

IBM Personal Computer Lab Showcased

By Dominic Dottavio

For the past two years the NPS Southeast Region has been developing microcomputer capabilities throughout the parks of the region. These efforts have resulted in a network of over 50 IBM Personal Computers (PC). Concurrent with this effort, the College of Forest and Recreation Resources at Clemson University has been engaged in a program to upgrade the management of natural areas through a regional information/communication network. The University's program received major impetus through the location of an NPS Cooperative Park Studies Unit (CPSU) in the College. One of its missions is to assist in developing the regional NPS computer system. The College viewed the National Park Service's developing network as a model that should be emulated by other federal and state land management agencies.

As both programs developed, it became clear that the capabilities of the technologies were outstripping the capabilities of the users to make full and creative use of the systems. Both organizations were concerned that the personal computer network would fall short of its promise due to human constraints.

To address this problem, the College of Forest and Recreation Resources and the Clemson CPSU approached International Business Machines, Inc. (IBM) seeking the company's cooperation and partnership in developing a training laboratory featuring the IBM Personal Computer. In September, 1983, IBM responded favorably to the request.

The proposed laboratory will be located on the Clemson University campus adjacent to the CPSU and will provide network links to the NPS system. The laboratory will be wired to accommodate PC to PC communication, PC to main frame (the Clemson IBM 3081) communication, and stand-alone PC capabilities.

IBM is viewing the lab as a showpiece on networking possibilities and is therefore considering installation of the most advanced communication systems available for the Personal Computer.

Equipment for the laboratory will include 19 IBM Personal Computers, with a least one of each model type being represented; printers, instructional projection monitors, modems, and a variety of application software. In total, the grant from IBM is expected to approach one-quarter million dollars.

This facility is being viewed not only as a showpiece for displaying sophisticated equipment, but also as a model of federal, state, and private sector cooperation and partnership. The combination of the resources and talents of the three organizations has resulted in a mutually beneficial, cost-effective means of meeting the needs of each organization.

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