

# **Glen-Hazel Recreation Center**

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**15-499B Computer Science in the Community**

Final Report

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# Introduction

## Background

### Consultant

I am a Junior at Carnegie Mellon University, studying Computer Engineering. My interests, both in computer science and community work, made this course an interesting proposition. I have worked several times for technical companies where I have had to deal with challenging problems and technical customers. On the other end I also have worked in the community setting as a volunteer and as the former Vice-President of Carnegie Mellon's Circle-K club, a student community service organization. Although both roles have played a significant part in my development, this course offers a way of combining the two, along with providing the foundations for computer consulting and the necessary skills needed to convey technical information to a non-technical audience.

### Community Contact

Helen McDonald works at the Glen-Hazel Recreation center in Pittsburgh, PA. Helen's position is defined as the Manager for the Glen-Hazel Reading and Learning Center. She is employed by the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh. Helen's primary goal in joining the project was to both find use for the computers in her care at the Glen-Hazel center and to increase her computer knowledge in order to further herself. Helen's scholastic background ends with a high-school GED, but this in no way hampers her ability or desire to learn the computer knowledge rapidly, which she feels will help her exceed beyond her current position. Helen's effort and enthusiasm for learning and developing her computer skills has made this partnership efficient and prosperous, while her lively and outgoing personality has made it a pleasure to work with her.

### Working and Planning

At our first meeting Helen and I basically got aquatinted. Neither of us knowing what to expect, or clearly what we wanted to do. On my part, this uncertainty came from the fact that this was the first time I have ever played the role of a Consultant. On Helen's part it was due to the lack of experience with computers and this technology. This uncertainty would give rise though, to our ultimate goal, furthering Helen's computer knowledge and experience while providing me with the opportunity to practice the role of community consultant.

The computers in Helen's care were placed in her care from the overall organization running the Glen-Hazel community center. They were given to them by the Weed And Seed program, a government initiative to provide a comprehensive and multi-agency approach to law enforcement, crime prevention, and community revitalization. Upon getting the computers the Glen-Hazel Reading Center became the Glen-Hazel Family Reading and Learning Center. Although the primary user, and administrator of the computers Helen's section of the organization does not own the machines thus making certain working aspects difficult.

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Together, Helen and I worked on a variety of her typical office tasks. This gave me a sense of what her organization position entailed and began to open her eyes to the possible uses of the computers. After starting a few project together Helen was able to then come up with and begin projects that she designed, such as a time-off request form, various inventory/attendance sheets, and memos. This both gave her a sense of ownership and instilled a sort of no-fear attitude in her that is essential in learning to use computers. Helen was then able to think of and approach tasks on the computer without knowing ahead of time how they were going to be accomplished, but by trying, eventually find a solution. After becoming comfortable with our partnership we looked towards finding a project that we could define. The obvious choice stemmed from the very nature of the center.

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## **The Problem**

### **Problem Statement**

Helen's section of the center is a library, where books are gotten from donations, or through purchasing via organization funds. Donations of books come from the Carnegie Library as well as outside sources. All these books are given to Helen and it is part of her job to sort through, organize, and assemble a list of all these books. After organizing the books herself an independent group from the Carnegie came and reorganized the books in her library according to their system. This perhaps to them was more efficient, but left Helen not being able to locate the books that people asked for. It was then decided, by Helen's superiors, that the books were to be given new labels and book cards. This lead her to want some way of organizing the library such that she could easily look up books by title or subject category, and an easier way or creating the duplicate labels and book-cards.

### **Project**

From my experience with similar tasks we decided to use an Excel database along with Word to create and print the labels needed for the books and book-cards. From the beginning Helen and I worked on every aspect of the cataloging system. First we defined the categories we needed to have, Author's Last Name, First Name, Middle Initial, The Book Title, The Number Of Copies, The Categories, Whether or Not the Book was Fiction, The Books Targeted Age Group, The Date Received, along with some fields to let us know if we had printed out the labels for this book yet. From this point on Helen and I worked on all the details, from entering books into the database to creating the labels, to doing the mail-merge between Excel and Word to have the database automatically create all the labels from the database. Helen was a part of each step of the process because she was then responsible for recreating each step.

