

## The University of Edinburgh

MARCH 1999 VOLUME 9 ISSUE 7

### EdVEC at the Bush

The Edinburgh Virtual Environment Centre (EdVEC) has received the go-ahead to occupy the vacant 'Guinness' building at the Bush Estate, and develop it to house its 3D Capture Studio. (This building was the home of the RCO ICL 2980 computer in the 1970s and three of the EdVEC team are experiencing *déjà vu* as a result).

EdVEC received £380,000 from SHEFC and almost as much from industry to establish the 3D Capture Studio. The Bush building will provide for a gait analysis laboratory, a motion capture studio, a 3D scanning suite, post production facilities, an audio/video editing suite, a seminar/tutorial room, and visitor and office accommodation.

Gait labs allow the study of human or animal motion. The EdVEC gait lab motion capture facilities comprise a set of eight linked high-speed digital cameras, a specialised lighting system, force plates and a workstation. Together they enable a wide range of movements to be observed, captured, modelled and analysed. The EdVEC gait lab should be open around Easter.

Applications include direct observation and understanding of movement, creation of realistic moving animated characters in computer simulations and environments, analysis and diagnosis of disorders in

walking patterns, analysis and improvement of sports performance, and analysis of the ergonomics of prosthetic and sporting equipment. EdVEC is looking for academic and commercial customers for this facility and is in discussion with a number of possible users. From its temporary home in JCMB the equipment is already in use for student and other research projects.

The 3D Capture Studio will also allow the convenient capture and digitisation of solid objects, to provide polygon meshes in many formats. Applications are many and varied. The equipment is already being used to support student projects in facial analysis and simulation, and for the modelling of teeth and cloth. Other applications include the creation of on-line libraries of museum and scientific collections in 3D, reverse engineering of manufactured parts or prototypes, and the digitisation of objects such as sculptures or body parts. We are also working with TV and games companies.

The Bush building is being put into good order and already has full EdLAN network services. We plan to begin setting up the experimental equipment this month, and are investigating ways of enabling people to use these exciting new resources from remote sites.

*John Butler, Roy Middleton (EdVEC)*

## CONTENTS

EdVEC at the Bush	1
MS Access bookmark bug fixed	2
John Butler joins EdVEC	2
EdLAN: lower maintenance charges	2
MacOS 8.5	2
Software Inspection and Software Reuse	2
Is this the way to the holodeck?	2
BCS Computer Graphics Conference	2
Eurographics Conference	2
IT courses	3
EUCS courses	
MIS training modules	
EPCC courses	
Information retrieval research	3
Conference: using C&IT in education	3
Internet Explorer for Mac	3
Change in proxy configuration	3
Exam papers online	3
NESI hits the road	4
Y2K: the biggest fear is fear itself	4
Data Library's enhanced Web site	4
Arts and Humanities on the Web	4
Web corner	4



### MS Access bookmark bug fixed

Last October's issue of *BITs* ([http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/bits/1998/October\\_1998/item11.shtml](http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/bits/1998/October_1998/item11.shtml)) described a potentially serious bug in all versions of Microsoft Access. The bug, which concerns the use of the bookmark facility, can cause updates to be applied to the wrong database record.

Microsoft has now issued fixes for the bookmark bug and a number of other problems in Access 97. The file **Jet35upd.exe** can be downloaded from <http://support.microsoft.com/support/kb/articles/Q172/7/33.asp> which summarises its applicability. The file (without summary) is also available locally from \\UCS-ML0\GUEST\PC\APPATCH\MSACCESS\PT\_access97\Jet35upd.exe. When executed, **Jet35upd.exe** generates a Read-Me file and new dlls for the Jet 3.5 database engine.

Also included in **Jet35upd.exe** is a stand-alone compaction program for Access databases. This program, which is an alternative to the built-in compaction facility provided by Access, will repair and compact Access databases which are deemed unrepairable using the previous built-in Access facilities.

For more information, email the database help desk: **db\_hd@ed.ac.uk**.

