



The University of Edinburgh

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The Statistical Accounts of Scotland – online

Bringing history to life, online access to the *Statistical Accounts of Scotland* was launched at the National Trust for Scotland in Charlotte Square, Edinburgh on 25th January. Professor T.C. Smout, the Historiographer Royal in Scotland, was among the special guests.

The *Accounts* are two of the best reports of life written at the time of the agricultural and industrial revolutions in Europe, in the 1790s and the 1830s – critical periods in the development of Scotland and Britain. Described as a ‘Domesday Book for Scotland’, the *Accounts* are a National Treasure, but the originals are not readily accessible.

Now the *Accounts* are online, thanks to a Scottish consortium led by SCURL, the Scottish Confederation of University and Research Libraries. They are accessible as a UK Distributed National Electronic Resource and as Digital Scotland content for schools, and will be a valuable historical source for anyone with access to the Web.

What the Accounts contain

The 21 volumes of the first *Account* resulted from a survey of 166 questions put to the ministers of Scotland’s 938 Kirk parishes. The exercise was repeated in the 1830s, with the *New Statistical Account* published in 15 volumes some 15 years later.

The *Accounts* cover a wide variety of topics: wealth, class and poverty; climate, agriculture, fishing, wildlife; population, schools, and ‘moral health’. These are key sources, both for local history and for studying the economic and social impact of the world’s first industrial nation.

Two versions

Eventually, two versions of the service will be available. The free version, now launched, allows the *Accounts* to be searched by the original subject index, keyword or parish name, and the resulting page images to be displayed and printed.

The subscription-based version, to be made available through UK universities and colleges, Scotland’s schools, public libraries and archives, and the National Library and the National Archives of Scotland, will provide a text version of the two *Accounts*. A range of research tools for scholars is in development, to provide better access via a geographical user interface and an index to the statistical tables, maps, and diagrams. Links to other digital resources are planned.

The initial proposal was put forward by the late Henry Heaney (former Librarian of the University of Glasgow). The Universities of Edinburgh and Glasgow provided the printed volumes from their collections. The development was funded by the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC), the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland, NAS, the Gannochy Trust, Friends of Glasgow University Library, SCURL, the Scottish Archives Network (SCAN) and SLIC.

The online service is provided by EDINA at the University of Edinburgh. The launch on 25th January coincided with the EDINA UK National Data Centre’s 5th anniversary celebrations. For access to the service see

<http://edina.ac.uk/>

Barbara Morris, Peter Burnhill (EUCS)

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Learning Technology supplement 4

Universal username scheme

A new scheme for generating computer account-names/usernames/login-names for members of University staff is about to come into effect (the scheme will not initially be extended to visitors). The scheme is being used first for the new dialup service and for the staff mailbox service which will be introduced next month. Also all existing staff accounts in the open-access computing labs will be renamed to reflect the universal name.

The scheme will be implemented progressively on the systems which are run by Academic Services Group, and will be available for any department to use. Although this is an 'opt-in' scheme for departmental system administrators, it is hoped that we will move towards a position where each person has the same account name on all computer systems in the University. This should greatly ease the administration of accounts, and provide a first step to offering a single sign-on for EUCS services.

Under the scheme, as many existing departmental account names as possible have remained the same. New names have been generated where clashes of departmental name have happened or existing names are longer than eight characters. New names are now being generated automatically for new members of staff.

The new name format is up to eight characters long and comprises your first initial plus surname, with possibly a number appended to distinguish identical names. You will only be advised by your computer support person if your login name is to be changed; if not, you should continue to use the login names which you already use.

Full details of the plans are in EUCSinfo at <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/futures/>

Keith Farvis (EUCS)

Electronic Information Services Librarian appointed

The Library is delighted to welcome Simon Bains to the new post of Electronic Information Services Librarian within the Online Services Division.

Simon joined us on 9th January from City University Library. He has significant experience of managing Web-based information and reference services. At EUL he will coordinate the development of electronic information services on the Library's Web site, and manage the Web Development Section of the Online Services Division.

Simon will work with the subject-based Liaison Librarians to ensure that they can make best use of the Library portal – Library Online – in delivering and promoting subject-based online information services. He will act as the Library's contact point for bibliographic resources provided through national licence deals, tackling the vexed questions currently surrounding 'access management' (user credentials and service rights provided via IDs, passwords, machine addresses, etc).

Simon will also develop our range of Web-based reference services. A key challenge will be to improve the Library's ability to obtain management information from its Web-based services, in order that we can deliver a more responsive service through Library Online.

Simon's work will inevitably bring him into contact with colleagues in the other Academic Services, as well as with academic staff and students across the University, and he is looking forward to meeting our users and discussing their priorities with them.

