1-2003

ACUTA eNews January 2003, Vol. 32, No. 1

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Priorities for 2003

As you prepare for the start of another calendar year, what are your top priorities at work? That's what we recently asked a few ACUTA members, and here's what they said:

Corinne Hoch, Columbia University
As the new year approaches and university operating deficits materialize, I realize that, once again, our premier challenge is to identify ways of working more efficiently. It isn't a resolution, by any means. It is a continuing raison d'etre.

Bill Brichta, DeSales University
Identify a new student-service offering that can be launched without an additional chargeback to the campus.

Randy Burns, Compco, Inc.
In 2003 I will find creative ways to strengthen existing relationships and build new ones based on integrity, service, and mutual respect.

Angela Imming, Southern Illinois University at Evansville
Document!

Ron Kovak, Ball State University
I would vow to be appreciative of my position and make a resolution to constantly show a positive attitude toward all people I come in contact with.

Walt Magnussen, Texas A&M University
My top priority is going to be to try to find additional ways to enhance collaboration, not only with other entities within the University but between TAMU and other institutions as well. It looks like budgets may not fare well next year, which means that we are going to be asked to do more with less. The best way to get this done is through collaborative efforts.

L. Vivien Oxley, Andrews University
To get everything caught up and everything I do documented so if I die from stress, the person who takes over would have no problem knowing what to do.
The Web Portal: 
Access to 
Campus Services

From the President
Jeanne Jansenius
University of the South

In today's unpredictable, ever-changing environment, it is necessary for colleges and universities to move from a city-state style of business operation to an operation that is more like a business...in this case, e-business. The next generation of Web content services will act more as facilitators. The emphasis on most campuses is shifting from single applications running in silo departments into enterprise/campuswide modular, network-enabled components spread across a highly distributed network. The Web portal acts as a Web-based frame allowing a personalized view of an integrated set of services, providing easy access to information, applications, processes, and people.

In the higher education environment, a Web portal assists in facilitating better communication on and off campus and has the ability to integrate administrative, learning, and community activities. It provides a conduit by allowing the end user to stay connected to campus resources through a personalized interface. In its simplest form, a portal gathers information and resources into a single, "one-stop" Web page, ideally with a single point of sign-on.

A portal should provide flexibility by allowing changes to be made from anywhere and at anytime. It should be designed to make an individual's Web experience more efficient, thus making the institution more productive and responsive. In short, a portal integrates Web applications and online services into one convenient location. It creates an entrance point, collecting together in-depth access to the institution's services. In addition, a portal may perform the following functions:

- Keep the customer as the center focus
- Allow for a significant devolution of organizational responsibilities
- Enhance service levels between central campus units and interdependent departments
- Reduce the rates of growth of administrative costs with the potential to increase revenues by improving customer value and retention due to customer satisfaction
- Overcome the unfriendliness inherent in most legacy systems
- Provide a mechanism to aggregate content resources, integrating ERP backbone systems into a self-service focus across a seamless easy-to-navigate Web interface
- Provide 24-hour-a-day access to content resources

A student portal may include opportunities for registration/enrollment, majors and degree programs, transcripts, grades, grant and scholarship resources, student account balances, educational tax benefits, financial aide status, career resources, and application for admissions. Faculty and staff benefit from information about labs and classroom scheduling, classroom support and technical services, online advising, discussion boards, digital libraries, personalized calendars, financial reports, purchasing and expense reports, travel arrangements, news events and activities, directories, housing information, and university-wide policies.

In addition, alums can stay more closely connected to their institution, thus providing a cradle-to-endowment relationship with students. A portal can provide a mechanism for managing a lifelong relationship by providing discussion forums, educational outreach, directories, and current events.

Another key advantage of a portal is the ability to sort through the deluge of electronic data, which allows the end user to focus on only those items that are most important. As stated in Web Portals & Higher Education: Technologies to Make IT Personal, by Richard N. Katz and Associates, the user-friendliness of campus Web portals will play a key role in the ability of colleges and universities to "...attract, retain, and serve customers [faculty, staff, students, et al.], of all types."

