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While there has been an interest in campus-wide information systems and videotext applications at the University of Pennsylvania for quite some time, it was in the Summer of 1991 that the University's Department of Data Communications and Computing Services (DCCS) led a formal campus-wide effort to determine the best approach for implementing a campus-wide information system (CWIS) for Penn. After evaluating three systems as well as local development, MIT's TechInfo CWIS was chosen. TechInfo was customized for the Penn environment to create PennInfo, which runs on a dedicated 24 MIP DECstation 5000/200 with two (RZ57) 1.3 gigabyte disk drives under Ultrix v4.2. A critically important feature of the system design is its client/server architecture. This client/server architecture enables Penn to distribute the responsibility for posting information on the system, and it reduces the potential for performance bottlenecks by utilizing the computing power of end-users' desktop workstations.

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Editor-in-Chief

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University of Houston
Houston, TX 77204-2091
(713) 743-9804
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