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ABSTRACT

Blue Ridge Community College (BRCC), in Flat Rock, North Carolina, has developed a student recruitment package that uses Asymetrix's ToolBook software package to introduce prospective students to the various curricula offered by the college. The ToolBook presentation uses a hypernavigation approach which allows users to directly access the information desired without having to sift through other extraneous information. After deciding upon the format for the presentation, BRCC then designed a basic structure for presenting information about admissions and each curriculum using the fewest possible screens to access any piece of information. The next step, writing the text of the presentation, involved gathering information from the faculty members teaching in each curriculum, thereby ensuring that the most current information would be included in the presentation. This process provides the opportunity for an annual update about each curriculum and for increased communication between the divisions. The largest obstacle BRCC encountered was the time required, approximately 200 hours, to develop the program. Other schools interested in implementing similar programs must be certain of both the funding and technical expertise required to assemble this type of information system. While BRCC's approach assumes that a school representative is working with the prospective students, the system could be modified to work with a student information station or on prospective students' home computers. Sample format screens for the Air Conditioning, Heating, and Refrigeration Curriculum and the technical specifications for the hardware and software used by BRCC are included. (MAB)

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Marketing Your School with Multimedia Technology

A Working Example

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A presentation at the 1993 Annual Conference of the League for Innovation in the Community College, November 15, 1993.

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This presentation demonstrates how Blue Ridge Community College is using multimedia technology to assist in the recruiting process. It highlights a project involving a ToolBook presentation developed to introduce prospective students to the various curricula offered by our college. The presentation covers this project from its inception through implementation, including a demonstration of the program we have developed. Attendees of this demonstration see how our college uses multimedia technology in recruiting and formulate ideas on how they may develop similar applications to assist in promoting their institutions.

In the Beginning...

During the summer of 1992, the North Carolina Department of Community Colleges sponsored a multimedia workshop at the Institute for Academic Technology. This was Terry Robinson's first real exposure to multimedia computing. During this time, he learned the basics of Asymetrix's ToolBook software package, and began developing some applications using this new software.

The Wheels Started Spinning

Upon returning to campus, Terry shared his experiences with Marcia Stoneman and showed her some examples of the work he and others had created during the workshop. Other than just being awed by these new applications, we began realizing the potential power of this software package. By being able to combine text, graphics, pictures, etc., we saw that we could develop an application to assist in presenting our school to prospective students. With Terry's background in computing and Marcia's knowledge of the recruiting process, a natural partnership developed allowing us to explore the possibilities of creating a multimedia recruiting package.

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Defining the Need

We were seeking a better way to disseminate information to prospective students. Initial contact with prospective students is one of the key factors in the recruiting process. While a campus visit is the ideal way to expose prospective students to the programs and curricula offered by a school, many times the student's interest needs to be kindled. By taking an interactive multimedia tour of the campus, the prospective students can become acquainted with the programs that interest them. The viewbook approach is limited in size, thus addressing each curriculum in detail is cost prohibitive. Video presentations are linear by nature and lack the flexibility to tailor to the interests of an individual student. By using a hypernavigational approach, a student interested in welding can be served as efficiently as a business student. As the competition for students becomes more fierce, this type of application can create a memorable impression for the student. The technology is now available to virtually take the campus to the student. We wanted a product we could use in-house, at high schools, mall exhibits, industry visits and at other recruiting opportunities.

Not the Catalog!

As we started developing this program, our first approach was to duplicate much of the information that was in our catalog. After designing several screens that duplicated the catalog's format and information, we asked ourselves the question, "Wouldn't it be easier to just give them a copy of the catalog?" Being a standard college catalog, ours meets all the expected academic criteria, but it does not answer some of the most common questions. People are interested in the practical aspects of career opportunities such as job availability, salary range, licensure, places of employment, and personality and physical requirements. The catalog's format and wording are a little too stilted from many students' perspectives. In presenting the faculty, we could have just listed their degrees, but we wanted prospective students to see them and realize that the faculty members are regular people.

Program Outline

In developing this program, we attempted to design a basic structure that we could use to present each curriculum. We wanted to be able to reach any screen of information with the fewest possible moves. We also wanted to have more information than can be easily fitted on a page. We used hotwords and object linking to accomplish this. The following outline indicates the structure we are using. Note that not all subtopics are appropriate for all curriculums. They are used only when applicable.

