

ITACS Celebrates Over Half a Century of NPS Computing on Centennial Kick-Off Weekend

By Barbara Honegger, Military Affairs Journalist

The Naval Postgraduate School's Information Technology and Communication Services (ITACS) celebrated more than half a century of academic computing with historical presentations, an open house and ribbon cutting for its new information technology archives and photo gallery as part of Centennial Kick-Off weekend, May 22.

NPS President Daniel Oliver welcomed the audience to the morning event on the theme "Technology Leadership: Our Heritage and Mission" stressing the importance of information technology to the NPS mission.

"Why has the Naval Postgraduate School been such a pioneer and leader in information technology?" Oliver asked the audience in Ingersoll Hall auditorium. "It's because IT is not just a support function here. It's a mission and a national security imperative to keep our computing systems on the cutting edge. Congratulations to [Vice President for Information Resources] Dr. Cermak and all of your team. I'm so proud of all of you and your accomplishments on this wonderful occasion of NPS' Centennial."

"What an inspirational day this 100th anniversary celebration of the Naval Postgraduate School is," Dr. Cermak said in opening her talk reviewing the School's challenges and partnerships reflected in the newly unveiled NPS Centennial Timeline.

Emphasizing the importance of understanding the challenge of information technology in a research university environment, Cermak noted that "ITACS takes the technological challenges proposed, invented and developed by faculty and students and makes the technologies more reliable, more user-friendly, more secure, scalable to enterprise-wide use, more accessible, and adaptable to emerging conditions. ITACS partners with our faculty and students so we're not just reacting to change, but are part of the discovery process."

Three industry leaders gave presentations on the theme "Technology as Mission Critical" -- Casey Palowitch of SUN Microsystems, Cmdr. Don Mitchell of Schneider Electric, and Victor Jacobsen of Xerox Corporation.

"History is the story of military victory through superior information, so information technology is a strategic priority in both war and peace," Palowitch said. "It's a real honor to be part of the IT mission here at NPS, a true gem of research and education that bridges the .mil and .edu domains and is at the cutting edge of providing the nation's cyber defense infrastructure. You're in the hands of terrific leadership as you celebrate your Centennial at the beginning of your most important second century."

"We've been blessed to be able to work with the Naval Postgraduate School," said Xerox's Jacobsen. "When Dr. Cermak arrived I sensed a real change towards looking out to the future, and you moved ahead quickly to reduce costs and consolidate assets. We've forged a remarkable partnership with NPS to test new technology here, like network-based multi-function devices and authentication systems."

The highlight of the event was a retrospective on the evolution of NPS information technology by its founder and leader of over three decades, Professor Emeritus Douglas Williams.

"It's a wonderful experience to be back at NPS after 15 years," said Williams. "When I came here from the University of Edinburgh [Scotland] in 1953, all the students had slide rules and no one used [computing] machines. Soon, NPS was offering two of the first computer science programs in the world. In just two hours, we were able to teach them FORTRAN and, once they had access to the mainframe, were able to solve a whole quarter's problems in only three days. *That* got the faculty's attention."

"The most important message from my 33 years at NPS is that the need to integrate the computer into the educational system is paramount," Williams stressed. "Because of the importance of NPS to the future of the Navy, my goal throughout was to keep NPS at the forefront of academic computing and to make it freely available to all faculty and students in support of research and teaching."

Williams concluded by paying tribute to the computing services team that worked with him throughout those critical decades.

"I'd especially like to acknowledge my deputy and right hand man Dave Norman," Williams said. "He did the specifications and budget and became manager of operations and then Vice Provost for Computing. Dave is an incredible individual and I owe an incredible amount to him."

Former ITACS systems administrator Carolyn Miller and ITACS Financial Manager Jim Hall co-chaired the Centennial Planning and Implementation Committee. Other members were Alyce Austin and Todd Wyatt, who provided web support.

Miller was called back from retirement to oversee collections for the Information Technology Archive in the Ingersoll Hall lobby and the historic photo gallery that now lines the halls. Oliver, Cermak and Williams joined the other speakers and ITACS Executive Director Joe LoPiccolo for a festive ribbon cutting inaugurating the twin displays (see photo).



(Above photo) Naval Postgraduate School President Daniel Oliver, third from right, joined Information Technology and Communication Services (ITACS) leaders and industry speakers in a ribbon cutting ceremony celebrating the inauguration of ITACS' Information Technology Archives and Photo Gallery in Ingersoll Hall at the beginning of Centennial Kick-Off Weekend, May 22. Left to right: Professor Emeritus of Computer Science Douglas Williams; Vice President for Information Resources and Chief Information Officer Christine Cermak, Casey Palowitch of SUN Microsystems, Victor Jacobsen of Xerox Corporation, Oliver, Don Mitchell of Schneider Electric, and ITACS Executive Director Joe LoPiccolo.



Father of Naval Postgraduate School computing services Professor Emeritus Doug Williams, right, guides NPS President Daniel Oliver through ITACS' new Information Technology Photo Gallery in the hall off Ingersoll Lobby, May 22.