University and college campuses—and ACUTA—are beginning to roll out their portals in order to meet customer needs. You might want to visit the following sites that allow guests to experience their portal: University of Washington, MyUW at http://myuw.washington.edu, University at Buffalo, MyUB at www.buffalo.edu/aboutmyub, and University of California-Davis, MyUCDavis at http://my.ucdavis.edu/.

Happy New Year!
Can you dig it?

That’s not just some long-forgotten catch phrase from the ’60s—we’re talking about your campus here. Just how well would it go over if you proposed digging up chunks of terrain so that you could install fiber-optic cable, or additional copper wiring, for more bandwidth to some areas?

If your department keeps a trencher idling out back because you need it so often, this may not be an issue for you. But we suspect most of you would have to do a lot of persuading and lobbying to pull off a major project. The good news is technology is making it less and less necessary for you to have to do this.

The latest means of boosting bandwidth—and you’ll be seeing a lot more about this as this new year progresses—involves the copper loops that are already in place in networks. Most of the push in this area is on the public network side, since those are the guys who own and control most of the copper wiring. But there are applications on the enterprise and university side as well.

The approach—and it takes a few different forms—involves bundling together multiple pairs of copper and aggregating their bandwidth to move beyond the current capacity limitations of a single pair. It can mean bandwidths of a few megabits per second to dozens of Mbps, and the general idea is to help increase bandwidth where fiber either isn’t installed or isn’t economically practical to install. This “pumped-up copper” makes no pretense of displacing fiber, just filling in where there are bandwidth gaps.

Let’s say that your campus is humming along real nicely, except for that former fieldhouse, which has now been turned into offices. The 24-pair bundle of copper that provided far more capacity than a fieldhouse ever needed is now maxed out, and there are more offices planned. A multi-pair copper solution can at least buy you some time until you can get fiber over there or install a free-space optical system (see the October 2002 Tech Talk column), or find some other long-term answer.

How the copper solution works is that you take (for instance) eight pairs of copper, and you inversely multiplex data over those pairs, getting anywhere from 1.5 to more than 2 Mbps of capacity on each pair (depending on distance and line quality). That gives you perhaps 12 to 16 Mbps total, which means you could even extend an Ethernet LAN to the building without creating a major bottleneck.

But wait, you say suspiciously, and then you ask a legitimate question: How can I use these eight pairs if my whole bundle is already maxed out? Well, at least one of the multi-pair copper approaches lets you use passive splitters that keep the data transmissions separate from voice and allow both to share the same pair.

Most of the technologies in this space are based on the G.shdsl standard for communications, because of its superior spectrum compatibility and high rates for symmetric transmission over copper. All three solutions are implemented through a line card at the central office, or equivalent, with a CPE device at the customer location for aggregation and transmission.

The three main approaches are Inverse Multiplexing over ATM, or IMA; Multi-Link Point-to-Point Protocol (MLPPP) and Multi-Link Frame Relay (MLFR); and Multi-Loop DSL (MLDSL).

IMA requires all of its links to operate at the same data rate. This is great if all the pairs are clean and operating at the optimal rate of 1.5 Mbps. But if one pair is degraded, all the pairs being used operate at the maximum data rate achievable by the degraded pair. You also lose some throughput to the ATM overhead.

Multi-link protocols offer a non-ATM approach. They are strictly DS1/T1-focused, so everything must be done in 1.5 Mbps segments.

MLDSL has the ability to transmit at 2 Mbps and above, and can bond copper pairs at different line rates, with the ability to transmit data on each pair according to its maximum capability. In addition, MLDSL can operate and maintain the desired bandwidth even if a pair in the bundle goes out of operation. MLDSL is also the technology that can share the frequency of a POTS line with a passive splitter.

