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Connecting to the Internet from Home: What Type of Modem Should You Get?

Over the past few years, Microcomputer Services consultants have heard from many users who have problems connecting to the Internet from home. Occasionally, these problems are directly related to the type of modem being used. Here are some guidelines for choosing a modem that will work best for you.

You Get What You Pay For

In today's market, the less you pay for a modem, the less you are getting. Cheaper modems cost less because they often lack essential components that allow them to work correctly with many of the remote access software packages that are used to connect to the Internet.

External vs. Internal Modems

If you own a newer model PC (486 or higher) with a high-speed serial port, it is almost always better to purchase an external modem rather than an internal one, for a number of reasons. The internal models of some modems may lack useful features for connections. With external modems, there are no potential serial port conflicts and no installation hassles. You can easily determine connection status (by checking the status lights), adjust speaker volume, and shut the modem off. You don't need to worry about configuring jumpers, and you can use an external modem on more than one machine.

How do you know if you have a high-speed serial port?

Windows 3.1 Users - To find out if you have a high-speed serial port...

1. Exit *Windows* and return to the DOS prompt.
2. Type **msd** (for Microsoft Diagnostics) at the DOS prompt and press Enter.
3. Press **c** to view information on your COM (Communication, or serial) ports.
4. Look at the last line of information labeled "UART Chip Used."

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WATCH FOR VMSCLUSTER UPGRADE!

During the month of June, the Computing Center will be replacing a number of older controllers and disks on the VMScluster with new equipment. *This upgrade involves the movement of all user directories.* There are two consequences of this move that users need to anticipate:

1. Watch for system notices giving the dates and times of the upgrades. All physical unit numbers will change during the upgrade, so be sure you do not leave

VMScluster batch and print jobs queued during the scheduled upgrade time. Jobs left in the queue will not be able to run, and will have to be re-queued after the upgrade.

2. If you've written your own DCL procedures or programs that refer to your home directories using the format **DISK\$USERn:[username]**, the scripts may or may not work after the upgrade. You can avoid this problem by modifying your **LOGIN.COM** file to define a logical name that points to the

home directory, then using the logical name instead of a specific volume name. You can see an example of this technique in the sample **LOGIN.COM** file, **SYSSYSTEM:SAMPLE_LOGIN.COM**

As soon as the arrival date of the new equipment is known, the Computing Center systems staff will provide an exact schedule for the upgrade online in **SYS-STATUS** and **NOTICE**. If you have questions or concerns about the coming changes, contact a consultant at consult@oregon.uoregon.edu

...What Modem? (continued)

5. If you see "16550xx" (with xx being any two letters) under COM1 and COM2, you have a high-speed serial port and can use an external, high-speed (14.4 Kb or higher) modem.

Windows 95 Users - To find out if you have a high-speed serial port...

1. Go to the Start menu.
2. Choose "Settings," then open your Control Panels.
3. Double-click the Modem Control Panel.
4. Click the Diagnostics tab.
5. Highlight COM1 or COM2 and click the "More Info..." button.
6. Wait for a moment. (If there is no modem connected to this port, you'll get an error message about the modem failing to respond. Ignore the message and click "OK").
7. Look at the "Port Information" box and the line that reads "UART:". If this line contains the string "16550," you have a high-speed serial port.

What if you don't have a high-speed serial port?

If you don't have a high-speed serial port, read the handout titled, "Serial Port Issues on the PC and Remote Access Software," available in the Microcomputer Support Center (Room 202A Computing Center). This handout is also available online at http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~mcshtml/net_access/sprt.html

Why should you buy a high-speed modem?

If you plan to use network applications like *Netscape*, or any other graphical Web browser, a 28.8 Kb modem is strongly recommended. Web software runs best with higher-speed network connections.

Need more help?

Modem models change constantly, and quality varies. Choosing a modem that will work with your machine can be complicated. If you have technical questions about purchasing a modem, contact the consultants in the Microcomputer Support Center (Room 202A Computing Center; e-mail: microhelp@oregon.uoregon.edu; phone: 346-4412). Office hours are Monday to Friday, 9 am - 5 pm.

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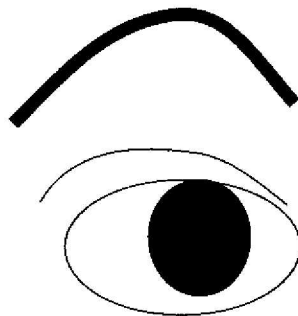
3480

Tape Drive Goes...

Low usage and high maintenance costs have contributed to the decision to phase out the VMScluster's 3480 magnetic tape drive on June 15. Anyone currently storing data on 3480 tapes is urged to copy it to 8mm cartridges before the deadline date.