- Admissions
  - Application
  - Tuition/Costs
  - Financial Aid
  - Placement Tests
  - Counseling/Advising
  - Registration Day
- Curriculum
  - Introduction
  - Program Description
    - Goals
    - Class Times
    - Program Length
    - Degree Awarded
  - Interests & Abilities
    - Physical Requirements
    - Personality Requirements
    - Self Directed Search Code

General Course Descriptions
Major Classes
Related Classes
Job Opportunities
Job Outlook
Places of Employment
Salary Range
Additional Benefits
Licensure or Certification
Types of Jobs
Faculty
Personnel

Involve the Faculty

After determining our format and developing a curriculum outline, we began writing our text. During the writing, we found that we did not understand all the information we were presenting. If we don't know what we're talking about, how are the prospective students supposed to understand it? We realized that the best resource for explaining this material was the faculty members of each curriculum. By working with the individual faculty members, we were able to get current and accurate information concerning each program. This also makes the faculty feel that others are interested in their programs. Most are proud of their curriculums and excited to see materials being developed to help present it.

Other Functions

In addition to the standard recruiting fare, this program may be used to present the curriculums to advisory committees or to make presentations to local civic organizations (such as ABWA). With this, we can show how current academic programs are structured and how current equipment is being utilized. This is also a good tool for the orientation of new employees.

Additional Benefits

When we began working on this project, we did not anticipate some of the benefits we encountered. We predicted that we would get better information about each curriculum, but did not foresee the amount of detail and the practicality of the information we uncovered.

We see this program as an annual check for keeping updated about each curriculum. At times, each of us encounters a communications breakdown, especially with the growth rate of many institutions. Annual updating of this program should help the persons responsible for recruiting stay informed about current changes in each curriculum.

This is also a device that helps bridge the gap between faculty and Student Services. Many times, people in different departments forget that they are both working toward the same mission in the same institution.

Lastly, this program helps create a high-tech image for the institution. It's one thing to say you have technology, and quite a different issue to demonstrate it.

Problems You May Encounter

The biggest obstacle we have encountered in this project is time. To date, we estimate we have invested approximately 200 man-hours. After completing the groundwork, things have progressed more rapidly. It takes a fraction of the time to develop a curriculum now that we have an idea of what we are trying to accomplish. Ironically, another "problem" is that we can't seem to find a stopping point. We keep asking, "Wouldn't it be nice if ...?" At the rate we're going, this project seems that it will be evolving continually.

At Blue Ridge, we are fortunate to have an excellent support structure. Our administration sees the potential value of this program and feels we are making a significant contribution to the school. In some institutions, persons from two different areas may have difficulty in crossing the imaginary boundaries that exist between divisions. Both of us are known for the fact that we regularly cross these artificial boundaries in our daily work. This made the task easier. Other boundaries that must be overcome may exist between curriculums.

Other potential problems may include money for equipment and the technical expertise required to assemble this type of information system.

Other Possible Multimedia Approaches

The approach we have taken makes the assumption that a representative of the school is working with the prospective student. We have purposely omitted explicit instructions on navigating through the program, because we want to keep the personal contact with our prospective students. This program may easily be modified to work with a student information station or in an interactive kiosk setting.

One program we have seen is designed to send a diskette directly to the prospective student. By nature, the typical community college student lives within a relatively close proximity to the school. Other schools may wish to send a diskette to the prospective student, but this creates technical problems that include, but are not limited to the program size, the number of pictures that can be included, the picture resolution, the depth of information, hardware requirements of the student, etc.

