

Oakland County Announces Massive PC Upgrade

by Jim Taylor

In the second quarter (fiscal year), Oakland County will launch a major technological upgrade of approximately 1,600 personal computers county wide. The County will be upgrading all personal computers and laptops that are running Windows 3.1 and 3.11. The upgrade is needed to replace aged equipment, move to a faster more reliable software application environment (32-bit), resolve Year 2000 date issues, and provide computers capable of running newer application software. The entire project is scheduled to be completed by the end of 1999.

What's New?

Both the desktop and laptop computers will sport a new look with more power and features than ever. The new desktop computer will be a 450 MHz Pentium II mid-tower computer with 128MB of RAM, 17" Monitor, 9GB Hard Disk Storage, High-end Video Card, 40x CD-ROM drive, and basic sound system. The new laptop computer will have a larger color screen and be based on the 300 MHz Pentium II processor.

The hardware being purchased is capable of running many of the advanced software applications that the county utilizes both today and in the future. These include LAN Based Imaging, Data Warehousing, Geographic Information Systems, HRFIS, PeopleSoft, CLEMIS, etc.

In addition to upgrading hardware, Oakland County will also be upgrading its software environment. All systems will now be loaded with Windows NT 4.0 as the standard operating system which will provide for a more secure and reliable networked operating system. The standard application software included will be the Microsoft Office Professional 97 suite (Word, Excel, Access, PowerPoint), GroupWise 5.5, Netscape Communicator 4.5, Internet Explorer 4.0, WordPerfect 6.1 and Lotus 123 version 5.0. Both WordPerfect and Lotus will be provided and supported until a full and complete transition to the new Microsoft Office suite has been completed.

Other Improvements

There are many new improvements to the software environment. First and foremost is the switch to the Microsoft Office Professional 97 Desktop suite. The suite is a fully integrated software application environment which provides for word processing, spreadsheet, database, and presentation software. Enhancements to the Office 97 Suite include the ability to publish documents to the web for easy access and retrieval via a web browser. In addition to being a fully integrated office suite, many of the new network applications (i.e., HRFIS, Peoplesoft, Business Objects, FileNet Imaging) are compatible with Office 97.

Other new improvements also include:

- Quicker and more reliable access to the Internet.
- Each personal computer comes equipped with multimedia capabilities which will allow for desktop training capabilities which may utilize sound, enhanced graphics and video.
- The new and improved GroupWise will allow for a web browser interface, project collaboration, and enhanced groupware functions.

Managing Change

To meet the scheduled completion date, approximately 200 personal computers will need to be installed per month. To assist County departmental personnel in transitioning to the new environment, the Information Technology Training Center has created a schedule of classes to meet the needs of learning the NT operating system and the new Office 97 suite. In addition, special workshops designed for converting WordPerfect, Lotus, and Access data files will also be held to ease the transition.

In addition to obtaining training, here are a few other things you can do to prepare for the upgrade:

- **Identify any departmental software that will require conversion to Windows NT 4.0.** Check on compatibility issues with your present departmentally acquired software vendors for any incompatibilities with the new environment. Ask if there are any required updates or new versions that need to be purchased to upgrade to the new NT environment. In most cases, software previously running under MSDOS, Windows 3.1 or Windows 95 will also operate under Windows NT. However, most vendors will provide an enhanced NT version which will probably operate more efficiently. Customers will be responsible for reloading departmental acquired software.
- **Clean house.** Cleanup and delete any old or rarely used data files, such as, word processing, spreadsheet, and database files. Ask yourself "Do I really need all these files?" Backup your data files in preparation for the upgrade. Remember that you will be responsible for making sure that any and all data files that are on your machine are backed up.
- **Identify Network Databases.** If your department uses network databases developed internally or provided by outside agencies, you will need to identify them to ensure compatibility with the new operating system. Contact your vendor or IT customer contact if you have further questions regarding compatibility.

Information Technology 1999/2000 Master Plan

Oakland County Information Technology (IT) has always played an integral role in County operations. The effective use of technology remains the only feasible method of controlling and maintaining vast amounts of information required to efficiently and effectively operate the County. The staff at IT take significant pride in the Department's accomplishments and continues to strive towards more effective solutions to the County's business missions, goals, and objectives.