The VMScluster will retain its 9-track and 8 millimeter tape drives. Users who are renting tapes for the 3480 will need to replace them with 8mm cartridges. Those who own their own tapes will receive trade-in value toward the purchase of 8mm cartridges.

If you have questions or concerns about the departure of the 3480 drive, contact Rick Millhollin (e-mail: rickm@oregon.uoregon.edu; phone: 346-1730).



Watch Out for These Common Modem Problems!

Here are some common problems experienced by UO modem users:

- The SupraExpress modem does not work reliably with *any* portable Macintosh computer! While these modems run without a separate power plug and cost less, portable Macs can't reliably supply enough power to make the modem work. *In some cases, using this modem can ruin your Mac's logic board.*
- Not all SupraExpress modems are labeled with the SupraExpress brand name! If you're looking for a modem to use with a portable Macintosh, don't buy an external modem that uses the keyboard port for power and does not have a power cord—it could be a SupraExpress.
- If you're interested in buying a Megahertz PCMCIA modem for your PC or Mac, *avoid* PC models **XJ2288** and **CC3288** and the Macintosh CruiseCard modem **XJA 288** (or **XJA2288**). These modems do *not* work with the UO's largest modem pool (346-6520). Note that the new XJA 3288 modem should work with a Mac, and any of the newer Megahertz modems that contain a cellular phone jack should work with a PC.

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Adaptive Technology Lab Makes Computing World Accessible to All

In recent years, computer technology has become increasingly important to academic life, indispensable for teaching, learning, and research. More and more people want—and need—access to the World Wide Web and other Internet resources, which dazzle the senses with color, movement, and sound.

But what use is all this if, for example, you are blind? Or, how could you access this exciting new world of information—or even register for classes online—if cerebral palsy

interfered with your mastery of a computer keyboard?

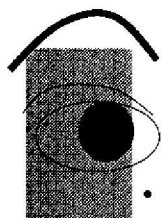
Fortunately, there *are* solutions to what might seem like insurmountable difficulties. “Adaptive technology” has created hardware and software solutions for people with disabilities: screen enlargers, braille printers, devices that read screen text aloud or report it in braille, special mouse adapters, speech synthesizers and “word prediction” programs for those with impaired motor capacity—all make the world of computing more universally accessible, and all are available in the UO’s own Adaptive Technology Lab.

The Adaptive Technology Lab is located on the first floor of the Knight Library in Rooms 138 and 139, and is managed by James Bailey, the UO’s Adaptive Technology Advisor. The lab features accessible machines on both Macintosh and PC platforms, a braille printer, an “Open Book” scanner which functions like a “talking Xerox machine,” and a Kurzweil Personal Reader. Lab facilities are available to qualified UO students, who are referred to the lab by Hilary Gerdes, the Academic Advising and Student Services counselor for students with disabilities (164 Oregon Hall, 346-3211).

The lab also functions as a resource for UO faculty and computer lab managers, with the goal of eventually integrating adaptive technology into mainstream computer labs and classrooms.

Currently, about 15 students use the lab, nine of whom are regular users. The lab exists primarily as a training facility to help students master the adaptive technologies. All training is one-on-one, and students who are already proficient in the use of adaptive technologies often assist in the training. The lab is kept locked at all times for safety and security, but students trained in the use of the equipment are given permission to obtain lab keys, and may use the facilities any time the library is open.

Students wishing to use the lab, those who need training to use the equipment, or anyone interested in touring the facility should contact James Bailey at 346-1076. For detailed information about the lab, see <http://www.vms.uoregon.edu/~atl/access.html>



Modem Problems (continued)...

- If you have a portable computer that uses an XJACK connector and you’re considering buying a PCMCIA (or “PC Card”) modem for it, be aware that this modem may be a Megahertz XJ2288 or CC3288 in disguise! Always look carefully at the fine print of the modem you are purchasing to see if it is labeled XJ2288 or CC3288, or some substring thereof. For a detailed discussion of this issue, see the online document at <http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~mcshtml/bug/megahertz.html>
- If you’re interested in purchasing a notebook computer with a trackball, make sure the trackball is not using one of the machine’s COM ports. If it is, and you plan to use a PCMCIA modem to connect to the Internet, you are likely to have problems. In particular, the **Cannon Inova 150** series has been problematic.

