Computer holds vast amount of information

By Jim Pastorick
GAMECOCK Staff Writer

Although the IBM 370/168 in the USC computer center is one of the largest computers in the Southeast, it is actually an unimpressive looking piece of equipment.

"Most people expect to see a lot of dials and meters," Bill Reauba, director of systems engineering, said. "It's just a console where an operator can send and receive instructions and the rest of the room is just the machinery." It may look rather plain, but the 370/168 can hold vast amounts of information. Charles Poole, who is in charge of academic services at the computer center, said the whole computer system can store "about 100 billion bytes."

A byte is one character such as a single letter or number. "One billion of these is about equal to the information that can be stored on seven million pounds of computer punch cards," Poole said.

WITH THIS huge capacity to store information, the computer is able to maintain student records, payroll and accounting information, and property inventory records for all of the USC campuses and five other South Carolina colleges. "A lot of the computer time is used for this kind of work," Poole said.

The same computer is used for research by professors and students at USC, Poole said. "Our main use is academic support. There are so many individual projects going on that I couldn't begin to think of them all."

"Our resources are tightly controlled, but they are available for legitimate university business. Any professor or student can use the computer for academic purposes," he said.

Students and professors use the computer through terminals located in the Business Administration Building, the Physical Sciences Center and Gambrell Hall. Poole said.

Terminals in the Coliseum and Petigru connect the student records department to the computer.

POOLE SAID the computer can also be used to teach courses at USC. Elementary statistics is presently the only course taught through the computer, but several others are in the planning stages.

"The computer can give the text, ask questions and correct the student's answers," he said. "It's not meant to take the place of the professor, but rather to free him from the time consuming chores. The professor can check on the status of a student at any time and even review the answers the student gave the computer."

Academic services are provided free to members of the university. "Every department uses the computer in some way. It really seems to be catching on," Poole said.

The computer is also used by agencies outside of the university that are willing to pay for computer time. The bill and history status system, funded by the state, can be used by any South Carolina resident.

"THAT SYSTEM allows people to check on the status of bills in the legislature," Poole said. The computer is used to store up-to-date information about action in the legislature and operators at the legislative information center relay it to the caller.

Poole said the 370/168 is expensive, but worth the cost. "A machine this size is not cost effective unless you really use it," he said. "At this site it's really used."

Jessie C. Ham honored,
named librarian emerita

After 40 years of service, Miss Jessie C. Ham has been named librarian emerita by the University of South Carolina, according to an Information Services release.

Dr. Francis T. Borkowski, who will become USC provost August 15, present Miss Ham the award June 15 at a reception honoring her on her retirement.

"Her services will be greatly missed," said Dr. Ken Toombs, director of USC libraries. "She has been one of the outstanding librarians at the university for years and has been a leader in state and regional library affairs.

MISS HAM, a Mullins native, came to USC in 1938 and served as a library cataloguer. She moved with the university's collections through three different library buildings.

Beginning her career at the South Caroliniana library, which then housed all the university's volumes, Miss Ham moved with the books to the J. Hion McKissick library in 1942.

She worked from 1938 until 1952 re-cataloguing the entire collection under a new system. During this time she was named head of the Cataloguing Department, a post she held until 1970.

At that time, the USC collections moved again, to Thomas Cooper Library, and another re-cataloguing was begun.

"DR. TOOMBS said it was too much to ask of anyone to re-catalogue those books twice in one lifetime," Ham said. Instead, she returned to South Caroliniana as special assistant to the library director for special cataloguing projects.

Since returning to Caroliniana, she has annually published in 'South Carolina Librarian,' a bibliography of new publications in the library.

Miss Ham earned her undergraduate degree at Randolph Macdon Women's College and studied library science at George Peabody College for Teachers.

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