The overall goal of the Master Planning process was to develop a clearer picture of the way Information Technology's development resources can support the County's short and long term information needs. This plan will:

- Assist County Business Units in communicating to IT the direction and priorities of projects
- Aid IT in allocating appropriate scarce resources to support project requests
- Provide a framework for IT Leadership Groups and IT management to continually measure and re-evaluate information systems efforts
- Support IT in its determination of the types of technologies that will be of use to future organizational applications
- Assist IT in charting strategies and individual project plans to support the business units present and future information needs

Oakland County Information Technology is comprised of five divisions; Administration, Data Center Operations, Technical Systems and Networking, Systems Development and Support, and Digital Information Service Center (DISC). This Master Plan is limited to the utilization of the budgeted positions and professional services allocation of the Systems Development and Support, Technical Systems and Networking, and DISC divisions. These resources make up approximately 42% of IT's total budget. The plan encompasses the 1999/2000 fiscal years of 10/3/98 through 9/29/2000.

This plan represents the commitment of IT to partner with the County's various departments and divisions in an effort to effectively utilize Oakland County's scarce and costly IT development resources.

In October 1998, each of the Leadership Groups met and prioritized all of their outstanding projects/requests. The result is a prioritized list of all Planned Projects for the 1999/2000 Master Planning period. The specific projects planned for the Master Plan period of 10/3/98 through 9/29/2000 are shown in the complete 1999/2000 Information Technology Master Plan Report, which is available for your review in WordPerfect format on the "O" drive, specifically "**o:\infotech\leadgrp\mastplan.rpt**". Also available on the "O" drive is a listing of each Leadership Group, department,

division and the representative for each group, this document is located on the "O" drive, "**o:\infotech\leadgrp\lgmember.wpd**".

On a quarterly basis, a Status Report will be distributed to all Leadership Group representatives and the Board of Commissioners Finance Committee. This report will include resource utilization, project status, project estimated and actual hours variance, and estimated and actual start and end date variance.

Leadership Groups will continue to meet on a quarterly basis to review project progress and address any project variance which would require re-allocation of resources, re-prioritization of approved projects, as well as any new projects being submitted to the Leadership Group for review.

Information Technology Training Center Quarterly Update

The 1999 first quarter training schedule (January, February, and March 1999) is now available for your review in WordPerfect format on the "O" drive, specifically **o:\infotech\training\schedule.doc**". If you cannot find a class listed on the schedule which you need to take, or the dates and times are not convenient for you, please contact the receptionist (858-0810) at Information Technology (IT). Your name can be placed on a waiting list. When any class has a waiting list of six or more individuals, IT will attempt to open an additional class.

In 1999 you will notice that the Information Technology Training Center is offering Windows NT 4.0 and Microsoft Office Professional 97 classes (which include Word 97, Excel 97, and Access 97). In the lead article "Oakland County Announces Massive PC Upgrade" it was stated that the County will be moving to the Windows NT operating environment and Office 97 software suite. As you review the quarterly training schedule, you will notice that the classes have been added gradually throughout the first quarter (January through March 1999). When scheduling these classes please keep in mind that it is strongly recommended that you enroll in the appropriate classes close to the estimated installation of your new PC. If the classes are completed several months prior to PC installation the concepts and features taught will be lost or forgotten. Your department/division will be notified in advance of the anticipated installation date. The complete installation process for all PCs affected will take several months. As the new PCs are installed, the Information Technology Training Center will begin phasing out the WordPerfect, Lotus, and Access classes and replacing them with Office 97 classes. The Office 97 classes which will be offered are as follows:

- Windows NT 4.0 (Upgrade, Introduction)
- Word 97 (Non-Typist Basics, Introduction, Intermediate, Advanced)
- Excel 97 (Upgrade, Introduction, Intermediate, Advanced)
- Access 97 (Upgrade, Introduction, Intermediate, Advanced)
- GroupWise 5.5 (Introduction)

In April 1999, the Information Technology Training Center will also be offering half-day workshops. The workshops will focus on Word, Excel, and Access. Users who have completed the required training classes will bring in their documents on disk which need to be converted. The workshops will be held in one of the training rooms so the user can work at a PC while converting their documents. An instructor or Office Automation staff member will be in the training room should the user need assistance.

Look for more news/updates in future issues of the Information Technology Quarterly.

Conversion of Access 2.0 Databases to Access 97

Several individuals have received new laptops within the last few months with the Microsoft Office Professional 97 suite (Word, Excel, Access) installed on them. If these individuals have Access 97 but need to share an Access 2.0 database with co-workers who use Access 2.0, they will need to select "**Open Database**" when first opening the 2.0 database. The dialog box language in Access 97 is as follows:

"**Open Database** - Click this option if you're sharing this database with users of a previous version of Microsoft Access. You will still be able to use the database with previous versions. In Microsoft Access 97, you will be able to view all objects, but will not be able to change the design of any object."