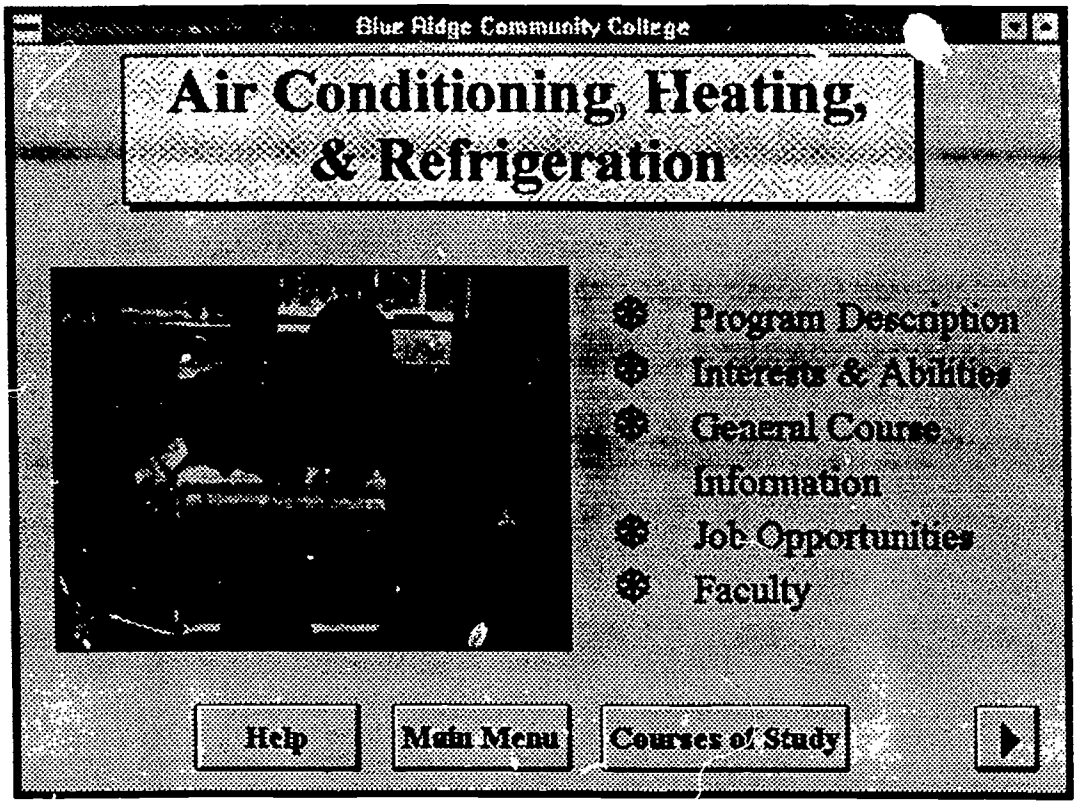
Future Plans

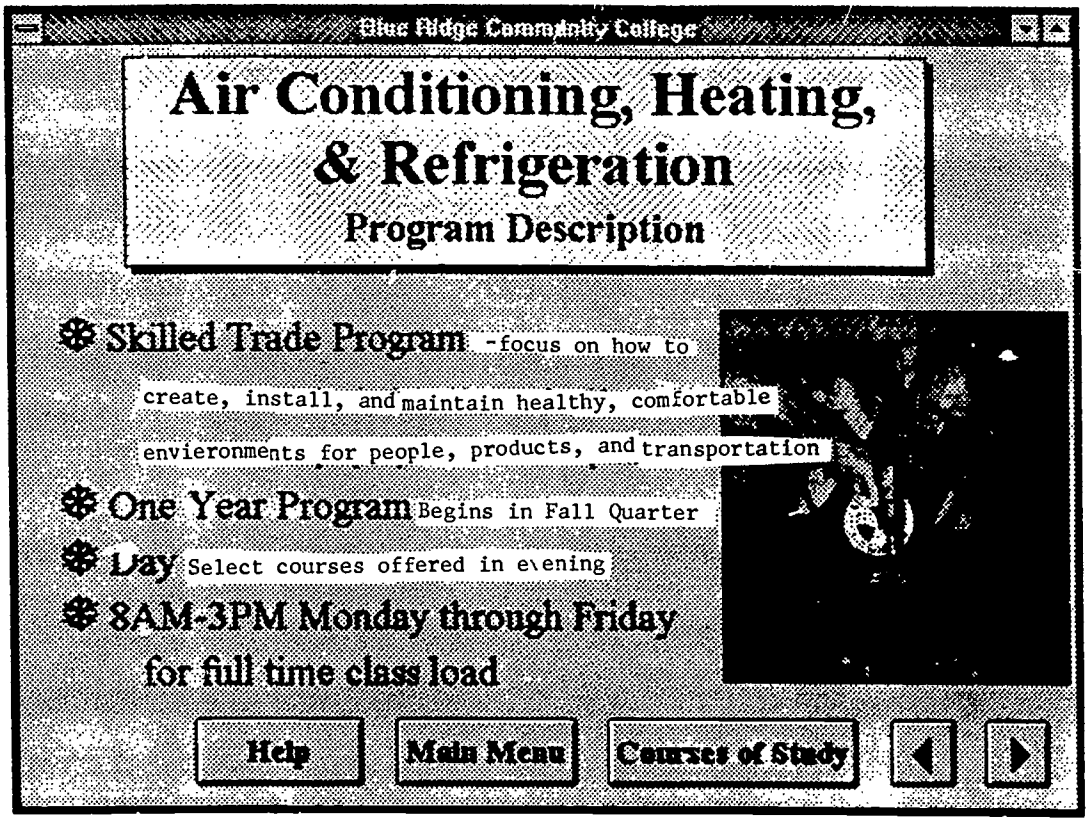
The current focus of this program is on the curriculums offered at BRCC and the admissions procedures, however other areas and functions of the school may be developed in the future. We have already found that a natural outgrowth of this program is a personnel directory. We have already developed biographical information on the faculty, so the staff should not be too difficult to include. Our immediate expansion plans include developing a section to explain the various functions of the personnel in the Student Services area. We also see sections highlighting our continuing education division, educational foundation, small business center, and the Blue Ridge Center for Lifelong Learning evolving, as time allows.

As these new sections are developed, other applications, like orientation class for students and foundation fundraising, will present themselves.

Screens for Air Conditioning, Heating, and Refrigeration Curriculum

The following pages contain a sample of the format we have designed to present each of the curriculums offered at Blue Ridge Community College.





