Technology Improvements at NCC in the 1990s

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Introduction

Many improvements to the technology infrastructure of North Central College's campus were made between 1990 and 1999, paralleling a time in which the world was seeing a proliferation in technological innovation. These years offer the richest discussion of the impact of new technology on campus because a major plan to upgrade campus technology was implemented in the middle of the decade. Through this major plan and other smaller improvements made throughout the decade, it is evident that NCC valued the opportunities that technology offered to students, faculty, and staff. Included is a table showing the years in which donations were made to the college to support the upgrades, demonstrating the wider interest in technology during this decade and the importance of staying current. AT&T and Microsoft were the major corporations that contributed to these upgrades through donations and university-focused grants. The installation of new computers and software upgrades are some ways in which the donations were used. Students were excited to take advantage of computers for both academic and personal use, though sometimes impatient in waiting for their turn. They often voiced their opinions through *The NCC Chronicle*.
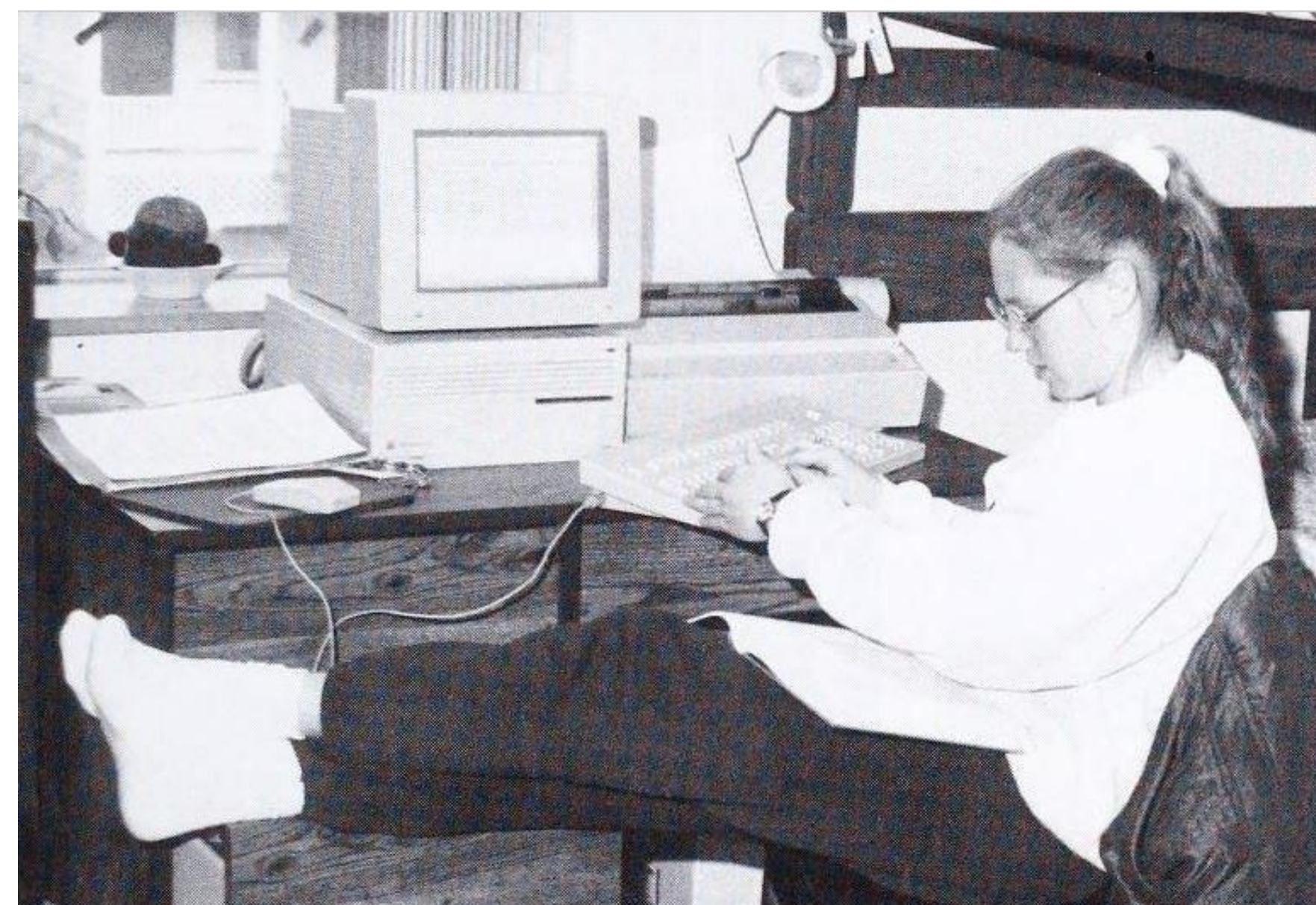
Staying Current or Struggling to Keep Up?

NCC was able to stay current with the technological innovations of the 1990s. The college remained competitive with other small schools.
By 1994, email was being used on campus, although it was not the primary method of communication. Classes about how to use the internet were offered throughout the 1990s. A librarian emphasized that "learning to use the internet is 'vital.'" In 1995, Juliet Oeffinger, Computer Support Coordinator (and later the Director of Technology Support Services), concluded that NCC was keeping reasonably up to date with new technology.

Source: *Spectrum*, 1996, pg. 5.

Computer Availability on Campus

Students often found themselves without access to computers because there were not enough for many of them to use at the same time. In 1991, a student noted that it would be faster to type their papers on a typewriters because the computer labs are constantly full. To combat this issue, many students brought their own computers to campus. The image below shows an NCC student with a computer in their dorm room.

Source: *Spectrum*, 1997, pg. 147.

Into the 21st Century: The 1995 NCC Technology Plan

In 1995, NCC launched an initiative to upgrade the technology on campus. The college invested $4 million into the installation of fiber optic cables that would link each building, allowing students, faculty, and staff to connect through the computer and phone networks. The technology plan also included the addition of cable television and phones into all residence hall rooms, and computer access for all students. The upgrade was essential to allowing NCC to remain competitive with other small colleges. Mary Desler, Vice President for Enrollment Management and Student Affairs, said of the initiative, "If we don't make this step into the future, we are going to be totally left behind." The image to the left shows an NCC student using a computer in 1996, after many upgrades defined by the 1995 NCC Technology plan were implemented.

Year	Type of Upgrade	Donor	Donation Value (in dollars)
1984	Computer network	AT&T	225,000
1991	18 Computers	AT&T	109,000
1997	Oesterle Library Computer Lab	Class of 1997	Unknown
1997	Computer software, Network expansion	Microsoft	47,847

Sample Bibliography

The NCC Chronicle, 1990-1999, Retrieved from North Central College Archives, library.noctrl.edu/archives.

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