

The University of Edinburgh

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Science Festival

The British Computer Society is organizing two major events in April during the International Science Festival.

The all-day **Sidney Michaelson Memorial Symposium** on 'Artificial Intelligence: Feats and Frontiers' features Marvin Minsky of MIT and Mike Brady of Oxford University, at Pollock Halls on 7th April. Further details are at <http://www.dcs.napier.ac.uk/~mac/AI.html>

Tim Hubbard of the Sanger Centre, Cambridge (which led the UK's human genome mapping effort) will give a talk 'Computing the Human Genome' at 3pm on Sunday 15th April, in the Royal Museum, Chambers Street. "Now that the first draft of the human genome sequence is out, where do we go from here? Who will control it – governments or commercial companies? And to what extent will the Internet and other new software technologies be used to provide access to this data?" Tickets cost £5 (£3) from the Science Festival box office. Members of the BCS and associated societies may obtain tickets free of charge from the BCS branch secretary. Further details are at <http://www.cce.hw.ac.uk/~bcsed/00-01/meets.htm>

David Muxworthy (EUCS)



Sidney Michaelson died 10 years ago, yet we continue to benefit from his vision and his inspiration.

IT in the Science Festival

There isn't as much IT as usual in this year's Science Festival, but the following items may be of interest:

- 'Creation: life and how to make it', by Steve Grand, architect of "the first computer game to use real artificial life" (9th April).
- 'The Net Generation', by Jim Schnitz of IBM Global Education: "should schools be preparing pupils for their future rather than our past?" (12th April).
- 'Surfing for Science: using the WWW', practical sessions particularly useful for newcomers to the Internet (9th to 12th April).

The Festival's Web site is at <http://www.sciencefestival.co.uk/>

Nick Stroud (EUCS)

Investigating the use of data in teaching

A project led by the Data Library, with partners at the Data Archive, EDINA, the LSE Data Library and MIMAS, has released findings from a survey of UK universities. Heads of departments and lecturers in Social Sciences and related disciplines were asked about their use of numeric data in teaching and supervising students, their experience of national data services, barriers to using data in teaching, and the extent of support available within their institutions for using and teaching with datasets. The 206 responses from 110 departments gave us a healthy 44% response rate.

The report, with information and outputs from the project, is available from the project home page, at <http://datalib.ed.ac.uk/projects/datateach.html>

Robin Rice (EUCS)

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EDINA Learning & Teaching projects

Could you help specify user requirements for two JISC-funded Learning and Teaching (L&T) projects currently being undertaken by EDINA?

This work will make many of EDINA's services more relevant to L&T practitioners. If you are interested in contributing to either or both of the following projects, please let me know (email Moira.Massey@ed.ac.uk).

Xgrain

The effectiveness of learners in finding and evaluating information from primary data sources, and in developing research skills, is an important concern for educators. There is increasing recognition that undergraduates need support to become researchers in their own right and that these learning outcomes need to be addressed within the curriculum.

EDINA is leading a JISC-funded project, Xgrain (pronounced "crossgrain"), which is developing cross-searching facilities between relevant services across the tertiary education sector, and L&T materials to support learning outcomes as discussed above.

Xgrain is part of the umbrella JOIN-UP Programme, which is addressing the linkage between references found in discovery databases, and the services that provide full-text material, whether in printed or electronic form.

Further information about JOIN-UP, Xgrain and other projects is at <http://edina.ac.uk/projects/joinup/>

Digimap e-MapScholar

This project aims to provide a range of L&T materials to support learning about spatial concepts and the use of geo-spatial data.

Currently, there is a skills/concepts gap in Digimap between creating a map, which is very easily accomplished, and downloading digital map data for use in a Geographical Information System

(GIS) or drawing software package.

This project will fill the gap, supporting both those learners who need to progress to using GIS, and those who simply need to understand how to use geo-spatial data more effectively. The learning materials provided will be customisable by lecturer or student, and will offer the chance to integrate other data, including data collected by the student, and undertake visual problem-solving exercises in 2D & 3D.

For more about e-MapScholar, see <http://edina.ac.uk/projects/mapscholar/>

Moira Massey (EUCS)

Online Information

The new or improved services described here are all available via Library Online, at <http://www.lib.ed.ac.uk/>

All services except The Statistical Accounts of Scotland are at <http://www.lib.ed.ac.uk/lib/resources/databases/findlita.shtml>

The Statistical Accounts of Scotland can be found at <http://www.lib.ed.ac.uk/lib/resources/collections/elrefcol/>

Athens accounts are required for some services: these can be created online, following the instructions at <http://www.lib.ed.ac.uk/lib/resources/databases/athens.shtml>

ChildData

This is an information service provided by the National Children's Bureau in London. It contains information about books, reports, journal articles, conferences, meetings and organisations concerned with children. (A username and password are required – and are available from Library Online.)