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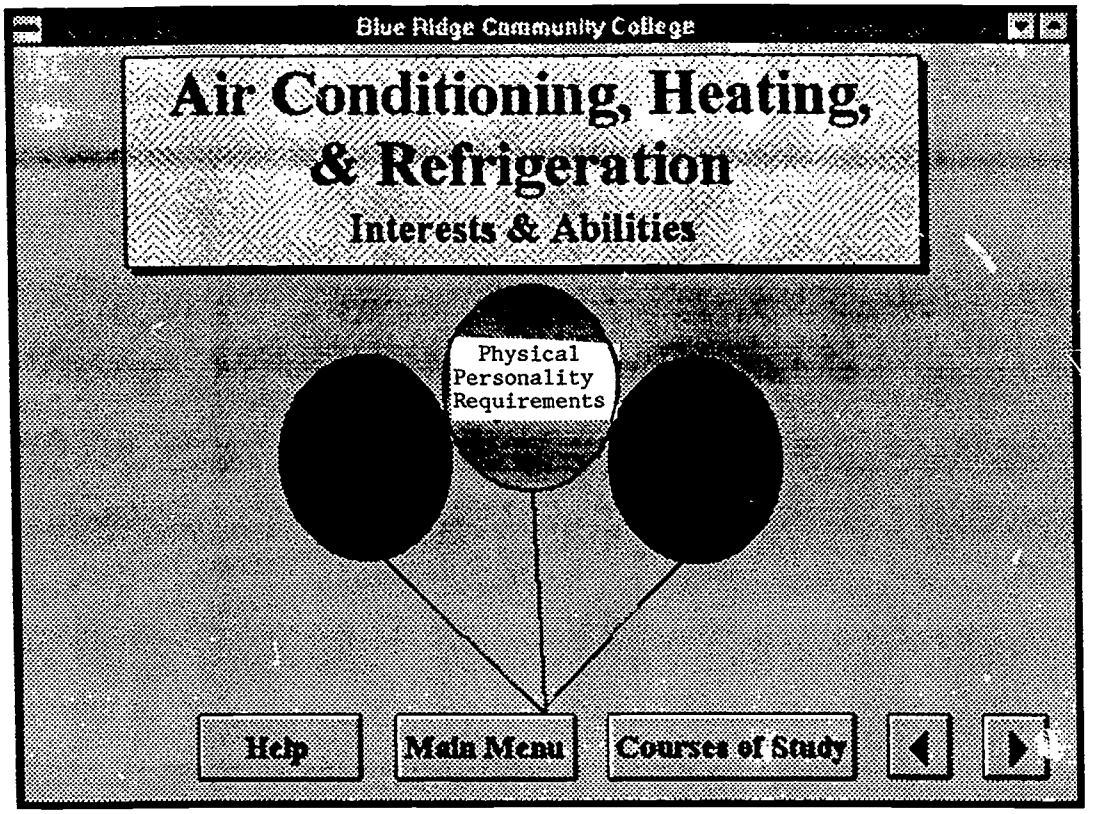