As always, if there are specific topics you would like to see covered in this space, please let me know via e-mail at kevin@duxpr.com.
On October 18, 2002, the FCC Wireless Telecommunications Bureau (WTB) issued a public notice requiring all Instructional Television Fixed Service (ITFS), Multipoint Distribution Service (MDS), and Multichannel Multipoint Distribution Service (MMDS) licensees and applicants to review licensing information and associated technical data that is on file with the FCC. Licensees and applicants are required to review the available information concerning their licenses and applications and, under certain circumstances, submit corrections or responses to that data. The type of response required varies depending upon the date on which your institution's license was granted or the application was filed. Details are in the public notice on the FCC Web site at http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DA-023372A1.doc

The initial deadline was December 17; however, it has been extended to February 3, 2003 in a subsequent Order issued on December 5. The Order extending the deadline can be viewed at http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DA-02-3371A1.doc

The database of ITFS, MDS, and MMDS licensees is located on the FCC Web site at http://wireless.fcc.gov/services/itfs&mds/licensing/inventory.html

Please ensure that your campus complies with this requirement from the FCC. Questions should be directed to the FCC Wireless Telecommunications Bureau at the contact numbers and Web sites listed in the Public Notice under Contact Information.

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Want to Be More Involved in ACUTA?

Be a State/Province Coordinator!

by Kellie Bowman
ACUTA Membership Development Manager

The Membership Committee is looking for volunteers to be "coordinators" for the following states/provinces: Alaska, Delaware, Hawaii, Iowa, Michigan, Mississippi, Nebraska, New Jersey, New Mexico, Nevada, Oklahoma, Puerto Rico, Virginia, Vermont, Wyoming, Alberta, Nova Scotia, and Saskatchewan. (If your state already has a coordinator, perhaps you would be interested in filling a vacancy for a nearby area.)

Being a coordinator is an easy way to participate in the association and reap personal benefits without a major time commitment. State/province coordinators serve as a central contact for members and nonmembers in their area. This helps ACUTA know what's happening at schools and what hot issues need to be addressed. We'll also ask you to let us know of any major telecom developments in your state, such as new laws or regulations that colleagues in other states should hear about. We especially need help finding out the names of your colleagues at nonmember schools so we can invite them to be a part of the growing network.

One of the principal benefits to you is the additional networking and the opportunity to increase your circle of contacts. In addition, accepting a position of responsibility in your professional organization is viewed favorably by senior administrators within college/university environments. The increased visibility for your school is also of interest to most administrators. Also, if you have ever thought of serving as a committee chair or on ACUTA's board of directors, this could certainly be a step in that direction.

The state/province coordinator plays a significant role in how ACUTA relates to both members and nonmembers on an individual basis. Networking has helped ACUTA become the single voice of communications technology in higher education. There are clear advantages for both you and the association for just a small investment of time on your part. As a volunteer-driven organization, we rely on members to support our goal of helping university communications technology professionals contribute to the achievement of their institution's mission. If you have any questions, please contact me (kbowman@acuta.org, 859/278-3338 x222) or Harvey "Buck" Buchanan/Chair, Membership Committee, at Florida State University, 850/644-3444. Consider becoming more involved in your professional association!
Wireless Services Coverage Problems Persist In-Building

by James McCoy
Innerwireless Inc.

Part one of a two-part article.
Part two will appear in the February issue.

Aggressive service pricing packaged with device subsidies, convenience, and reasonable outdoor coverage combined with roaming capabilities is making wireless the preferred mode of connecting people and information—especially students who can take advantage of minute buckets bundled with long distance. However, indoor coverage problems continue to persist because buildings present unique barriers to wireless signals—particularly those coming from outside. Materials, construction, architecture, and terrain all combine to compromise reception and signal quality inside buildings. Continuing coverage problems make it impossible to fully realize the potential of wireless services. The root of in-building wireless coverage problems lies in several areas including: the subscriber's changing expectation of service quality; the technical aspects of signal engineering (noise, interference, antenna placement, radiation, and propagation); and the desire of many wireless service providers to address these issues without changing their radio access network deployment paradigm.

Quality of Service

Service quality can be dealt with by two very different approaches. One is the purely technical approach of measuring availability, reliability, bit error rate (BER), and speed/throughput and then comparing to some set of threshold values. While this approach appeals to those desiring a quantified service quality, it is still subject to issues arising out of finite measurement sets versus theoretical statistical distributions.