The Access 97 user will be able to update records/add records, etc. using Access 97 but will not be able to change the design of a query, report, etc. Be extremely careful when opening the Access 2.0 database. If the "**Convert Database**" option is selected, the database will be converted to Access 97 and Access 2.0 users will no longer be able to use the database.

Status of the Business Recovery Plan for Oakland County Department of Information Technology by Mike Wilk

Oakland County Information Technology (IT) is in the process of developing a business recovery plan. This plan specifies the strategies, assets, personnel, and tasks necessary to prepare for and recover from a disaster affecting IT functions. A disaster is defined as a sudden and unexpected loss of equipment, data, facilities, or personnel, which effects operations over an extended period of time. In this event IT must have a means to restore computer services to departments/divisions.

A second meeting with our Disaster Recovery Consultant, Strategia Corporation, was conducted in September 1998 with each of the business recovery teams. There are eight business recovery teams, which consists of the Management Team, Salvage and Restoration Team, Administrative Support Team, Mainframe Recovery Team, Server Recovery Team, Application Team, Telecommunication/Network Team, and

Contingency Planning Team. At these meetings, strategies that identify how critical issues will be addressed following a disaster were drafted.

Examples of the critical issues discussed were alternate site processing, application development, application recovery, backup/restoration, declaration and notification, and equipment replacement. In addition, the recovery tasks necessary for strategy implementation and resources necessary for strategy support were identified.

In December 1998, we received plan updates from our consultant for review. Each team is in the process of assembling and/or developing specific documents needed for the plan. IT has also prepared a Request for Quotation for alternate site processing services. This Request for Quotation is due back in February.

Due to the critical nature of some of the business applications, a commercial hot site is being addressed as an option to restore the critical applications in a timely manner. A commercial hot site is a facility which has compatible computer equipment available in the event of a disaster. This facility would be linked to the campus data communications network to provide the appropriate County departments/divisions with access to those applications. Business application restoration time in a hot site facility would be 24 to 48 hours.

Reestablishment of service for non-critical applications could take place in a facility on campus or nearby which could temporarily house computer equipment. Computer equipment harder to obtain would be contracted ahead of time for quick shipment and the remaining equipment could be obtained from off site storage or local computer stores. Restoration time for the less critical applications is approximately one week.

An important element to the Business Recovery Plan is the reestablishment of data communications from divisions/departments and remote locations to the hot site and the local processing site. A current study of the wide area network (WAN) will address this. This study will consolidate many individual communication lines into fewer, higher speed links, maybe three, from the communication provider to IT. These fewer links would lend themselves more readily to reestablishing communication services from the hot site and/or local site.

The Business Recovery Plan is scheduled to be completed in July of 1999. Although the plan will be completed, plan maintenance will be a continuing process. As new applications, servers, and communication equipment are installed, upgraded, and changed, so does the plan. Each team is responsible for meeting twice per year to review its responsibilities under the plan, verify that the assets are appropriate and up to date, discuss potential plan changes, train new team members, and identify potential plan improvements. In addition, work remains in implementing open system connectivity from the mainframe to the network and migration of 3270 terminals to PC workstations. When this is completed, along with the implementation of the redesign of the wide area network, a major improvement will be made in our ability to provide restoration services in the event of a disaster.

Information Technology Quarterly Index Added to the "O" Drive

The Quarterly Newsletter Index can now be found on the "O" drive for your reference. The index lists topics covered in each newsletter and which Information Technology Quarterly contains these articles. The index, in WordPerfect format, can be found as "**o:\infotech\training\qtrindex.wpd**". The index will be updated as each newsletter is published.

Spring Cleaning in January?

As mentioned in the lead article of this newsletter, the County will be moving to a Windows NT 4.0 operating environment with Microsoft Office Professional 97 suite applications. To prepare for this upgrade, Information Technology is recommending that all individuals who have a Windows 3.1 or 3.11 PC/laptop begin their Spring-Cleaning a little early this year. We're not talking about the normal cleaning that takes place at home or in the office but a thorough cleaning of your computers hard drive.

