



The University of Edinburgh

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Open-access Labs

Annual upgrade

Preliminary plans for upgrading the University's open-access Computing Labs, which takes place over the Summer vacation, have been published in the 'Future Developments' section of EUCSinfo, at <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/futures/>

These plans take account of advice we have already received from departments and faculties, but feedback on matters of detail is most welcome and should be sent to Christine Rees (email C.Rees@ed.ac.uk). Comments on matters of strategy should be addressed to me (email A.McKendrick@ed.ac.uk).

Andrew McKendrick (EUCS)

Departmental software in the Labs

The software provided in the open-access Computing Labs consists of both a core set of packages for things like wordprocessing and email, and specific packages requested by departments which students need for their courses.

The upgrade programme which takes place over the Summer vacation requires that the overall software collection is known and assembled in June, to give us time to check that we have a consistent setup which has been tested on all the different hardware configurations in time for the start of the new session in the Autumn.

The Communications and Information Technology Committee supports our request that departmental course organisers should let us know of their lab software requirements by the end of May (email C.Rees@ed.ac.uk). We appreciate that this may be difficult in some cases, for example when the

necessary software is not yet available, and we will certainly do our best to incorporate later requests into the released system, but cannot guarantee to do so.

Christine Rees (EUCS)

The HE Archives Hub and EUL

The Higher Education Archives Hub is a gateway to the holdings in the special collections and archives departments of UK universities. Within the Web site there are descriptions of these collections. The recently redesigned search mechanism of the HE Archives Hub is at <http://www.archiveshub.ac.uk/>

Following its contribution to the pilot phase of the Archives Hub, EUL's Special Collections Division has recently succeeded in winning resources to participate in the next phase of its development. The funding is administered by the JISC (Joint Information Systems Committee) and its Committee for Electronic Information (JCEI), and will apply until July 2003. The Lothian Health Services Archive – which is located within the Division – was also successful in its bid for resources, and its funding will apply until January 2002.

The teams from the Special Collections Division join over 30 other Hub participants across the UK, of which nearly one third are Scottish repositories. To browse the descriptions submitted so far from EUL, go to the above Web address, select the 'Advanced' option, then at 'Repository' select 'Edinburgh' from the pop-up menu, and then 'Search'.

Graeme D. Eddie (EUL)

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News for Apple users

Mac OS X

The latest version of the Mac Operating System – OS X (pronounced “OS ten”) – was released at the end of March. It includes important new features, such as memory protection which can cope with a crashing application and keep the Mac and its other applications running smoothly.

It is not a final product, and will be evolving steadily in the coming months, with a major step forward in July when OS X is expected to become the default system on all new Macs. Indeed, the first update to the new system has already been released, and can be installed using ‘Software Update’ in OS X’s System Preferences.

General advice about OS X seems to be that enthusiasts should buy it now, as should people who need to know about it so that they can support it when it becomes more widely used later in the year; otherwise it may be sensible to hold off buying OS X until it is more complete and more applications are available for it, or until you buy your next Mac if you are planning that in the near future. The journal *Macworld* is tracking the progress of key Mac products for OS X at <http://www.macworld.com/2001/03/21/osx-road.html>

Scotsys has set up a Mac Forum, where people who want to learn more about OS X can post technical issues and questions, and exchange news and views about the new system. The Forum is at <http://disc.server.com/Indices/151383.html>

You can join Apple’s own email list for Mac OS X product news at <http://applenews.lists.apple.com/subscribe/>

(Mac OS X requires a G3 or G4 Mac with at least 128Mb of RAM, and costs £59+vat.)