The alternative approach, often taken when dealing with consumers, is purely subjective expectation management. The consumer wants the service to work; he wants to get what he paid for. While unpleasant experience with DSL and cable modems have given many consumers a desire for quantification, the wireless industry has only offered the subscriber a shrug with an "it's supposed to work that way" answer. However, consumer expectations about wireless service have changed. Whether they take a quantitative or qualitative approach, consumers want the wireless providers to deliver on their promise of anytime, anywhere voice and data.

Signal, Noise, and Interference

All forms of electronic communication are based on the ability to successfully discriminate a desired signal from noise and interference. Except for special situations, this requires that the received signal be stronger than any competing noise and interference. For wireless, unlike wireline, it is not a matter of simply increasing the power of the transmitter to ensure that the signal dominates. If a wireless signal is indiscriminately increased, the "signal" within one cell site becomes "interference" to the adjacent cell sites—analogous to cross talk among parallel cables.

RF signal engineering does not lend itself to "plug and play." Instead, it requires careful attention to many variables. For example, the noise is determined by the bandwidth of the RF channel (TDMA: 30 KHz, GSM: 200 KHz, CDMA: 1.25 MHz) and the quality of the receiving electronics (specifically the input amplifier's noise figure). The minimum required signal to noise ratio (SNR) is a straightforward function of the modulation used (DQPSK, MSK, QPSK) and the BER necessary to support the application (voice or data, streaming or store-and-forward). However, interference is a function of the presence/absence of transmitters in adjacent RF channels (with associated spill over of undesired signal into the desired channel). This can become a significant issue if they are located in close proximity or are operated at substantially higher power than the desired signal. Proper operation of the wireless link depends on having simultaneously a good SNR and a sufficiently low level of interference.

The intentional re-use of the same RF channel for increased network capacity within a cellular deployment results in self-interference (unless the cell sites are completely isolated-blocked by the combined effects of terrain, foliage, and man-made structures). Self-interference routinely occurs when the subscriber is located on the upper floor of a building with signals arriving from many cell sites. It explains why one often sees "five

continued on page 6
Wireless Coverage... continued from page 5

bars of coverage" on a wireless device, but the call is garbled or is dropped. (The handset can measure the signal component but cannot measure/estimate the interference—it is simply a victim thereof.) Since current wireless networks are still targeted toward vehicular and pedestrian users, changes are routinely made to cell sites having significant impact on in-building coverage—with little thought to the in-building impact. Only with a thorough knowledge of the ambient RF environment and an assessment of the potential effects if it changes can the engineering of in-building antenna placements, radiation patterns, and propagation effects be successfully accomplished. Look for Part Two, "Signal Propagation and Additional Considerations," in the February issue of the ACUTA e-News. James McCoy can be reached at jmcoy@innerwireless.com.

Board Report December

The Board of Directors met on December 5, 2002 by conference call. The following are highlights of the Board’s actions at that meeting:

- The Board accepted and approved without discussion several financial and committee reports that were distributed to the Board for review prior to the conference call.
- The Board discussed and approved additions and amendments to the Strategic Plan, the 2003 Annual Conference Schedule, and a reallocation of reasonable small expense items from one expense line to another.
- The Board passed the recommendation to rename the ACUTA Journal to The ACUTA Journal of Communications Technology in Higher Education.

Respectfully submitted,

John Bradley, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
Secretary/Treasurer

Thanks to Journal Advertisers for 2002

ACUTA thanks the following companies for advertising in our 2002 journals. As you choose the companies with which you will do business, we hope you will remember these ACUTA supporters.

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<td>CBI</td>
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Three Issues

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<th>Amcom Software, Inc.</th>
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<td>Integrisys</td>
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Two Issues

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<th>1 Nation Technology</th>
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<tr>
<td>Info Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>K-Tech Intl., Inc.</td>
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One Issue

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<th>Campus Televideo</th>
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New FCC Commissioner

Jonathan Adelstein has been sworn in as the fifth Commissioner for the FCC and is working hard to catch up on all of the things that are in the works at the FCC. As time goes by we will see where he stands on the issues that are before the Commission—and there are a lot of issues on their table. Brad Gillen of the Washington law firm of Wiley, Rein & Fielding joins the Legislative/Regulatory Affairs Committee conference call every month and helps keep us up-to-date on things happening at the FCC.