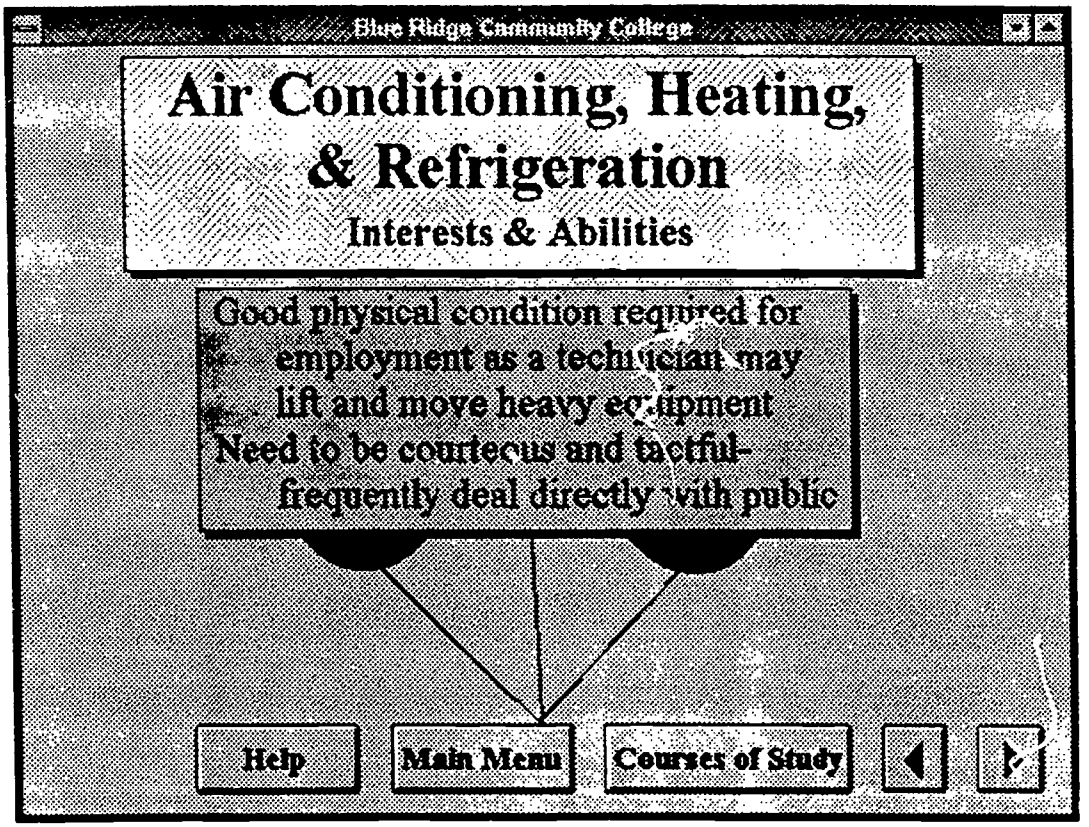

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