Modem Tips

- U.S. Robotics Sportster, Supra FaxModem, and Hayes Courier modems have proven performance records and are known to work well with all UO modem pools.
- When you purchase a modem, be sure it comes with a manual documenting its features and internal command set. If for some reason your modem doesn’t connect using standard configurations for Internet access software, the manual will help you troubleshoot the problem.
- Read the handouts titled “Serial Port Issues on the PC and Remote Access Software” and “Detailed Report on Problems with the Megahertz.” The serial port handout is available in the Microcomputer Support Center (202A). Both handouts may be found online at

http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~mcshtml/net_access/sprt.html and
<http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~mcshtml/bug/megahertz.html>

Note: For a more complete version of this article and the “Connecting from Home” article in this issue, see

http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~mcshtml/net_access/modems.html

Make an Offer, Get a Deal! Microcomputer Purchase Program's Silent Auction Begins

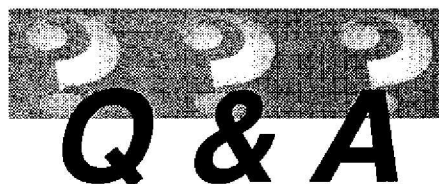
Spring-cleaning fever has hit the Microcomputer Purchase Program! Effective immediately, UO students, faculty, staff, and departments have the opportunity to bid on a range of new and used equipment in a silent auction.

Bids will be accepted until 5pm Tuesday, May 21, in the Support Center. If you prefer to bid online, send your bid via e-mail to Eileen Lahey (elahey@oregon.uoregon.edu). Here's what's slated for the auction block:

Quantity	Description	New/Used	Min. Bid
1	Apple ImageWriterII*	Used	\$ 50
1	Apple PowerBook Duo Express Modem 14.4	New	75
2	Apple StyleWriter 1200	Used	100
1	Apple Tape Backup 40SC*	Used	25
2	AppleCD 300i for Centris 610/660	New	75
1	AppleCD 300iPlus for Quadra/Performa 63X	New	75
1	Apple Color Plus 14" Display	New	offer
1	AppleDesign Keyboard	New	offer
1	HP DeskJet 310 w/Feeder	Used	100
1	HP DeskJet 320 w/Feeder	New	150
1	HP DeskJet 500	Used	75
1	HP DeskJet 500c	Used	100
3	HP DeskJet 540	New	175
1	HP DeskWriter 320 w/Feeder	Used	100
2	HP DeskWriter 600	Used	100
2	HP LaserJet 4L	New	300
2	HP ScanJet IICx-Windows	New	350
1	MacDirect Tape Backup*	Used	25
1	Plastic Printer Stand-Smoke	Used	offer
1	Proxima Data Display Multimode*	Used	200
1	Quicken v3.0 Windows	New	offer
5	SAM v.3.5	New	offer
1	USRobotics Sportster 14.4 Ext. Modem-Mac	Used	70

* UO departments only

More questions about the auction? Call 346-4402 or e-mail mpp@oregon.uoregon.edu



Q: I use a Global Village Platinum 28.8 modem and I dial in via InterPPP. Are V.42bis or any other correction/compression settings supported?

A: If you have an external (Teleport) modem, both hardware error correction and V.42bis are supported. To turn on V.42bis, check the V.42bis box in the Teleport Control Panel.

If you have the internal (PowerPoint) version of this modem, there is no Control Panel with this feature.

Otherwise, the correction and compression routines are largely dependent on what dial-in software you're running.

Quick Tip: Looking for answers to microcomputer-related questions, including connecting to the Internet? Try the new USENET newsgroup uo.org.cc.microhelp



Computing News is published twice a term during the academic year by the Documentation Services staff of the Office of University Computing, 1212 University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97403-1212. You may reprint articles from *Computing News*, provided you credit the source.

Telephone: (541) 346-1724

URL: <http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~cchome/documentation/cnews9.html>

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COMPUTING NEWS SURVEY RESULTS.

In the last issue, we asked readers to register their degree of interest in having a World Wide Web version of *Computing News*. The proposed newsletter site would provide readers with the opportunity to search for information by article title or topic, issue e-mail queries, and access a library of newsletter archives, among other interactive options. Here's what you told us:

- Out of a total of 88 respondents, more than half were unequivocally in favor of an online *Computing News*.
- Twelve percent of respondents expressed concerns about losing the printed version

of *Computing News* and, while they were not opposed to a Web newsletter, wanted the option of a hard copy too.

- Of those voting "yes," several asked to have the newsletter e-mailed directly to them, or wanted e-mail notification when a new issue came online.

Thanks to all who responded. As always, we will take your needs into account. For the foreseeable future, we'll continue to publish both printed and Web versions of *Computing News*. In the coming months, we'll strive to improve our Web site and add more interactive features to the newsletter.