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Handbook To Help PC Users Tackle The Y2K Problem

Will your computer work properly on 1 January 2000? The Y2K Handbook for PCs has been published by the Cyberspace Center and the Center of Computing Services and Telecommunications at Hong Kong University of Science and Technology to help small and medium size enterprises (SMEs) deal with this problem, also called the Y2K problem or the Millennium Bug. The handbook can be downloaded from the Cyberspace Center's web page (http://www.cyber.ust.hk/publications.html).

"Unlike large corporations who can hire consultants and technical teams to tackle the Y2K problem of their mainframes or mini-computers, most SMEs who mainly use personal computers do not have the expertise to handle this critical problem. Our handbook was written especially for the SMEs and addresses the problem for PCs," says Prof Samuel Chanson, Director of the Cyberspace Center.

The Y2K problem is commonly known to occur in systems, hardware and software, which use two digits (i.e. '98' instead of '1998') to store the year data or systems that cannot roll over from Year 1999 to 2000. However, it can also occur on systems unable to recognize that Year 2000 is a leap year--a situation that only occurs once every 400 years. On 29 February 2000, these systems will show the date as 1 March 2000.

The Handbook contains useful information as well as general guidelines on how to test whether a personal computer can properly function after 31 December 1999. These Y2K compliance tests, including the rollover and leap year tests, cover the three layers of a computer system: hardware, operating systems, and software applications. A rule of thumb is that personal computers with 80486 (or earlier) processor chip may have the Y2K compliance problem.

However, with the abundance of hardware and software products installed today, it is impossible to fully test every system, device driver, and application. Prof Chanson suggests, "A general guideline to avoid the Millennium Bug is to migrate to a Y2K compliant system before 2000. And be sure to ask the vendor for proof of Y2K compliance before you buy a new system."

Note to Editors:
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URL: http://www.ust.hk/~webopa/news/1998_News/news0623.htm
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