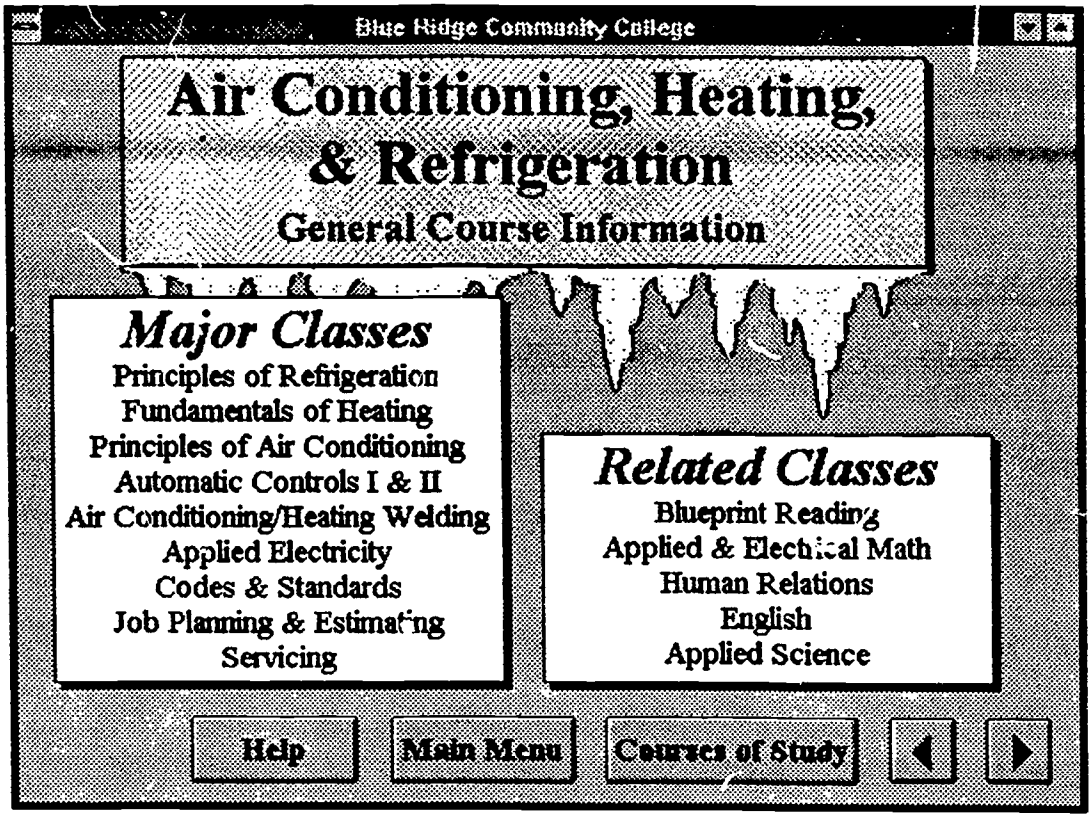
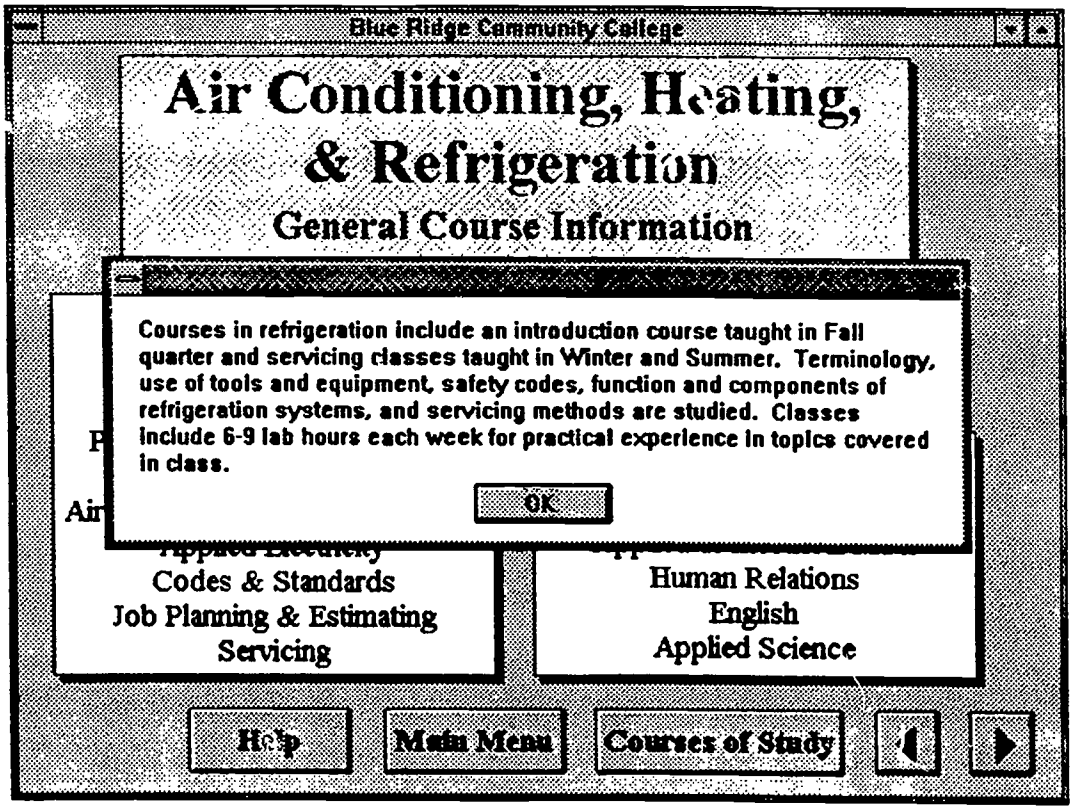
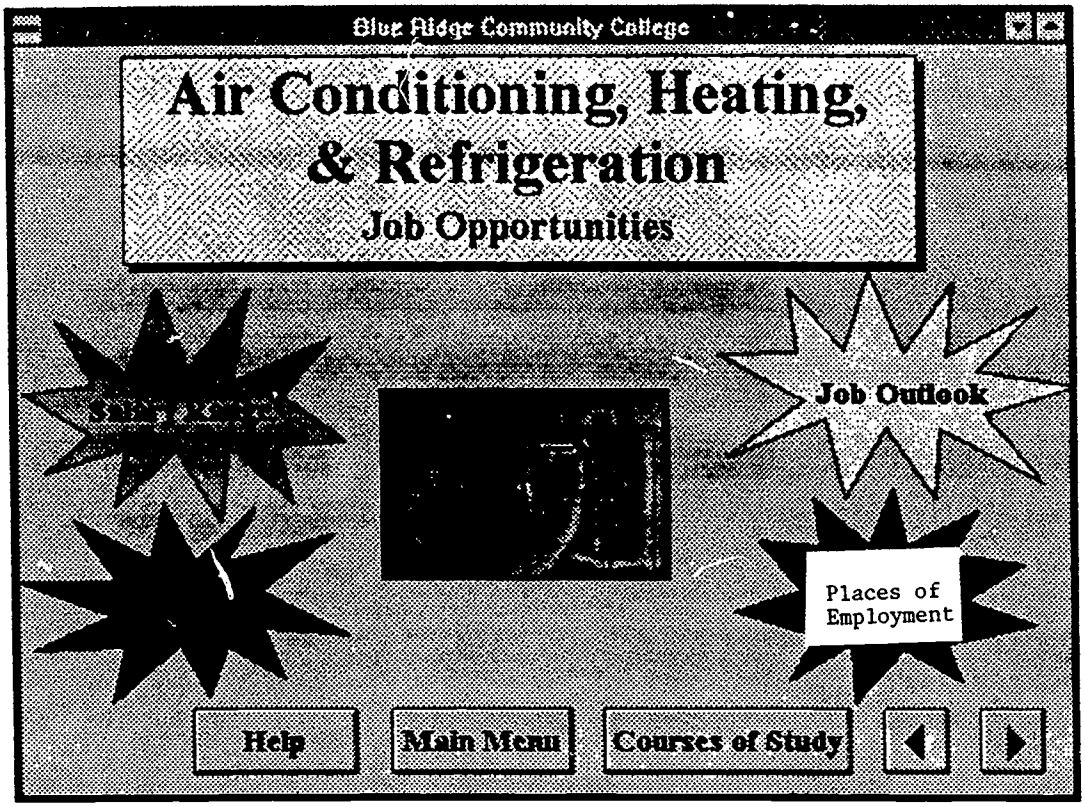
