In Fall 1991 a computer laboratory was used for the first time at Wright State. Twenty students in a section of Calculus I worked in pairs on ten computers.

1. What was “special” about this section of Calculus I?

A. It was an Honors section of Calculus I. For many years the department taught Honors sections of Calculus I, II and III each year. This fall an Honors section of Calculus (II) will be taught for the first time since 2005.

2. What computers were used in the first calculus lab?

A. Ten Macintosh IIci computers were purchased by Dean Marc Low for this purpose. They were powered by 25 mhz (!) 68030 processors.

3. Where was the first calculus lab located?

A. In a room on the second floor that was pretty much where the graduate student office (244MM) is today. This area was remodeled and some walls may have been moved so it is hard to be precise.

4. What funding was obtained for the creation of a calculus lab?


5. Which nearby university had a Mathematica-based calculus lab before Wright State?

A. Bill Davis of Ohio State was part of the earliest Mathematica-based calculus laboratory project, together with Jerry Uhl and Horatio Porta of University of Illinois. Their project began somewhat before the public release of Mathematica in 1988. Of course only a small fraction of calculus courses offered at these universities have used Mathematica.

6. What happened on a trip to this nearby Mathematica-based lab that had a major impact on planning for WSU’s lab?

A. In 1991 I visited the OSU lab along with four students while preparing a grant proposal. There was no lab class in session for us to observe, so I set the four students down to work at the Next computers where the materials were available. Two of the students chose to work alone, and the other two (Greg Bothe and Tina Schlarman) worked together. Greg and Tina accomplished far more than the two working alone, which convinced me that we should design the lab for working in pairs.

7. Which current member(s) of Mathematics and Statistics has(have) worked as calculus lab assistant(s)?
LAB TRIVIA ANSWERS

A. Ray Otto was the first lab assistant in 1991; he was a graduate student at the time. Lisa Wellinghoff (Lisa Drummond at the time) also was a lab assistant as a graduate student.

8. On two occasions calculus labs contained computers that were neither Macintoshes nor PCs. What were they?

A. In 1992, 20 Next color workstations were purchased using NSF grant money. These computers were used in the calculus lab for 4-5 years, first in room 160 and then in 270 after the building addition was completed. At some point in the mid-90’s Macintosh clones manufactured by Power Computing were used in 170. According to Wikipedia, Power Computing was the first company to sell $1M of products on the internet.

9. Who was the only person other than myself (RM) to write notebooks that were used in the calculus lab?

A. Manley Perkel wrote the original versions of labs 11 (Limits and Derivatives), 12 (Limits and Infinity), and 23 (Advanced Graphing – not currently in use).

10. True or False:

(a) The calculus lab had an ethernet network before department faculty did.

(b) The calculus lab once had a color printer.

(c) The calculus lab once created and maintained its own student accounts.

(d) Mathematica did not support structured mathematical notation until 1996.

(e) There have been nearly 150 lab assistants, one of which became a noted Hollywood actor/actress.

A. All these statements are true, except the part about the Hollywood actor/actress, which was a pathetic lie. But there was one that was a Dance/Math dual major!

The Next computers were Unix workstations and so were designed to run on an ethernet network. I went to a week-long training session to learn how to set up and manage such a local network. The lab network was not connected to the internet but it did have individual accounts for students, email to other students with lab accounts, and a color printer. Few faculty outside CECS at this time had ethernet connections. (The Next on my desktop did. It was cool! I had email and access to the internet in 1992, even before the web!)

You can still see in room 270MM at the top of the bulletin boards instruction sheets regarding the use of delimiters in Mathematica that were printed on the Next Color Printer; they also show the linear, calculator-like notation used in Mathematica at that time. The creation of student accounts on our own server continued for several years on Macintoshes until CaTS finally(!) provided Novell-based accounts for students.