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## Registration Blues



### Time has come for computer registration system

By Denise Clifton  
Emerald Associate Editor

College life is often labeled as too stressful. Some students stay up all night desperately cramming for mid-terms or frantically writing a paper.

Others juggle homework with jobs and a social life until they end up at the health center with mono or strep throat. This is all considered part of life by most students.

But at the University, you can forget about homework, term papers and all-nighters; the most stressful part of the term is before it even starts — registration.

It's a hectic, tedious and nerve-wracking process. Most University students have horror stories of hours spent sprinting across McArthur Court through crowds just to stand in line for half an hour and end up at the bottom of an endless waiting list for a required class offered only once a year. They complain about trying to reorganize their schedule from the "leftovers" after four out of five classes they need are closed.

And after they've completed the stress of registering, students have to run the gauntlet of people pushing pamphlets outside Mac Court.

Many students simply give up on getting their classes during the registration process. Instead, they get the classes they can and try to complete their schedules through the add/drop process.

Last week, more than 18,000 University students grew gray hairs and developed ulcers scrambling through this

process of arena scheduling registration, as have a generation of students before them.

But is this necessary? Administrators have been talking about a computer-assisted registration system at the University since 1967, as indicated by an *Oregon Daily Emerald* article from February 28, 1967 which promised computerized registration "by fall term, 1968."

More recently, the Oregon State System of Higher Education ordered all state schools *not* to update their registration systems between 1985 and 1988 so the state board could search for a combined computerized registration and student information system for the entire state system.

However, only the University and Oregon Health Sciences University already do not have some sort of computerized registration process.

Because past efforts have failed to modernize the University's archaic system, 1989 marks the 20th year Oregon's primary research institution has registered students through arena scheduling.

Although arena scheduling was not considered out-of-date in the 1960s, other universities already were discovering how to use computers to make registration more efficient and effective for students, faculty and administrators.

#### OSU More Advanced

The first computer-assisted registration programs began appearing on college campuses in the late 1960s, and the third such program in the United States was adopted at Oregon State University.

Developed by on-campus computer programmers and patterned after pioneer programs at Purdue University and Washington State University, OSU opened its revolutionary system to students in fall, 1969.

To register, students simply listed course requests on optical scanning forms. After the forms were reviewed by the computer, deans and department heads received a list of courses demanded by the students. They made all possible adjustments in the number of course offerings, and then the computer assigned schedules. Four days after turning in their requests, students picked up their completed schedules and paid their fees.

This computer-assisted registration process is still used at OSU in addition to many other Oregon state schools and, according to OSU Registrar Russell Dix, the system only requires about 20 minutes of each student's time. It has also been much more efficient than the arena scheduling process OSU used to register students before 1969.

"This system responds to actual demonstrated demand, while in an arena system, you're not flexible to add or subtract classes as needed," Dix said.

"Also, in an arena system, you never know exactly how many students wanted a certain class because they are just turned away from a registration table while we can plan future terms from past demand.

"(The University's) is really a reservations system — when the plane is full ... there's no more room," he said. "We like to call ours a railroad system where

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### Oregon passes on system used across Pac-10

By Dan Eisler  
Emerald Reporter

When the University joined Portland State University in selecting Systems and Computer Technology Corp. (SCT) in February to provide a student information and computer registration system, the firm was the only one to meet all system requirements, said University Registrar Herb Chereck.

"We as an institution were very interested and desired a system that utilized a relational database," he said, adding that of the firms that applied, only SCT carried relational databases.

A relational database consists of two or more data files and an index file to list key relations between them, and provides more flexibility in managing data. In other processes and systems, the data and indices have to be hard-coded in a computer language.

However, rival software company Information Associates Inc. (IA) also carries relational databases, according to IA's solutions manager Pat Coyle, and the University "didn't even give us a second look."

IA is the larger of the two firms.

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