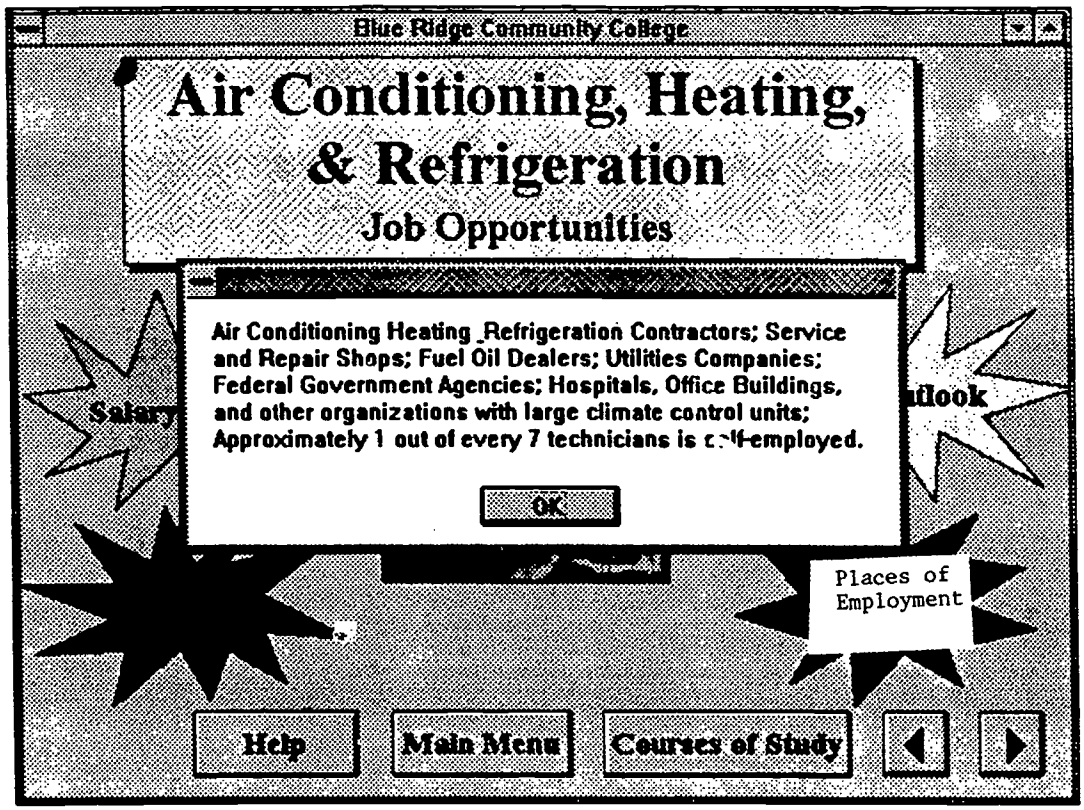
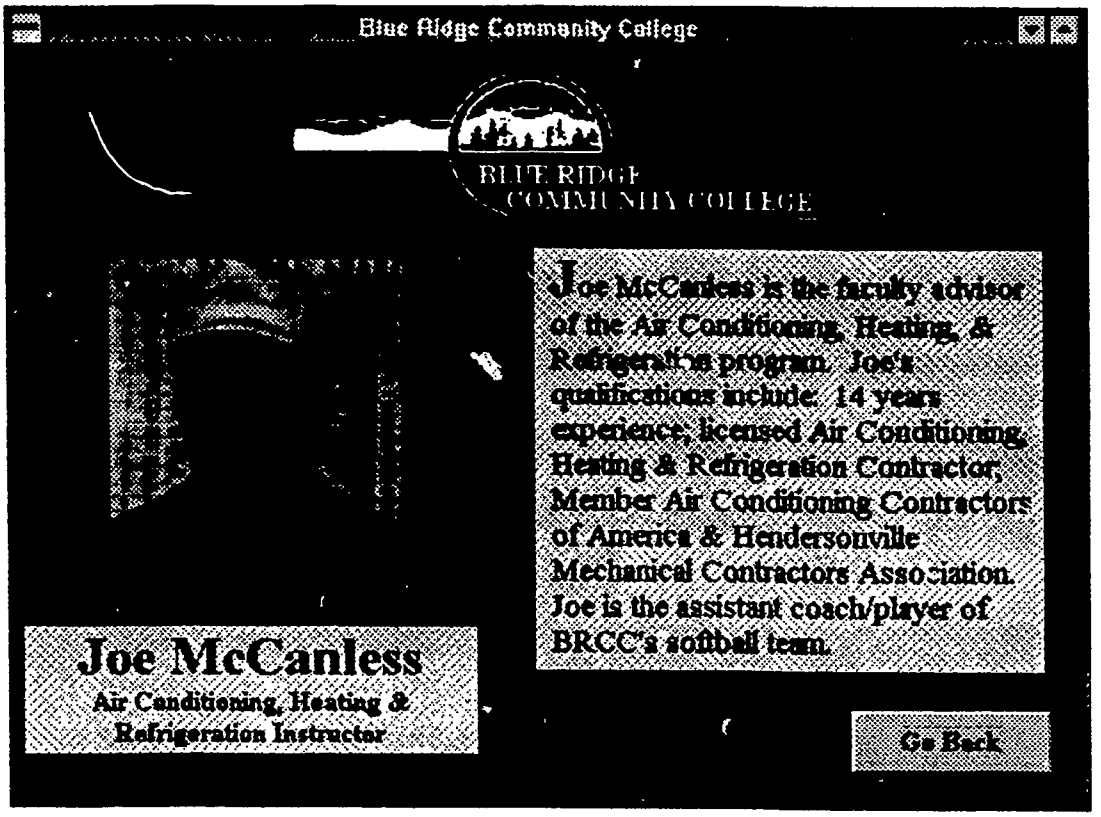