FirstSearch

This service is now available through Athens, and all registered Athens users should be able to use their usernames and passwords to access FirstSearch at <http://firstsearch.uk.oclc.org/athens/>

The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians

This database gives access to 29,499 articles, including biographies of composers, performers and writers on music.

The New Grove Dictionary of Opera

This dictionary covers all aspects of opera, from composers, librettists and social history to singers, conductors and directors, to cities, opera houses, costumes, choreography and design.

Palmer's Index to The Times

This index to the Times newspaper covers the years 1790 to 1905 (full-text for the period 1800-1870). An Athens account is required.

PsycINFO

This contains citations and summaries of journal articles, book chapters, books and technical reports, and citations to dissertations, in the field of psychology and psychological aspects of related disciplines, from 1887 to the present. An Athens account is required.

Statistical Accounts of Scotland

These are the two Statistical Accounts of Scotland, covering the 1790s and the 1830s.

Simon Bains (EUL)

The 2001 Milner Lecture

The Laboratory for Foundations of Computer Science presents the 2001 Milner Lecture. Christos Papadimitriou (C. Lester Hogan Professor of Computer Science, University of California, Berkeley) will speak on 'Algorithmic Problems Related to the Internet', at 4.30 pm on 23rd May, in the Law Lecture Theatre, Room 175, Old College. Details are at <http://www.lfcs.informatics.ed.ac.uk/milner/>

This is a public lecture, open to all, and one of a range of events in the University's Informatics Jamboree, which runs from 23rd to 25th May.

Ian Stark (Division of Informatics)

Upgrade for EBIS service

The University's Estates and Buildings Information Systems – EBIS – team has been working closely with MIS and the Estates & Buildings Computer Representatives to allow E&B workstations to be the first in Support Group 2 to be upgraded from Windows 95 to Windows 2000 Professional.

The timing was vital so that the Archibus package could be upgraded at the same time, as the old version does not run on Windows 2000 and the new one does not run on Windows 95.

The EBIS team has spent several months testing the new system, preparing new user guides and arranging training for over 100 users. The Computer Reps have upgraded over 100 PCs in record time as well as coping with their day-to-day workload. Target dates were all achieved thanks to the effort put in by everyone. The result is an improved, more reliable and easier system that will allow us to take advantage of the latest technology for the next few years.

Lesley Weaver (EBIS)

5th ICCS/IFIP Conference on Electronic Publishing

ELPUB2001 – “2001: an Electronic Publishing Odyssey” – takes place at the University of Kent at Canterbury in July, to bring together academics, managers, developers and users working on issues of electronic publishing for public, scientific and commercial applications. Details are at <http://www.tu-chemnitz.de/pm/elpub2001/>

Digital Library Toolkit

Sun Microsystems has published the second edition of its 'Digital Library Toolkit'. Anyone planning a digital collection can get a free copy from <http://www.sun.com/products-n-solutions/edu/libraries/digitaltoolkit.html>

J.W.T. Smith (UKC)

New MIS-managed Desktop

MIS has begun the rollout of its new managed desktop service to over 1,000 PC users in Support Group 2, and MIS and MALTS departments within Academic Services Group.

The service is based around MIS's fifteen Netware 5.1 file servers and three Microsoft NT4 servers. The standard package includes:

- Microsoft Windows 2000 Professional
- Microsoft Office Pro 2000 (with Access)
- Microsoft Frontpage 2000
- Microsoft Internet Explorer 5.5
- Adobe Acrobat Reader 4
- McAfee VirusScan
- Novell ZENworks
- Pegasus Mail
- CaLANdar diarying/scheduling
- Kea 420 Terminal Emulation
- Netscape Communicator

After lengthy testing and evaluation, and in order to achieve acceptable performance levels across all supported systems, we revised the minimum hardware specification for our managed desktop to a Pentium PII computer with 128MB RAM and 2GB internal hard disk. It is not cost-effective to upgrade Pentium PI computers to this level, so these computers will remain on Windows 95 until replaced this Autumn.

Early indications confirm that the new configuration provides a better, more resilient and supportable platform. The next stages in the development of our service will be to transfer our email set-up to the new University Staff Email service, and to introduce a new campus-wide diarying/scheduling service available to all staff from this Summer.

For further information on MIS services please refer to <http://www.mis.ed.ac.uk/NEWS/news.htm>

Bryan MacGregor (MIS)

Trust nobody

Computers within the Edinburgh domain are constantly being probed electronically from outside, by people who are looking for security holes which they can exploit for mischief. The tools to do this are readily available over the Internet.