Emergency Responders

Right after the 9/11 terrorist attacks the White House described the need for the creation of a fund of about $3 billion to be used for equipment and training for local police and other emergency agencies so they would be ready and able to respond to any terrorist attack in the future. More than a year has gone by, and there has not been any money set aside by Congress to cover such expenses.

Telecommunications Reports (TR 12/1/02) reported that "Efforts to get Congress to authorize money for first responders fell apart last week when the Senate failed to include the money in its version of legislation that created the new Department of Homeland Security." The House had already passed a version of the bill, and it did not include funding for emergency responders either. Discussion back and forth between members on the House and the Senate led the Senate to believe that it would be faster to vote for the bill that reflected the House version and did not include the $3.5 billion as finally requested by President Bush.

Representatives of the National League of Cities have indicated that they will be working hard to get the needed funds appropriated to cover the costs of the new, modern equipment and training needed to have the emergency responders ready to meet the needs in the future. A representative with a coalition that is working to improve emergency response indicated that "The front line on homeland security is with emergency response. [Local officials] have been watching the homeland security debate carefully. They’re being asked to have increased vigilance and increased response to sometimes false alarms, and they’re facing the same budget crises that we face at the federal level. We have cases of police and fire and emergency responders not being able to talk to each other. There’s a lot of work to be done to close the seams of our homeland security net." (TR 12/1)

It does not look like there will be funding appropriated very early in the next session of Congress. The funds are surely needed, but who gets them and what guidelines on how they are spent will be interesting things to watch during this next year or so.

More Layoffs

The Telecom Manager's Voice Report (VR 12/2/02) indicated that Sprint is cutting back staff as well as contractors involved with the PCS division. There will be 1,600 employees and 500 contractors terminated as a part of cost reduction. An official with Sprint's PCS said that only a small number of those workers interact directly with customers. He also said that PCS is revamping its organization. PCS is part of the wireless service area in Sprint.

WorldCom and the SEC

The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) has been looking into WorldCom due to potential management and finance problems that have shown up during the last couple years. WorldCom and the SEC have reached a settlement. WorldCom did not admit to any guilt, but did agree to continued federal oversight.

continued on page 8
WorldCom was not fined, but it was left open that they could be fined at some later date. As part of the settlement, WorldCom said it would not violate securities laws in the future, would train its executives in business ethics, and would retain a consultant to oversee its accounting. (VR 12/2)

Do-Not-Call Register

On NBC news, Dec. 18, Tom Brokaw stated that the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) had announced that they will be setting up a register listing people that do not want to receive calls from telemarketers. The register is expected to be ready for use during the summer of 2003. Brokaw also said that some of the telemarketers had indicated that they would likely challenge the FTC plan in the courts. They expect there to be as many as 60 million do-not-call numbers on the register by the time it is put into use.

Not-for-profit companies may still be able to make the calls as usual. We must note, however, that funding for this initiative has not been approved by Congress.

Universal Service Fund (USF)

The FCC has been considering changes in the method used to determine the amount of the funds that carriers pay to the FCC for the USF. The current method is based on a percentage of their LD revenues for the last six months. Some carriers do not like that since their revenue is on a slippery slope downward. They are also concerned since most of the growth is showing up in the smaller companies, and they pay less than their share. (VR 12-2)

A fee structure based on the number of lines is being looked at. One idea that surfaced would charge about $1 for residence lines and some other lower rate for business lines; and the fee for business lines would have to be big enough to make up the difference between what is collected from residence lines and the total of the USF at the time. ACUTA is concerned because all member institutions have only business lines and could have to pay a higher rate.

The National Telecommunications Cooperative Association (NTCA) has laid out its legislative agenda for the 108th Congress, citing protection of the Universal Service Fund as its big issue. They also listed a few other items after the USF item as being high priorities.

NTCA officials told reporters during a press conference that although the FCC is probing USF issues, Congress "may need to get involved once again, looking at the 'contributions' issue and — more importantly for NTCA members — the extent the fund supports service provided by wireless carriers." (TR 12/1)

There has also been discussion at the FCC as to how the wireless industry may get involved in paying into the USF. This seems to be another issue under consideration.

