



Computing & Information Services

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## MTS Users - It's That Time Again

In September of 1993, ITS (Information Technology Services) announced to the campus that the "public" MTS service would be discontinued as of June 1995. It was recognized at that time that not all administrative computing applications could be migrated off MTS within that period, especially student records. However, it is now 4½ years after the first MTS termination announcement, and the first phases of the new Banner-based student records system have been deployed. Rensselaer is the only university in the world with a production MTS service. The risks associated with running the MTS service are substantial.

All aspects of the MTS production service will be shutdown no later than March 31, 1999. This includes all programs which actually run on MTS, as well as those programs which run elsewhere but use MTS print or other services. This also covers services which run on the IBM 9672 mainframe, but not under MTS proper, such as the campus-wide LISTSERV.

### What does this mean to you?

Most Rensselaer faculty, staff, and students will not be directly affected by the MTS shutdown. Many of you have never used MTS nor do you know exactly what it is. Services that depend on MTS can be broadly categorized:

1. Student Records  
The lion's share of MTS activity today is associated with student records. Virtually all of this activity is covered by the Banner student records project.
2. Printing  
There are two disjoint MTS print services. Impact printing, mostly for transcripts, labels, and miscellaneous forms such as W-2 and United Way, are done on the IBM 6262 impact printer. Large volume print jobs and mailing labels are done on the Xerox 4850 laser printer. Many of these jobs originate today on systems other than MTS.
3. "Standalone" programs or systems which are not part of the Banner student records project  
Programs in this category include some CIS accounting programs, the gas cylinder inventory, the campus "space" inventory, and a handful of other special purpose programs.
4. Data interfaces and archival data  
MTS is used to read magnetic tapes with data from sources outside Rensselaer, such as banks, testing services, etc. MTS is also used internally to transfer data to and from the FAIMS system on campus. MTS is also used to transfer data to and from systems off-campus, such as for payroll direct deposit. Some departments no longer using MTS may have data archived, explicitly, or implicitly on MTS.
5. E-mail addresses and services  
Some users still read mail on MTS or VM, or use an @mts.rpi.edu or @vm.its.rpi.edu e-mail address.

## What happens next?

Date	Event
August 30, 1998	MTS 6262 impact printing service terminated MTS RJE service terminated Spectrum Online Ordering system terminated MTS real 3270 "coax" service terminated All VM-based services terminated
December 31, 1998	Xerox 4850 printer service terminated @mts.rpi.edu and @vm.its.rpi.edu e-mail addresses will no longer be honored
March 31, 1999	MTS is shutdown for the last time

### Student Records

The migration to the Banner-based student records system is well underway, with registration for Fall 98 classes already having taken place this Spring on the Banner system. Assuming implementation schedules are kept, the MTS shutdown timetable should not impact student records processes.

### Printing

Impact printing on MTS covers transcripts, labels, and miscellaneous forms such as W-2 and United Way. The Banner-based student records system will not depend on the MTS-attached impact printer for printing transcripts. Over the last 5 years, all the technology required to print mailing labels is available on MS Windows PCs. Many companies moved their W-2 forms processors to laser printers years ago. In fact, at Rensselaer we printed our W-2 forms on laser printers for a year or two. There is no technical impediment to doing so again. ☒ Some miscellaneous forms may require the use of an impact printer, and once we fully understand the need, CIS will help find the appropriate campus solution.

The MTS-attached Xerox 4850, which has a maximum print speed of 48 pages per minute, is used exclusively for administrative printing – student records, financial reports, labels, and mass letter mailings. The Banner implementation at Rensselaer assumes an increasing number of departmental printers instead of our current system of centralized printers, with output delivered to various buildings throughout campus. Commodity printers from Xerox, Lexmark, and HP which are not that much slower than the central Xerox 4850 can be purchased for a few thousands of dollars. Personal computer or department based solutions can easily be deployed for mass letter mailings, using standard tools such as Microsoft Word. As in the case of the impact printer, labels can easily be produced and printed using departmental resources.

☒ CIS will arrange for demonstrations from Avery and other appropriate vendors to explore local printing solutions for labels, envelopes, and other special printing applications.

### “Standalone” programs or systems which are not part of the Banner SRS project

There are efforts already underway to move many of these programs off of MTS. CIS still uses MTS for telecom and RCS billing, but has bought, and is implementing an Oracle-based package which runs under Windows NT to provide these functions. The “restricted lot parking system” has already moved off MTS. ☒ Rensselaer will be participating with Staples beta test of their new Web-based online ordering system to replace our Spectrum ordering on MTS. ☒ CIS has acquired, and will be implementing a new list manager to replace the LISTSERV running on the IBM mainframe under VM. ☒ CIS will work with departments to help identify standalone MTS applications, and to explore options for moving these applications off MTS.

## Data Interfaces and archival data

The number of departments and researchers using MTS for reading or writing magnetic tapes for external systems is small. In many cases, this data may be available through *ftp* or other direct electronic transfer mechanism, bypassing tape altogether. ☒ For those few cases where tape support will still be required, CIS will help identify a common tape format across all these applications which might be implemented or made available on another system or systems.

☒ For those applications now using MTS for data transfer to and from MTS, CIS will work with departments to find other solutions. ☒ Discussions are underway with Rensselaer at Hartford data processing staff to find another solution to move transcript data between the Troy and Hartford locations. ☒ CIS staff will renew discussions with Marine Midland staff to explore options for exchanging financial data, including payroll direct deposit. ☒ CIS will provide a new mechanism for those departments, such as the Campus Computer Store, which use MTS as a staging area for moving data to and from FAIMS.

Some departments still have archival data on MTS, either explicitly or implicitly. In either case, if the data needs to be accessed in the future, it will have to be moved to another computer system, or copied to media which can be read by another computer system. ☒ CIS will assist users wishing to migrate archival data from MTS and/or VM.

## E-mail addresses and services

☒ Users still reading mail on MTS or VM, or using an @mts.rpi.edu or @vm.its.rpi.edu e-mail address to forward their e-mail to another system, must use a different system to read or send e-mail, and must switch to a different e-mail address. CIS recommends [your\\_RCS\\_userid@rpi.edu](mailto:your_RCS_userid@rpi.edu), which can be forwarded to another e-mail address if necessary. Users are reminded to update their campus directory information to reflect this change.

## What are the next steps?

Although CIS has operated the campus-wide MTS service for over 20 years, CIS does not necessarily know what applications are still running on MTS. From our system logs, we can determine what programs were run at what time, but we cannot tell which departments are depending on MTS for what university functions. You, the departments and end users, need to help us understand what MTS applications do not have a migration plan or strategy. ☒ Departments should identify an individual to serve as MTS migration coordinator, to help ensure that CIS fully understands departmental needs.

☒ We have set up a new mailing list,  
MTS-L@LISTS.RPI.EDU

to share information on MTS application migration issues. If you have MTS application questions, issues or suggestions, please report them initially through the mailing list. To subscribe, send e-mail to [listproc@lists.rpi.edu](mailto:listproc@lists.rpi.edu) with a single line in the message body

subscribe MTS-L your\_firstname your\_lastname

CIS will use the *MTS-L* mailing list, the *Rensserv* mailing list, and The Kiosk, the CIS newsletter, to share information and developments concerning the MTS migration and shutdown.

As noted previously, virtually all of Rensselaer's major applications have already moved off of MTS, or projects are now underway to move them off of MTS. The MTS shutdown schedule leaves enough time to find solutions for the handful of applications which are not yet accounted for.

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