Computer unit

The Computer Unit was established in 1985 as a service unit under the overall supervision of the Dean of the Faculty of Science. It provides a variety of service: conducting awareness course to new entrants, course on computer usage such as word processing and Database applications, and writing of project reports, research reports and thesis.

Initially the Computer Unit provided services to students who studied computing under applied Mathematics, and also provided facilities to staff members who were interested in learning Computer programming by themselves. Later it has been extended its services to the whole University Community providing a range of services to the students and staff from various disciplines in the University.

The services of the computer Unit are not confined to the University Community, but it extends its services to the society in addition to the University Community. In fact, until the army of operation by IPKF took place, the Computer Unit conducted a certificate course and a Diploma course in Computing. More or less 400 students have benefited from these courses in 4 years' time. It was disrupted due to IPKF operating in the region. The Computer Unit met a severe loss due to destruction by war during that time. As a result, the service of the Unit became standstill.

Then after rebuilding of the laboratory facilities step by step, the Computer Unit resumed its services to University community as usual. It also conducted a staff-training programme to accountants and administrative staff of Jaffna Secretariat and Jaffna Teaching Hospital.

Once again such a provision of services discontinued due to war. All of the equipment were lost during the exodus that took place in October/November 1995 due to the escalation of war. At present the Computer Unit has only 21 Pentium-based personal computers, which is less than one-third of what it had before exodus. Thus, it faces difficulty in fulfilling requests from a students and staff. The computers are optimally used in order to provide services with fair opportunity to all sorts of students, and staff. It is planned to resume its services to the public community in near future should the laboratory be equipped with enough computers as anticipated.

Staff Position of Computer Unit

As mentioned earlier, the Computer Unit and the Department of Computer Science are the only places in the University where the staff members with formal qualification in Computing are found. The following table summarises the staff position of the Computer Unit.

Staff-position	Qualification	Number
System Analyst Cum Programmer	M.Sc.	01
Programmer	B.Sc.	01
Instructors (temporary)	B.Sc.	04

In addition to the above staff members, the Computer Unit has Head, who is looking after administrative matters of the Unit. The Head rarely participates in the formal academic programmes of the Computer Unit. The staff members of the Unit should be appreciated very much for their tireless and dedicated work. Without their dedication it would be impossible to meet the enormous requirement of the staff and students from various departments of the University. The number of instructors should be increased in order to lessen the workload of individuals. This also helps to increase the efficiency and the quality of the performance of the instructors.

Laboratory facilities of the Computer Unit

At the early stage the Computer Unit had a few computers such as Commodore Super Pet, Commodore-64 etc. which were used to run BASIC language. Later it was equipped with different types of computers such as Radio Shak, KayPro, BBC Micros, Micro Wax mini Computer etc. and peripherals, accessories, repair kits, power conditioners, air conditioners. It was very unfortunate that a severe setback was faced by the Computer Unit because of the loss and damages of laboratory equipment due to IPKF operation. Thereafter another setback resulted in 1995. All of the laboratory equipment were lost during the exodus that took place in October/November 1995 due to the escalation of war. In fact, the lost items included computers, peripherals, and many other valuable accessories such as UPS and power conditioners. The number of lost computers could be listed as follows:

Computers	Numbers
Micros such as	
BBC Micro, KayPro Radio Shak	46
Sun Workstation	01
Micro VAX	01
Personal Computers (286, 386, 486-based machines)	35

The cost of the loss of computers, computer peripherals, UPS, power conditioners and other accessories has been found to be worth more than four and a half million rupees.

At present, the laboratory of the Computer Unit is equipped with only 21 personal computers. Which are totally inadequate meet the requirements of the students and staff. It is very much essential to equip the laboratory with sufficient number of computers and accessories for a smooth provision of services.

Future Plan of Computer Unit

We live in the era of information technology; the world has shrunk to be a "global village" with respect to communication. This has been made a reality by the establishment of the world biggest wide area network-generally known as Internet. It is essential that we need to be a member of "the village" connecting through Internet. In view of this, the University of Jaffna should be connected to Internet.

The Computer Unit is taking the initial step to establish a connection to Internet. After security forces of Sri Lanka has taken control of Jaffna, and the telephone connections were established and 24-hour power supply is expected to resume soon. Thus, it is anticipated that the Computer Unit would be able to get a dedicated telephone line in near future and to get connection to Internet.

In fact, a request has been made to "Learn" committee for making such a connection to Internet. It is very much anticipated that the University of Jaffna is connected to Internet. As a higher education institution, the University will benefit more than any sectors, especially in Jaffna, by establishing a connection to the other part of the world or even Sri Lanka.

The Computer Unit has a vision that all departments and administrative sections should be connected in a network; and all of which are connected to the Computer Unit. In fact the Computer Unit becomes a Computer Centre which will function as a central point to the whole university community in providing services through network in addition to its usual services.