

E1-26: IT Awareness via 24-hour student computer lounges

Dharshana Athukorala, Kirithi Premadasa
(*University of Colombo, Colombo 3*)

This paper describes the technical and administrative mechanisms needed for the smooth establishment of Student Computer Lounges in Academic Institutions. Such Lounges are absolutely necessary for today's academic institutions, to create Computer Awareness and thus enhance employment opportunities and academic skills of students.

The suggested plan is a network of PCs with one PC acting as a server (with Windows NT server in it) and the others acting as workstations. An equation to estimate the number of machines is given with variables being the financial strength, the needs and the population of the institution. Internet connectivity is provided to the network via either a subnet or a proxy server. Each student is given an account with a disk quota (which is automatically monitored and automated warnings and suspensions made if exceeded). Each student can get an e-mail account from a free e-mail provider on the net. A team of Computer savvy students takes turns in administering the network to a strict set of rules. Training sessions can be conducted by students themselves. Visual Basic programmes can be coupled with NT command lines to create utilities, which will schedule time slots and stop unauthorized logins. Popular applications, Internet and educational software and popular compilers are installed in the network (both in server and in workstations to prevent server dependency) giving students a comprehensive exposure to all areas of computing.

One such student lounge (operating around the clock) is already operating successfully at the University of Colombo.