In order to keep a step ahead of these 'virtual burglars', EUCS has commenced a regular sweep of hosts to establish machine characteristics. Further tests and checks will be carried out in due course, and Computing Officers will be notified of any vulnerabilities that are found.

If you have any questions about this, please email eucs-scan@ed.ac.uk or phone Alan Boyd (EUCS) 650 7768.

Jack McAulay (CITS)

Information Society Symposium

A one-day conference on the theme of 'Teaching the Information Society' will be held at Napier University on 18th May. The many conferences devoted to exploring the information society are generally of two types only: research-led, with a sociological emphasis, or industry-oriented, reporting 'leading-edge' technology. This conference offers a rare opportunity to exchange ideas on how to *teach* the information society.

For more information, contact Dr Alistair Duff, Lecturer in the Information Society, School of Communication Arts, Napier University, Craighouse Road, Edinburgh EH10 5LG (tel 0131 455 6163/6150, email a.duff@napier.ac.uk).

Lecture: 'Information Warfare'

The previous day, Prof Blaise Cronin (Indiana University) will address the topical issue of information warfare – at national, corporate and personal levels – in the fifth Epixtech Information Society Lecture, at 5:30pm on 17th May, at the Craiglockhart Campus, Napier University, 219 Colinton Road, Edinburgh. Further details are available from Dr Duff.

Alistair Duff (Napier University)

What happens on the walk to the Postbox...

Electronic mail is a wonderful tool. It provides very low cost, almost immediate messaging unhampered by some of the constraints of conventional letter writing.

Email does have its problems, however. For example, its immediacy can be a double-edged sword. In contrast to a telephone call, it is very difficult to convey tone in an email message – and what one person sees as light humour or mild rebuke might at its destination look like an insult or a challenge to war. And, unlike a letter, the message can be sent instantaneously – in the heat of the moment. With no reflective walk to the postbox, words typed and sent in haste can return to haunt us. It is even worse when a hasty reply is unintentionally sent to the entire original recipient list...

So whenever you are sending an email message, pause to think before you click the Send button!

There is plenty of information about electronic etiquette. For example, Pmail includes built-in etiquette documentation, and these are some of many sources on the Web:

- <http://www.iwillfollow.com/email.htm>
- <http://www.learnthenet.com/english/html/65mallet.htm>
- <http://www.albion.com/netiquette/>

James Jarvis (EUCS)

Politically incorrect virus

A new virus called “The Naked Wife” appeared recently. Unfortunately for an American government department, the message which was intended to warn its users against this virus was automatically deleted from its mail servers because it contained the word ‘naked’, and was therefore thought to be undesirable spam...

UK earth science image database

The British Geological Survey has launched the ‘National Archive of Geological Photographs’ on the Web, at <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/photoarchive/home.html>

The site has 6,500 photographs out of a total collection of 100,000+ taken by the Survey since 1892. The majority of the images are field photographs taken in classic areas of UK geology, and range from aerial photographs through to photomicrographs of thin sections of rock and minerals, together with a selection of stunning shots of the recent volcanic eruptions on Montserrat.



Mountains of Mamore Forest looking westwards down Glen Nevis

An illustrated history of the British Geological Survey photograph collection and screensavers made with selections of the photographs are available as a free download at <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/photography/articles/home.html>

(Photograph/extract etc. courtesy of the British Geological Survey.)

Bob McIntosh (BGS)

Two holidays in April

The University observes two holidays in April – the 9th and the 13th – when all its buildings will be closed and there will be no EUCS or Library services (except in the Western General Hospital Library). The KB Centre and Greenfield computing labs will be accessible to those with entry cards. The Main Library is open until 9pm on Wednesdays during the vacation. All services are back to normal when the new term starts on 16th April.

Jeff Phillips (EUCS)

EdLAN charges 2001/2002

The EdLAN charges for 2001/2002 have just been published, at

<http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/nsd/nsd-cho102.html>

Maintenance charges have been held at the same level as 1999/2000, following two years of reductions. This is largely because of uncertainties over future equipment maintenance costs (we are out to tender for the largest part of it), and the replacement of EaStMAN where there may be a three-month overlap period when we have to pay for both old and new networks.

Network Service charges, which reflect our staff costs and are paid by “Band Y” and external customers, are being increased by some 3%, the first increase since August 1998.

Scott Currie (EUCS)

Edinburgh BITS

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Contributions to *BITS* are welcomed from all readers.

Copy deadline for May BITS:

Monday 16th April