You will need to review all files stored on your hard drive (c: drive). You'll want to make sure that all files are stored under the main directory c:\123wks, c:\wpdocs, and c:\data. This includes all files. Keep in mind that if you are using a Windows 3.1 PC/laptop, Access files are stored by default in c:\access, any Paintbrush files are stored by default to c:\windows, etc. You will need to move these files to c:\data if you wish to keep them.

While cleaning your hard drive also look for any old or rarely used data files that you've created which can be deleted. Please keep in mind that you only want to delete files you created. System files which are critical to the operation of applications can be placed in the same directory your files are stored. If you delete these files the application will not run the next time you attempt to launch it. If you cannot open the file or if the file doesn't make any sense when opened - DO NOT DELETE IT.

Your department/division will be notified in advance before any upgrade takes place. But it doesn't hurt to start the Spring-Cleaning a bit early. Remember that you will be responsible for making sure that any and all data files that are on your PC are backed up. Better safe than sorry!

Moving Forward: GroupWise 5.5

In the second quarter (fiscal year), the GroupWise application will be upgraded to version 5.5. The upgrade will primarily provide enhanced efficiency of the electronic mail system (the back-end of the system) although there are some enhancements to the GroupWise application that will be beneficial to the user (the front-end of the system). Some of the new features in GroupWise 5.5 are Universal Mailboxes, Shared Folders,

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Conversation Threading, Item Conversion, GroupWise WorkFlow, and integration with the Internet.

As mentioned above, the primary reason for the upgrade is to enhance the efficiency of the GroupWise system. To enhance the efficiency of the GroupWise system, all documents and message attachments are compressed while they are stored and in transit. This compression optimizes “over-the-wire” performance and decreases disk storage requirements. With GroupWise 4.1 (the current version), the documents and message attachments are moved through the network and delivered from the sender’s post office to the recipient’s post office. With GroupWise 5.5, the files (documents and messages) stay in their original location and a pointer is sent to the recipient. The recipient can then open the mail message and view the document and message attachments by following the pointer back to the original location. This will significantly decrease the network bottleneck effect when sending messages with attachments to several people at the same time.

What does the upgrade mean for those of us using the GroupWise application? Well, first of all there are several issues that need to be discussed. As mentioned earlier, there is a back-end and front-end of each application. The back-end is what makes the system work - it works behind the scenes to ensure smooth operation. The front-end is what we see on our computer screen. It’s how the system looks to us when we launch it.

When the upgrade is completed, it will affect only the back-end of the system. We will not see any difference in the appearance of GroupWise until we are upgraded to the Windows NT operating system (discussed in the lead article in this newsletter). What we do need to be aware of is when the upgrade of GroupWise takes place we will lose **all** information in GroupWise (**except archived information stored on your local hard drive**). Unlike other software upgrades, there is no way to convert old data located in the In Box, Out Box, Trash, or Calendar into the new GroupWise 5.5 application. The **only** data that will be retrievable will be what is archived and stored on your local hard drive.

With this in mind, you will need to take several steps to ensure that you have all the data you need from the old version of GroupWise prior to the upgrade. All items in your In Box, Out Box, Trash, and Calendar will be lost. If you don’t want to lose the data you will need to save it or archive it. Information Technology recommends that you open each message in your In Box, Out Box, and Trash and either delete it, print it, archive it, or save it as a WordPerfect document. Instructions for saving your messages can be found in the Introduction to GroupWise 4.1 student manual which you received when taking the GroupWise class at Information Technology. Also, for your convenience, excerpts from the manual have been placed on the “O” drive, specifically, “o:\infotech\training\calendar.wpd”.

You will also need to print your GroupWise calendar prior to the conversion. This will give you a printed copy of the calendar so that you can recreate appointments, tasks, and notes in the new version of GroupWise. It is recommended that you look at several

versions of the GroupWise calendar prior to printing all future months that have items in them. A Monthly calendar type may work for some users but a Weekly calendar type may be better for others. This is dependent upon the amount of data you have in your calendar. If you have many items listed on your calendar you may want to choose a Year calendar type. This type looks similar to a monthly itinerary that lists appointments by date and time and any notes or tasks that appear on your calendar. If there is message text which has not been deleted, it will also be printed.

Please keep the upgrade in mind as you begin preparing your GroupWise calendar for 1999. You may want to hold off establishing too many appointments, tasks, and notes until the new version of GroupWise is installed. You might also choose to write down the names in personal groups (if you have established any) so that they can be recreated in GroupWise 5.5.