*Ed Dee (EUCS)*

### John Butler joins EdVEC

John Butler (Division of Informatics) has joined EdVEC on a 50% secondment. John will act as special projects coordinator and fulfil the role of business/marketing manager. He will also act as the key liaison person between EdVEC and Informatics. His primary task for the present is to prepare the Bush Computer Building for occupancy (see page 1).

*Roy Middleton (EdVEC)*

### EdLAN: lower maintenance charges

The EdLAN maintenance charges proposed for 1999/2000 have been reduced back to the 1997/98 levels, as the income resulting from the general expansion of the network has offset the extra costs incurred this year with EdLAN2 and the incorporation of Moray House. The Network Service charges for Band Y organisations have been retained at the 1998/99 level.

Full details can be found at <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/nsd/nsd-charging.html>

Also at this URL there is a link to a note explaining just how the income from the charges is spent.

Anyone interested in general statistical information about EdLAN should visit <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/nsd/nsd-stats.html>

*Scott Currie (EUCS)*

### MacOS 8.5

The new Apple operating system, MacOS 8.5, is available through the Apple education pricing scheme, which EUCS administers for the University. OS 8.5 runs only on PowerPC Macs with at least 20Mb of memory, and is said to be worth adopting for its Internet-searching capability alone. Called 'Sherlock', this is like the old 'Find' utility, extended to search by content and to search the Internet, very fast. Other features include interface enhancements, faster copying and QuickTime 3.

OS 8.5 costs £40.20 (including VAT), or £29.05 for a licence only. Orders should be sent to EUCS Purchasing, JCMB, The King's Buildings. The complete range of software in the Apple education scheme is shown at <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/tsd/software/Special/apple.shtml>

*Charlotte Moon (EUCS)*

### Software Inspection and Software Reuse

The British Computer Society is organising two software development-orientated talks this month: "Inspection myths and misconceptions" by Dorothy Graham of Grove Consultants on 3rd March; and "The Key to Software Reuse" by Campbell McCausland of Project Technology International on 24th March.

Both talks start at 6:30pm, and are at St. Mary's Land, Holyrood Road (half way between St. Mary's Street and St. John Street) and are open to all, members or not. Abstracts are available at <http://www.cce.hw.ac.uk/~bcsed/98-99/meets.htm>

*David Muxworthy (EUCS)*

### Is this the way to the holodeck?

This is the title of EdVEC's lecture on virtual realities past, present and future in next month's Science Festival. It is at 3pm on Saturday 3rd April, in Old College Theatre One. EdVEC will also have some exhibits in the "Technopolis" Adam House from 3rd to 9th April.

*Roy Middleton (EUCS)*

### BCS Computer Graphics Conference

"Digital Media Futures" runs from 13th to 15th April, in Bradford. Full programme information on the courses and the conference is on the Web at <http://www.sedm.brad.ac.uk/conf/conf99.html>

*Roy Middleton (EUCS)*

### Eurographics Conference

The 1999 Eurographics UK Conference is being held at Fitzwilliam College Cambridge from 13th to 15th April. For details of the programme, tutorials, and booking see <http://info.ox.ac.uk/eg-uk/Camb99/>

*Roy Middleton (EUCS)*

## IT courses

### EUCS courses

The courses being offered by Computing Services for the rest of the Spring term are listed on the Web at <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/usd/iss/courses/>

This site also contains a list – updated daily – of the number of places on each course and the number of vacancies remaining. Bookings must be made on a booking form which can be printed from the Web site or found in course catalogues, and is strictly first-come, first-served.

*Tracey Rawlinson (EUCS)*

### MIS training modules

Full details of the IT training modules offered by Management Information Services are on the Web at <http://www.mis.ed.ac.uk/services/training/timetbla.htm>

Further details are available by sending email to [misusers@ed.ac.uk](mailto:misusers@ed.ac.uk).

