New Computer To Be Used For Courses, Study

By BOB HAYES

The joint engineering departments at Rice have recently purchased an IBM 1620 computer. The new computer, housed in the mechanical laboratories, is to be used in connection with both research and regular courses, and for the purpose of teaching engineering students to program.

The IBM 1620 is a moderately small computer, employing transistor in character with very few mechanical parts. With a magnetic core type memory unit, it is capable of storing up to 20,000 digits. These digits may be grouped in numbers of 1 to 20,000, in which case each block of digits is called a word.

THE NUMBER SYSTEM of the 1620 is decimal or base-ten as opposed to the binary or base-to system used in other computers. The new computer here at Rice employs both console typewriter and punch cards as modes of input and output.

According to Dr. Edward Holt, who is in charge of the new computer, the engineering departments plan to subsequently add additional memory units in modules of 20,000 digit capacity. Dr. Holt also plans to hold a basic course in instruction on computers, the second semester of this year for all interested students.