The Web Site Recognition Task Force congratulates the two schools selected for this quarter for having outstanding sites that exemplify the best use of communications services for students.

Hamilton College
http://www.hamilton.edu/college/its/default.html

Drew University
http://www.depts.drew.edu/telecom/FORMS/forms.html
http://www.depts.drew.edu/telecom/DOCS/index.html
http://www.depts.drew.edu/telecom/INFO/infoindex.html

The topic for next quarter will be "Web-Based Alumni Pages and Services."
Nominations are due by February 1, 2003.
Are you preparing to travel to the ACUTA Winter Seminars in Tempe, AZ or some other destination in the near future? While we can't improve the quality of the meal you may (or may not!) receive while en route to Tempe, the following tips will help make your air travel as painless as possible.

Everyone who has recently traveled by air is aware of increased security measures, as responsibility for screening baggage and passengers transitions to the Transportation Security Administration (TSA). New procedures now require screening of all checked baggage in addition to screening of passengers and carry-on items and random screening at gates.

As a frequent traveler through airports throughout the U.S., I have learned how to effectively navigate through the screening procedures and find that they rarely result in more than a few minutes delay.

As a tool to help make your air travel easier, TSA has put together the most up-to-date and comprehensive set of information on aviation security. This information is all available for the public at http://www.TSATravelTips.US. Here are a few key time-saving tips from the TSA Web site:

**Before the Airport**
- Don't pack or bring prohibited items to the airport. Visit http://www.TSAtraveltips.us for a complete list.
- Leave gifts unwrapped. They may be opened for inspection.
- Avoid wearing clothing, jewelry, and accessories that contain metal. Metal items may set off the alarm on the metal detector.
- Put all undeveloped film and cameras with film in your carry-on baggage. Checked baggage screening equipment will damage undeveloped film.
- Carry-on baggage is limited to one carry-on bag plus one personal item. Personal items include laptops, purses, small backpacks, briefcases, or camera cases.
- Place identification tags in and on all of your baggage.

**At the Airport**

**Before you get in line...**
- Don't bring drinks or other liquids to the security checkpoint unless they are in paper or polystyrene (e.g. Styrofoam -sealed or sealable/spill-proof containers. (Liquids in cans must be sent through the x-ray machine.)
- Don't bring food to the security checkpoint unless it is wrapped or in a container. Natural foods like fruit are okay.

**Once you get in line...In, Out, Off**
- Put metal IN your carry-on bag. This includes jewelry, loose change, keys, mobile phones, pagers, and personal digital assistants (PDAs).
- Take OUT your laptop computer. Place it in a bin, separate from its carrying case.
- Take OFF your outer coat. Place it in a bin. Suit jackets and blazers do not have to be removed, unless requested by the screener.

**And last of all, Jeri's personal tips (not endorsed by the TSA!)**
- Get to the airport early. Although screening has rarely added more than 15 minutes to my travel time, it is much less stressful to know that you won't miss your flight.
- Leave any bags you intend to check unlocked until the screening process is completed. In some airports, it will no longer be practical to lock your checked bags, so pack accordingly.
- Wear shoes that can be easily slipped on and off, and avoid wearing thick-soled hiking boots or platform shoes. They almost always set off the metal detectors and subject you to extra screening.

*continued on page 10*
• Take as much "junk" as possible out of your purse, backpack, and briefcase before you travel—put non-valuables in your checked baggage instead. It will speed up screening of your carry-on items. (I admit to personally violating this tip, but am getting better!)

• If singled out for additional screening at the gate, don't take it personally. These selections are often completely random, and complaining will only prolong the process.

• Remember, ACUTA provides computers for Internet e-mail access at all of our events, so try to get by without carrying your laptop whenever possible.

Above all, security screening is for our benefit, and should not be a deterrent to the pleasures of personal or professional travel. Keep a positive attitude, and I look forward to seeing you in Tempe, Norfolk, Hollywood, and San Diego in 2003!

Welcome New Members

Institutional Members

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ACUTA NEWS, Vol. 32, No. 1

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