*Pat Jackson (MIS)*

### EPCC courses

Edinburgh Parallel Computing Centre's programme of courses in high-performance computing is on the Web at <http://www.epcc.ed.ac.uk/epcc-tec/courses/timetable.html>

Further information is available by email to [epcc-tec@epcc.ed.ac.uk](mailto:epcc-tec@epcc.ed.ac.uk). Postgraduate students can register for some of the courses through the transferable skills programme.

*Elsbeth Minty (EPCC)*

### Information retrieval research

The British Library Research and Innovation Centre has issued a call for proposals for research into information retrieval, with a closing date of 7th May. Full details are available at <http://www.bl.uk/services/ric/research/ir-call.html>

*Simon Matty (British Library)*

## Conference: using C&IT in education

TALiSMAN and LTDI are running a one day conference on 'Using C&IT in Education', covering virtual learning environments and open/distance learning. It is on Wednesday 24th March, at the Strathclyde Graduate Business School.

TALiSMAN is the SHEFC initiative set up in 1996 to support Teaching and Learning in Scottish Metropolitan Area Networks; LTDI is the Learning Technology Dissemination Initiative, also funded by SHEFC.

The Conference, which is free to members of SHEFC-funded institutions, aims to help anyone who is exploring alternative ways of meeting the demands of an expanding and varied student population. It will show how C&IT can be used to widen access, improve choice and extend the learning experiences of non-traditional students, and is aimed at staff in higher education who are developing open and distance learning materials, or who are responsible for developing and implementing institutional policy in this area.

Full details of the conference, and how to book a place, are on the Web at <http://www.talisman.hw.ac.uk/>

*Carol Higgison (TALiSMAN)*

## Internet Explorer for Mac Change in proxy configuration

The instructions for manually configuring Internet Explorer v3 and v4 for the Macintosh have been updated. If you configured your copy of Internet Explorer before 20th February using the instructions in EUCSinfo, then you will need to change the configuration as follows:

- Start Internet Explorer
- Select Edit / Preferences, then Network / Proxies

- Check that Proxies are Enabled
- Check the Protocol is set to HTTP
- Check that the address is **free.cache.ed.ac.uk port 3128**
- In the box marked 'List the sites you want to connect to directly' enter **\*.ed.ac.uk**
- Ensure that 'Use proxy for local servers' is not selected

Full instructions on using the proxy service are given on EUCSinfo at <http://webhelp.ucs.ed.ac.uk/faqs/proxycache.html>

*Graham Rule (EUCS)*

## Exam papers online

It's coming up to the time of year when your students will be pleased – or at least, anxious – to look through past exam papers as part of their revision. The Library has been working hard to collect as many exam papers as possible, to help them.

We are now in the process of scanning most papers received from the 1997-98 academic year (exceptions are exclusions specifically advised by Departments, and papers already available on other Web services). We anticipate completing this process by the end of March.

Please note that access to the exam papers on the Web is limited to users within the University of Edinburgh domain. Exam papers are also available in bound (printed) form in the Main Library Reading Room and in Faculty Libraries.

The latest news from the Library's Web site is summarised at <http://www.lib.ed.ac.uk/lib/news/latenew1.shtml>

A shortcut to the exam papers online is also to be found under 'Quick Access' on the Library Web site. The URL is <http://www.lib.ed.ac.uk/lib/quick/index.shtml>

*Steve Scott (EUL)*

## NESI hits the road

NESI is the New Edinburgh Student Information system, the joint Registry/MIS project to rewrite the University's corporate student record system. The project began in August 1997 and was prompted by two key factors: the proposed merger with Moray House, and the 'millennium bug'.

Much of this work is now nearing completion but in some ways this is really only the start. Information systems are the key to enabling the Registry to provide a quality service – to students, and to academic and administrative colleagues alike. There is little point in accumulating student data in the corporate database if it cannot be made readily available to all who need to use it. We believe that NESI provides a firm foundation on which MIS and the Registry, working jointly, can continue to build.