Nick Stroud (EUCS)

Local Mac User Group

Mac enthusiasts might be interested in the Edinburgh Mac User Group, ‘edMUG’, which caters for a range of expertise and experience. This meets monthly, usually at George Heriot’s School, not far from the University in the central area. You can find out more from our Web site, where you can join our mailing list, get copies of our magazine, find useful links, and more. The URL is <http://www.edmug.org.uk/>

Philip Williams (edMUG)

Virtual Training Suite

Enhance your Internet skills

The Resource Discovery Network’s (RDN) Virtual Training Suite will be launched at six locations, including Edinburgh University Library, on 9th May. Three of the tutorial authors will be at the Edinburgh launch, hosted by EEVL: ‘Internet Geographer’ author Pete Maggs, ‘Internet for Electrical Engineering’ author Nicola Harris, and ‘Internet for Social Statistics’ author Robin Rice, of the Data Library.

The RDN Virtual Training Suite was developed for the UK Higher Education community through two JISC-funded projects, and provides a set of free Web-based tutorials to help students and lecturers develop their Internet information skills and to enhance the use and value of the Resource Discovery Network for the learning and teaching communities.

There are 38 tutorials, offering a subject-based introduction to discovering, choosing and using high-quality Internet resources. They aim to help lecturers seeking to teach information skills in their curriculum, librarians who need tools to support their user-education programmes, and learners wanting self-paced help to improve their Internet information skills.

The Virtual Training Suite is at <http://www.vts.rdn.ac.uk/>

Robin Rice (EUCS)

Learning Technology Supplement

The 5th Learning Technology Supplement included in this issue of *BITs* is edited by Nora Mogeys of MALTS, who welcomes comments and contributions for future issues (email Nora.Mogeys@ed.ac.uk).

John Murison (EUCS)

‘Rich text’ in email

Some email programs allow you to use more than just plain text: you can change font, colour, size, style and so forth, the resulting message using HTML, MIME encoding or Rich Text Format to achieve the result.

However, there are good reasons why you should *not* use these features, unless you *know* your recipient wants them: for example, some mail programs can’t handle this formatting, which may leave your message almost unreadable at the other end, and it can be difficult for people who use text-to-speech or text-to-Braille systems.

Helen Talbot (EUCS)



IMHO ?

Do you occasionally see things like :-) or :-(in your email messages and think they’re random misprints? Or mysterious acronyms like IIRC and ROTFL? You can find out what these ‘emoticons’ and acronyms mean at many Web sites, including <http://www.datacomm.ch/~silver/smile2.htm>

Nick Stroud (EUCS)

Linux dialup

There are comprehensive instructions for using the University’s new dialup service from a Linux computer at <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/scisup/faq/linux/wvdial.html>

James Jarvis (EUCS)

Informatics Jamboree 2001**Psychology Building, George Square, 23-25 May 2001**

The third annual Informatics Jamboree starts with the Milner Lecture, at 4:30pm on 23rd May, given this year by Christos Papadimitriou on 'Algorithmic Problems Related to the Internet' (details at <http://www.lfcs.informatics.ed.ac.uk/events/milner-lecture/2001.html>).

Prof Papadimitriou will give a second talk later in the Jamboree on 'The Complexity of Multiobjective Optimization'.

Other invited speakers include Prof Nir Friedman (Hebrew University), and Dr Paolo Traverso (IRS, Trento, Italy). Prof Friedman will give talks on 'Using Probabilistic Models to Understand Gene Properties and Interactions' and 'Understanding Cancer by Analyzing Multiple Gene Expression Patterns'; Dr Traverso will talk on 'Planning as Model Checking'.

Informatics Staff who have been appointed in the past year have been invited to give short talks as a way of introducing themselves to the rest of the Division. As in previous years, there will be a research poster competition for postgraduate students, with prizes for winners and runners-up, and ample lunches for everyone on both Thursday and Friday. This year, the poster competition will be judged by a committee of students from within the Division. The final event of the Jamboree will be a Ceilidh on 25th May to which everyone and their family are invited. The Jamboree Web site is at <http://www.informatics.ed.ac.uk/events/jamboree/>

Talks at the Jamboree are open to all members of the University. For further information, contact Diana Sisu (email diana.sisu@ed.ac.uk).