Simon can be contacted on 511825, email Simon.Bains@ed.ac.uk.

John MacColl (EUL)

Electronic journals set-back

For five years the Library has made Academic Press journals available electronically, while continuing to buy the journals in print. This service, 'IDEAL', has been licensed to the UK higher education community through a series of national negotiations.

Academic Press has made new arrangements for 2001 which greatly increase the cost to the University. Consequently, we have decided that we cannot renew electronic access for 2001. We have taken this decision with reluctance, because we appreciate that many academics and students like to use the journals from any terminal on the Internet, and because the move to electronic journals is in line with University Library strategy.

However, we cannot pay the increase, and we must take a stand against inflated price increases which publishers are perpetrating for the electronic versions of their journals. Academic Press has recently been taken over by Elsevier, which may affect the position, and the UK academic library community is putting pressure on Academic Press to be more reasonable.

One option is to cancel the paper subscription, but we could not do this at short notice, without consultation.

We would like to hear from academics, researchers and students about the effects of this decision, and whether we should consider cancelling the print subscriptions to reinstate the electronic ones (though we probably couldn't do this until January 2002 at the earliest). We would also like to hear from anyone who is a member of an Academic Press editorial board, who may be able to put pressure on Academic Press about this.

Please send your comments to Liz Stevenson, Electronic Publications Librarian, Main Library (email L.Stevenson@ed.ac.uk).

Liz Stevenson (EUL)

ResNet: wiring up student accommodation

ResNet – the project to wire up student accommodation – has started, with most of the work at Pollock Halls being completed during the Christmas vacation. The target date for the start of service is early March. Information as we have it, particularly aimed at departmental Computing Officers and managers of systems in the University, is available at <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/nsd/ed-only/resnet/>

Students will be able to plug their own computers into this network, so ResNet presents both an opportunity and a challenge, and you will see that we have taken some steps to control what students can do. There will be a ‘firewall’ between ResNet and the rest of EdLAN, and we will publish the rules as soon as they have been finalised.

I apologise for the “rough and ready” nature of the information, but the project only got the go-ahead in November, and it has taken us until now to sort out the technicalities with Cable & Wireless (the networking subcontractors). We were able to start testing the new network in January.

If anyone wishes to raise any points for discussion, I suggest that the edlan@ed.ac.uk list would be the most appropriate forum.

The ResNet Web site is at <http://www.accom.ed.ac.uk/news/ResNet1.htm>

Scott Currie (EUCS)

The old dial-up service

As announced in *BITs* last month, the old dial-up service (on 466 7112) is to be closed down – though the closure date has been put back a little, to Monday 5th February. If you have not already registered for the new service, please do so now at <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/usd/iss/docs/Dialup/>

Scott Currie (EUCS)

Graphic file formats in question

If you use image files, you should know that support for compressed TIFF files cannot be guaranteed. In future, using them could cost you money. Here’s why:

Bitmap images used in image manipulation packages are often stored in compressed Tagged Image File Format (TIFF) using Lempel Ziv Welsh (LZW) data compression. Unisys has a patent on this and is entitled to charge licence fees for any use of LZW in files (see <http://www.unisys.com/unisys/lzw/default.asp>).

Currently Unisys just charges major software vendors such as Adobe whose packages handle LZW-compressed data. The end user of a package pays a licence fee to Adobe (say), and is then entitled to use the package on LZW-compressed images without further charge. (A list of companies who have negotiated with Unisys for use of the patent can be found at <http://www.unisys.com/unisys/lzw/lzw-companies.asp>)

However, some software companies have recently decided not to pay Unisys. The latest version of IDL, Interactive Data Language, 5.4, removes all support for LZW-compression. Other companies might do the same; Unisys might change its practice: using this file format could become expensive or impractical. Shareware and freeware are unlikely to be covered by a Unisys licence. If you use them, or any unlicensed software, to handle LZW-compressed files, you are potentially exposed to action by Unisys.

You can avoid these problems by using other image file formats. For most purposes we suggest:

- uncompressed TIFF
- JPEG
- Portable Network Graphics – PNG.

PNG was devised by the World Wide Web Consortium as an extensible file format for the lossless, well-compressed storage of raster images, and provides a patent-free replacement for many common uses of TIFF. Up-to-date versions of most Web

browsers can display PNG files (though sometimes inadequately). Further information on PNG is available at <http://www.w3.org/Graphics/PNG/>

All the same warnings apply to the widely-used GIF image format, which always uses LZW compression and is proprietary to Unisys. However, GIF is used mostly on the World Wide Web, and should be safe for the time being. If you use GIF for other purposes, we advise you to reconsider. Apart from possible legal problems, GIF is not a good format for general image storage.