## Computing Environment

The computers at the Glen-Hazel Recreation Center are housed in a library setting. There are four machines placed on opposite ends of a long row of computer desks. The desks are actually one long desk attached to the wall with multiple keyboard trays. The library is well ventilated and the computers are out of harms way. The chairs at the desk are regular metal folding chairs. All wires are out of the way, behind the desk and kept tightly against the wall. The library is community accessible and the computers are not secured. There is however a security system for when the center is closed.

## Hardware

There are four computer now in the center. When I began there were only two. I was able to do a closer inspection to three out of four of the machines. A fifth machine will be coming soon, this will be Helen's personal machine in her office. Upon closer inspection I came up with the following statistics on each computer:

### Computer #1,2:

- Compaq Deskpro 2000 (Pentium® 200)
- NEC 15" MultiSync C500 Monitor
- 16 MB Ram
- Compaq Video Card (CL5436) PCI w/ 1MB Video Memory
- Matshita CD-ROM Drive
- 1.18 GB Hard Drive (197 MB Free)
- 1.25" Floppy
- US Robotics (Compaq modified) Sporster 33.6 Fax Modem
- Labtec Speakers (LCS-150)
- HP-Deskjet 693C
- ESS Es1868 Sound Card

### Computer #3:

- 486 SX 33
- 4MB Ram
- 14" Monitor.

### Computer #4:

- Tandy 1000 TL/3
- 14" CGA Monitor
- 640K RAM

## Software

None of the software on these machines is backed up, and they don't know where any of the originals are.

Computer #1,2:

- Windows® 95
- AOL®
- MS Office 95
- Mavis Beacon Typing Tutor
- MS Works 4.0
- Quick Book Pro
- MS Internet Explorer
- Print Paks Family Fun Pack
- Various Games (Mostly Educational)
- \*Networked Via Dialup Networking

Computer#3:

- Windows 3.1
- Old version of MS Word.

Computer #4:

- DOS 3.3
- Various Educational Games

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## Conclusions & Recommendations

### Conclusions

Due to Helen's enthusiasm, energy, skills, and intelligence were able to not only get the majority of our project accomplished we were able to accomplish many other tasks. With her son, Woddy's, help Helen was able to get over fifteen hundred books entered from her library, over half. The most important accomplishment is that Helen was able to do this and is able to recreate it. Helen has been able to gain all the basic skills necessary to further her computer knowledge along with learning some of the non-basic skills such as performing an Excel to Word mail-merge and database sorting, and filtering in order to find specific books and categories of books.

### Recommendations

I would definitely recommend that the Glen-Hazel reading and learning center participate in this program again. Furthermore I recommend that Helen once again be the contact person for this partnership because she now has the basic knowledge to begin thinking ways of incorporating the computers into the daily activities of the center. I believe that the center is now at a point at which they can begin to think of ways to use the computers as part of programs that they have beyond just casual use.

Further recommendations are for the Weed and Seed organization. These computers at the Glen-Hazel center can now become an integral part of their routines and community projects, but when they were placed there they couldn't have been. These computers seem to be placed into these organizations without giving them any ideas on how to use them. I don't feel that restricting who gets the computers is the answer but rather spending the extra time, effort, and money in seeing that the computers are being used as

intended. I can't help but feel that many of these machines are sitting on the sides of many community organizations gathering dust. Not because they don't want to use them, but because don't have any idea how or why they would use them. This goes back to the parable that if you give a hungry person a fish you'll feed them for that day, but if you teach them how to fish they'll be fed for life. Well, if you give them a fishing pole and don't give them a sense of how to use it, it goes unused and they still go hungry.