Information Technology will begin sending out weekly reminders through the Broadcast Message system several weeks prior to installation of GroupWise 5.5. As soon as a definite date is established Information Technology will broadcast the upgrade date. Please call the Software Help Desk at 858-8812 between 8:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. if you have questions about saving your messages or printing your GroupWise calendar.

BIF Files and Shared Code Errors in GroupWise and WordPerfect

by Matt Pawlowski

BIF files are responsible for much confusion and frustration in GroupWise and WordPerfect. Understanding how these files interact with GroupWise and WordPerfect will hopefully alleviate some of those mystifying quirks.

Oakland County is currently using Novell GroupWise version 4.1 and Novell WordPerfect version 6.1 (As of version 7, Novell no longer owns WordPerfect). These applications save preferences you make, such as the default directory or special toolbar buttons, in a shared file commonly known as the BIF (**B**inary **I**nformation **F**ile). Although both programs can share this information file, each program will also create its own preference file based on what applications are opened and the order in which they were opened.

If GroupWise or Notify (which is a part of GroupWise) is the first program that you start, the BIF file created by GroupWise will be opened. If you then open WordPerfect, WordPerfect will pull its preferences from the BIF file opened by GroupWise. If, however, you were to close Notify or GroupWise before going into WordPerfect, WordPerfect would open its own preference file. The same applies when opening the applications in the reverse order. It's also important to realize that a new GroupWise preference file is created for each person who logs in to the network on this PC. The most common solution to making sure you are consistently working with the same preference file is to launch Notify each morning.

The BIF file tends to be very susceptible to corruption due to network failures, improper computer shutdown (you must exit Windows BEFORE turning off the power) as well as other factors. When the BIF file becomes corrupted, GroupWise and WordPerfect are unable to read these preferences and display a 'Shared Code Error'. These errors seem to be limited to Windows 3.1 although they can occur in Windows 95.

The solution to a Shared Code Error caused by a corrupt BIF file is to delete the corrupted BIF file. When Windows is restarted, a new default BIF file will be automatically created. Any preferences will have to be recreated. Follow these steps to delete your BIF files:

Instructions are provided for Windows 3.1 (Windows 95 instructions are provided in parenthesis).

1. Close any open applications. *A BIF file can not be deleted or modified if it is in use by WordPerfect, GroupWise or Notify.*
2. Open **File Manager** which can be found in the Main group of your Program Manager (**Windows Explorer**).
3. Click **File...Search (Tools...Find...Files or Folders)**.
4. Type ***.bif** in Search For and **c:\windows** in Start From (type ***.bif** in Names and **c:\windows** in Look In).
5. Click **OK (Find Now)**. *You should be presented with a list of one or more files that end with *.bif.*
6. Select all files.
7. Press **[Delete]**. *Follow prompts to Delete all files selected.*
8. Exit **File Manager (Windows Explorer)**.
9. Select **File...Exit Windows (Start...Shut down...Shut down the computer...Yes)**.
10. Turn the PC off and back on.
11. You will be returned to the Network Login prompt.
12. Log into the network.

When starting GroupWise or Notify you will be prompted for the location of your Post Office. Enter **m:** and press **[Enter]**. GroupWise and WordPerfect should now start successfully with default preferences.

Once you have recreated your preferences, you can create a backup of your BIF file, so, if it becomes corrupted again, you can restore your preferences easily.

1. Using steps one through five above, locate your preference file.
2. Select the file.

Copy the file to a directory of your choice,

3. In Windows 3.1, select **File...Copy**. Type your directory (i.e., c:\wpdocs) in the To: field of the Copy dialog box. Select **OK**.

or

In Windows 95, select **Edit...Copy**. Select your directory in the Windows Explorer. Select **Edit...Paste**.

If your BIF file becomes corrupted again, once you have completed steps one through twelve above you can copy your backup BIF file to your c:\windows directory. You will receive a message stating a 'File already exists', select **Yes** to overwrite it.

Please contact the Software Help Desk at 858-8812 between 8:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. for any further information.

Procedure for Requesting Netscape Internet Accounts

The procedure for requesting Netscape Internet accounts (e-mail passwords to send/receive internet mail) has been changed. The GroupWise mailbox named NetAdmin will now be used to receive these requests. For security purposes, only requests from designated network contact persons will be processed. Department network contacts should submit their authorizations, via Novell GroupWise, to NetAdmin. Please do not send requests directly to the Information Technology Network Administration team or the Information Technology Help Desk. Questions regarding this procedure can be directed to Dave Veit at (248) 858-0830.