Computer to speed up OSU check writing

By Carl Gyarmaty
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The OSU Accounts Payable Department will begin using a new $170,000 mini-computer keyboard system Monday to conduct business.

The Ampex computer will replace a manual system of check printing in which three people typed checks eight hours a day, five days a week, and printed 150,000 checks a year, said Chuck Long, the department's manager.

Speed is the main advantage of the computer, which can print 650 checks in a half-hour, whereas the manual system needs a day to type that amount, said Pete Hagan, the department's senior accountant.

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Under the manual system, cash discounts and travel orders were given priority printing and mailing dates while individual invoices were processed when time could be found to do them, Long said.

The computer system also uses priority payments, but it will print checks on demand based on the terms of the invoice, Long said.

For example, if an invoice states that it is payable under terms of 15 days, the computer will write the check within that time period.

Checks probably will be printed every three days unless the office is swamped with payments and must make them each day, Hagan said. The computer can pay up to 26 invoices on one check.

At the end of the day, the mini-computer feeds its information to a main computer at University Systems for storage and information distribution to campus offices, Long said.

Another function of the computer is to keep a six-month history of the university's bills for quick information. After six months, the information will be purged to permanent storage on tape discs, Hagan said.

The computer has several built-in precautions. One must know certain passwords to print a check on the computer, and only a select few employees know them. This reduces the possibility of people writing unauthorized checks, he said.

Another precaution is a backup information storage system on five discs that can be used if a power failure paralyzes the computer.

Other functions of the computer include record keeping for the Internal Revenue Service and storing a list of vendors OSU deals with.

The computer can show invoices that will need to be paid within a month, Hagan said, and show if amounts of over $1,000 are due in a short time period.

The computer has a list of invoices over 30 days old that can be checked to see why they have not been paid.

"All the problems have been ironed out and we have put mock information in the computer to familiarize our people with it," Hagan said.