John Blair-Fish (EUCS)

Moving up to Netware 5

There is a draft consultative paper, on the future upgrade of Novell Netware, in the ‘Futures’ section of EUCSinfo, at <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/futures/>

This paper has been presented to the Communications and Information Technology Committee, and it has been agreed that EUCS should now develop proposals for making a move from Netware 4.11 to 5. Departments running a Netware service will be consulted, starting in February. Feedback and input from other departments is also welcomed, to help decide how to take this issue forward during 2001 (please contact Christine Rees, by email to C.Rees@ed.ac.uk).

Andrew McKendrick (EUCS)

Software news

Exceed 7.0

Version 7 of Exceed is now available from EUCS. This release does not contain any major changes, but Windows 2000/ME users are advised to upgrade to it. If you already have licences for Exceed, an upgrade CD is £20. New copies are £50 (including CD and installation guide), or £20 (licence only).

Charlotte Moon (EUCS)

Beware a new email 'scam'...

A new breed of junk mail is making its way into the University – and trying to take your money off you. EUCS uses various techniques to try and filter out unwanted mail, but these all depend on reliably identifying the mail as junk – and can be circumvented if the message is rewritten each time it is distributed.

This is exactly the process used by the new scam – which was originally distributed by fax but has now been seen in some numbers in the University as email. The message purports to come from someone wishing to move money into the UK monetary system in return for a generous commission. The common elements of these emails are:

- they come from an African country (Sierra-Leone/Nigeria/Ghana)
- the writer is a government official or business consultant
- the sums are large, usually around \$40 million
- the money was acquired as the over-invoiced amounts on a contract or was held by the Minister of Finance in his basement
- generous commissions of between 10% for 5 years or a once-off 27% are offered.

Be warned that these schemes are fakes: you are asked to put up some money to guarantee your good faith – and you won't see that money again. It sounds too good to be true – and it is. The soundest advice is to ignore the offer and delete the message.

The contact telephone and fax numbers change with each incarnation of the text so are difficult to trace. As the perpetrators are overseas it is extremely difficult to bring UK legislation to bear on them. In the US, the FBI has set up a site (at <http://www.ifccfbi.gov/>) to allow such frauds to be reported, but at present there is no such mechanism in the UK.

Jack McAulay (CITS)

Student computer training

'Computing for the terrified'

During February EUCS is running its courses for people who haven't used computers before and don't know where to start. We particularly ask Directors of Study to encourage any of their students in this category to consider this gentle introduction to the world of IT. Full details are in EUCSinfo at <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/usd/ungrad/>

Computing tutorials

EUCS is following up its Beginners' Sessions with a series of free tutorials on various topics this term, comprising a talk, a demonstration and a supervised practical session in a computing lab. All Edinburgh students (undergraduate and postgraduate) and staff are welcome. There is further information and a booking form at the above Web address.

Noel Millar (EUCS)

IT training in the LRC

A series of events in the Learning and Resource Centre (LRC) in the Main Library in February and March will introduce such topics as disability awareness and support, finding information on the Web, spreadsheets, Word and PowerPoint, along with general awareness sessions. Details are at <http://www.asg.ed.ac.uk/lrc/>

Jenny Ansett (EUL)

BCS meeting: mobile computing via your 'phone?

Anthony Harford, Mobile Communications Consultant at BT Cellnet, will talk on "Mobile phones – essential tools for 'computing on the move' or just the latest gadget?" at 6.30pm on Thursday 15th February at the Apex Hotel in the Grassmarket. (Please note the change of date since the original announcement.)

The meeting, organized by the local branch of the BCS, is open to all. Refreshments will be served from 6pm. The Web site for further details is at <http://www.cee.hw.ac.uk/~bcsed/00-01/meets.htm>

David Muxworthy (EUCS)

Streaming media presentation

Computing Services is running a lunchtime seminar about the Streaming Media Service on Wednesday 7th March between 12 and 2pm in the Brenda Moon Room, Main Library. This seminar is open to staff and postgraduates who are interested in publishing audio and video over the University network EdLAN, JANET and the Internet using this service.

A number of University departments are already publishing teaching and research materials on this server, and during this lunchtime session EUCS staff will give a presentation about the service and demonstrate some of the materials currently being published.

If you would like to attend, send email to stream-media@ed.ac.uk.

A streaming media presentation about the service is available at <http://webhelp.ucs.ed.ac.uk/services/media/presentation.html>

Arthur Wilson, John Smith (EUCS)

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Contributions to *BITS* are welcomed from all readers.

Copy deadline for March BITS:

Tuesday 13th February