

DOLLARS AND SENSE

COLUMN

900 Numbers: Scourge of Our Society?

By Michael Ollie Clayton
■ Sagebrush
U. of Nevada, Reno

In what ranks as the vilest, most crass misuse of the information age, we find ourselves overtaken by a new math. Currently, the difference between 8 and 9 is \$2.45, plus 45 cents for every minute thereafter.

1-800 numbers are free.

1-900 numbers aren't.

The 1-900 phenomenon is typically American. It is aimed at duping dollars out of the young, the ignorant and the millions of glazed-eyed groupies across the heartland. Innocent sheep are being led to the slaughterhouse by advertising executives across the world.

Of course we can't forget about the telephone company, as they obviously participate in this information-age phenomenon — all via some interlocking board of directorate. (Paranoid? Perhaps, but at least I know the difference between a man and a machine.)

Many of the stars and idols in the music, television and film industry are now at one's fingertips (literally). You can now call virtually any star and have he, she or it talk to you anytime, day or night. And the "stars" do talk, though not "to" you, but "at" you.

After they get you hooked, they add a little spice in order to keep your fingers dialing. The 1-900 menu is long and varied. A few such examples of what's being offered are: "STREET TALK" — you'd do better going to the movies or watching the evening news; Jeanne Dixon's "STAR GAZING!" — the same Jeanne D. who has an accountant, tax lawyer and financial planner predicting her (fortune) future; and "SECRETS" — you can hear the most intimate secrets: Jill is pregnant, Jack is gay, Mary had a little half-human lamb.

I'd like to get in on this one. I'm a greedy pig too! Imagine the glory, the fame, the cash flow, if I were to start a number: 1-900-CLAYTON!

What would my earth-shattering message be? Well, I'd ramble on for a "few" minutes about the environment, getting an education, investing in IRAs, wearing condoms, the golden rule, peace, etc. Then, I'd kindly turn the floor over to you.

BOOK REVIEW

Transfer Tactics

Two students from Brown U. co-authored a book to help students make an easy transition to a new school.

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HAVING TROUBLE?
ALL YOU
HAVE TO
DO IS
CALL

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Agonizing About Accounting

1-800-727-PAUL

Is first year calculus or accounting giving you trouble? Who ya gonna call? Curt DeBerg, an associate professor at California State U., Chico, says he hopes students call to find out about his two new study tapes: "How to Pass Calculus" and "How to Pass Principles of Accounting I." Developed by DeBerg and associate Paul Ramgopal, the two audio tapes present the often difficult topics in a conversational format. This is accomplished by the help of two fictional characters, Arnie Asset and Lola Liability, who take a tour of the financial accounting world and encounter real-life situations. "It's something kind of cute and kind of corny, but enough to break up the monotony," DeBerg said. "We have found a way to make it fun so that it isn't distracting to the content of what I'm trying to convey." The study tapes, which sell for \$34.95, come with four 60-minute cassettes and a comprehensive study booklet.

■ Radley Kanda, *Ka Leo O Hawaii*, U. of Hawaii, and Andrew Faught, *State Press*, Arizona State U.

Computing Made Clear

1-415-841-7376

Like many computer users, U. of California, Berkeley, junior Helmut Kobler was put off by the complex manuals that made computer operation about as clear as mud. "Campus Computing: How to Use Computers to Study Smarter, Earn Cash, and Even Improve Your Social Life," a 224-page book, is 21-year-old Kobler's answer to the frustrations of many students who attempt to work with computers.

Kobler, a his-



tory major, wrote, designed and published the book on his Apple Macintosh computer within a year. The result of his work is a book that sells for \$8.95 and reveals the capabilities of computers, locations where they can be purchased, listings of jobs that require computer skills, features of different brands, and almost anything else college students might want to know.

"There's more to computers than spell-checking English papers," Kobler said, adding that he hopes his book will encourage students to experiment with the various computer functions. Most students probably don't realize that they can send letters all over the country through electronic mail or reply to the opinions of students in a selection of colleges on a variety of controversial subjects. Kobler assures that the book is not a technical manual for computer science majors, but for inexperienced or occasional users.

■ Michelle Lin, *The Daily Californian*, U. of California, Berkeley

Term Paper Blues

1-800-THE SYS-7

Michael Adams, a junior at Washington and Lee U. in Lexington, Va., has written a program that could be a boon to many college students, especially when term papers are due. The program, *Thesys*, sells for \$29.95 and works in conjunction with Wordperfect 5.0 on IBM personal computers.

"The program basically takes care of all the term paper needs college students have," Adams said. Among other functions, it uses such style manuals as the Modern Language Association to punctuate and alphabetize bibliographies when provided with pertinent facts.

But perhaps the program's most appealing feature, says its creator, is its ability to expand or reduce a document by up to 25 percent. A 10-page paper, for example, can be made into a 12-page paper with no noticeable difference.

The program also has keyboards that accommodate French, German, Spanish and Italian language characters, as well as keyboards with math and science symbols.

Adams said, "It takes the whole headache out of writing papers during that last-minute crunch."

■ Eric Adams, *The Diamondback*, U. of Maryland, College Park

Participle Problems

1-205-844-5749

Comma confusion? Participle problems? Auburn U.'s composition hotline is just a phone call away for students with questions about their writing. The number, which has been in operation for two years, handles 80 to 90 calls each quarter, said director Peter Huggins. "Many of our questions concern the use of quotations, subject-verb agreement, documentation, and even resume and letter formats," he said. The hotline is one in a network of related hotlines coordinated by Tidewater Community College in Virginia Beach, Va. Auburn receives calls nationwide from troubled writers, Huggins said. "The hotline is helpful because of its convenience," Huggins said. "People can get a quick, clear answer immediately."

■ Alison Appich, *The Auburn Plainsman*, Auburn U.

Making the Grade

1-800-932-2323

Where there's a will, there's an A. The video tape by this name was created by Claude Olney, an Arizona State U. professor, when both of his sons were not admitted to college because of poor grades and test scores. He then developed a study program that eventually helped his sons get into college, and turned it into a video tape program available to students nationwide. Topics covered in the three-hour video include suggestions for making top grades, taking tests, learning better writing skills, developing and using memory skills, improving study habits and taking notes.

Some colleges have started using the videos and have held special viewings of Olney's tapes close to test dates. At Tarrant County Junior College in Texas, the response has been favorable, said Robert Young, director of special services. "I thought the video would be a good way to reach a large population of students who need to improve their test-taking and study skills, but didn't have time to go by the special services office to get that help." Cost is \$89.85 for the video and \$59.85 for a cassette.

■ Lisa Warner, *The Collegian*, Tarrant County Junior College