To gather as much input as possible, the project team intends to hold a number of roadshows. It has put up a Web page which provides regularly-updated information about NESI, to stimulate discussion. The site gives an overview of NESI's functionality, and provides an opportunity to pose questions to the project team and to offer ideas on what information would be of most value.

More details can be found at <http://www.registry.ed.ac.uk/nesi/>  
*Donald Cattanach (Registry)*  
*Shona Mould (MIS)*

## Y2K: the biggest fear is fear itself

In an article in the New York Times on 9th February, 'expert advisers' warned that panic about the Year 2000 problem could be worse than the problem itself. On the other hand, overreaction now may be preferable to overreaction later.

With only ten months to go, you can remind yourself of the problem by visiting the University's Y2K Web pages at <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/Y2K/>

*Jack McAulay (CITS)*

## Data Library's enhanced Web site

The Data Library's Web site – at <http://datalib.ed.ac.uk/> – has a new look and lots of new content for data users. The new design provides a user-focused view of Data Library resources, and shows our place in the University as a division of Computing Services.

Edinburgh users have clear links to dataset holdings, services and contact information, while a single link to the EDINA home page reveals the Data Library's role as a JISC national data centre, separating the national and local functions. A regularly-updated "What's New" section highlights data training and research opportunities.

A new section of the site describes and links to 'Internet sources of data', giving rapid access to data for student reports, background statistics and analysis. There are four ways into this section:

- 1 *Academic Information Gateways*, listing the major UK subject-based gateways for finding all types of research-based information;
- 2 *Major Data Producer Home Pages*, for a source-based approach to learning about available data in the UK;
- 3 *Downloadable Data by Subject*, where each site leads to actual data from a variety of international sources, by academic discipline;
- 4 *Other Pointers to Data Sources*, giving authoritative collections of links for an exhaustive search.

Finally, there is a new facility to sign up for an email announcement list, through which staff may learn about new data and services, and suggest acquisitions.

*Robin Rice (EUCS)*

## Arts and Humanities on the Web

The AHDS leaflet *Arts and Humanities on the Internet*, a printed list of all JISC and HEFC funded HE resources, is available on the Web at <http://ahds.ac.uk/public/ahleaflet.html>

*Julie Wilson (AHDS)*

## Web corner

A useful new Web site for information on major Scottish literary figures is *Gateway to Scottish Authors*. Web pages for 80 Scottish writers from the 14th to 20th centuries provide links to biographies and historical information, bibliographies, quotations, and a growing number of etexts (electronic texts) of poetry, plays and even entire novels.

The sites are all quality-assessed by the staff of the Scottish EARL project, a consortium of public libraries and other partners working on electronic access to resources in libraries under the auspices of the Scottish Library Association (SLA) and the Scottish Library and Information Council.

The Gateway is the most comprehensive and detailed source of information about Scottish writers on the Internet, and is accessible from the SLA's SLAINTE web site hosted by Napier University at <http://www.slainte.napier.ac.uk/> – or directly at <http://146.176.15.249:80/ISC3692>

*Clare Powne (EUL)*

## Edinburgh BITS

**Published by:**  
 Computing Services  
 The University of Edinburgh  
 for the Edinburgh IT community.

**Editor:**  
 Frances Allen  
 Computing Services  
 Main Library, George Square  
 Edinburgh EH8 9LJ  
 Email: [BITS@ed.ac.uk](mailto:BITS@ed.ac.uk)  
 Telephone: 0131 650 3345

**Distribution queries:**  
 Individuals receive *BITS* through their departmental office; departmental secretaries please notify changes in requirements to:

David Muxworthy  
 Email: [D.Muxworthy@ed.ac.uk](mailto:D.Muxworthy@ed.ac.uk)  
 Telephone: 0131 650 3305

*Printed on chlorine-free paper from sustainable forests by:*  
 University of Edinburgh  
 Printing Services, 13 Infirmary Street.

***BITS on the Web:***  
<http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/bits/>

Contributions to *BITS* are welcomed from all readers.

*Copy deadline for April BITS:*  
**Wednesday 17th March**