration and faculty of the College in creating this new facility, and to participating in the development of computer instruction within the College.