Blue Ridge Community College
Air Conditioning, Heating, & Refrigeration
General Course Information
Major Classes
Principles of Refrigeration
Fundamentals of Heating
Principles of Air Conditioning
Automatic Controls I & II
Air Conditioning/Heating Welding
Applied Electricity
Codes & Standards
Job Planning & Estimating
Servicing
Related Classes
Blueprint Reading
Applied & Electrical Math
Human Relations
English
Applied Science
Help
Main Menu
Courses of Study


Blue Ridge Community College
Air Conditioning, Heating, & Refrigeration
General Course Information
Courses in refrigeration include an introduction course taught in Fall quarter and servicing classes taught in Winter and Summer. Terminology, use of tools and equipment, safety codes, function and components of refrigeration systems, and servicing methods are studied. Classes include 6-9 lab hours each week for practical experience in topics covered in class.
OK
Codes & Standards
Job Planning & Estimating
Servicing
Human Relations
English
Applied Science
Help
Main Menu
Courses of Study


Blue Ridge Community College
Air Conditioning, Heating, & Refrigeration
Job Opportunities
Job Outlook
Places of Employment
Help
Main Menu
Courses of Study


Blue Ridge Community College
Air Conditioning, Heating, & Refrigeration
Job Opportunities
Air Conditioning Heating Refrigeration Contractors; Service and Repair Shops; Fuel Oil Dealers; Utilities Companies; Federal Government Agencies; Hospitals, Office Buildings, and other organizations with large climate control units; Approximately 1 out of every 7 technicians is self-employed.
OK
Places of Employment
Help
Main Menu
Courses of Study



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Technical Specifications

In designing this program, we approached it asking "What will it take to accomplish our goals?" We wanted to present a professional appearance, so we chose to use a graphical user interface with a high quality display, 640 x 480 pixels with 256 color resolution. We also wanted to use a machine that would respond efficiently enough so that users would not become impatient while seeking information. Our program currently requires approximately 20mb of hard disk space (not including the software listed below). Portability of this system was also a consideration.

Commercial Software

- Asymetrix ToolBook 1.53—Primary development environment
- Microsoft Windows 3.1—required for ToolBook
- Microsoft Video for Windows 1.0—Full motion video capability
- DOS 5.0 or higher

Hardware—minimum requirements

- 486sx processor
- 4mb RAM
- 130mb hard disk
- SVGA monitor
- 1mb VRAM
- Video Spigot

Cannon Xapshot Camera for still motion video photography

For portability, we chose a NEC UltraLite Versa laptop computer with 486slc processor, 4 mb RAM, 180 mb hard disk, and an active matrix color display.

Questions or Comments?

Please feel free to contact us at the address listed on the cover. We welcome input on how we can improve our program!

About the Presenters

Marcia Stoneman has been with Blue Ridge Community College for 14 years in the Student Services area. She has been involved with retention, testing, job placement, personal/academic/career counseling, admissions, recruiting, and public information functions. Marcia holds a B. S. in Business Administration from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a M. A. Ed. in Student Personnel Development from Western Carolina University.

Terry Robinson is an instructor of Computer Operations at Blue Ridge Community College. In addition to his teaching responsibilities, Terry serves as consultant/resource for the campus's academic and administrative computing needs. He has also been affiliated with Brevard College, Philips & Dupont Optical Disc Corporation, and several consulting firms. Terry holds a B. S. from the University of North Carolina at Asheville.