Bonnie Webber (Informatics)

Institutional Web Management Workshop

The Web site for the Fifth Institutional Web Management Workshop, to be held at Queen's University, Belfast, from 25th to 27th June, is now open, at <http://www.ukoln.ac.uk/web-focus/events/workshops/webmaster-2001/>

This year's workshop is half a day longer than previous events, allowing more time for interactive sessions. The cost for the three-day event is £250, which includes three nights' accommodation, workshop materials, a social programme, breakfasts, lunches and the conference dinner.

Brian Kelly (UKOLN)

e-BOOKS: what's in them for us?**A seminar in EUL, 9:30-4, 7th June**

'A publishing revolution is underway and books are going e!' This is the theme of this seminar, arranged jointly by SCURL (the Scottish Confederation of University and Research Libraries) and SLAMIT (the Scottish group of the Library Association Multimedia, Information & Technology Group), which will bring together speakers from major e-book players including suppliers, publishers, librarians and researchers. The speakers will explore hardware and software issues, different delivery methods and models, the publisher's perspective and issues for information professionals.

The seminar is in the Wolfson Suite, Edinburgh University Library, George Square, and costs £45+vat. For more information, or to register, please contact Paulette Hill (email paulette.hill@scotland.gsi.gov.uk, tel 0131 668 8651). Further information is available at <http://www.slainte.org.uk/slamit/slambook.htm>

Gill Hamilton (Napier University)

UTOG: UK Theses Online Group

SELLIC has received funding from UTOG to carry out a pilot project to digitise theses in selected subject areas in four UK University faculties – including the Science & Engineering Faculty.

Each institution will select 15 theses and ensure that copyright permission is obtained from the copyright owner before submitting them for digitisation. Access to theses may be unrestricted or restricted, in accordance with the authors' wishes.

The University of Edinburgh is to carry out the scanning and digitisation for all the partners, and the resultant files will be stored temporarily in Adobe Portable Document Format on the SELLIC server. A virtual theses library Web site is to be created with links to each thesis and to the Library's Voyager catalogue.

Scanning of the theses has started and draft Web pages created. SELLIC also plans to develop an EUL digital theses abstracting service.

Wilma Alexander (SELLIC)

Free university courses

At a time when many universities are wondering how to generate income by selling their courses on the Internet, Massachusetts Institute of Technology has announced that it will put many of its course materials on the Web, for free use by anyone. Around 500 courses – lecture notes and videos, course outlines, reading lists and assignments – will be available by 2004, and some 2,000 from the entire MIT curriculum within a decade. MIT's aim is not to replace human teachers, but to make better use of the time they spend with their students, seeing the fundamental cornerstone of learning to be interaction amongst people.

Further details are at <http://web.mit.edu/newsoffice/nr/2001/ocw-facts.html>

Nick Stroud (EUCS)

Software news

Select Scheme changes

Microsoft is making these changes to the availability of different versions of Windows under our Select Scheme:

From 30th June, you will not be able to buy Windows Me upgrades under Select, but only as a full-price boxed product.

From 30th September, you will not be able to buy Windows 95 or Windows 98 upgrades under Select. However, you will be able to buy a Windows 2000 Pro upgrade, and use Windows 95 or 98 instead.

For more information, see the article provided by Microsoft at <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/tsd/software/Special/selectchanges.html>

Zip utilities

Packages such as WinZip and PKZip (for compressing files for distribution or storage) are widely used in the University. You can easily download free evaluation copies, and a free evaluation copy can easily become forgotten. WinZip and PKzip are not free software – if you intend to keep them on your computer you should buy a full copy. This does not have to be done in dollars via a Web site: both packages can be ordered from UK suppliers by EUCS Purchasing (email EUCS.Purchasing@ed.ac.uk, tel 504942). There are bulk discounts for multiple licences.

It should also be noted that copies of WinZip cannot be shared from a network server. The WinZip licence agreement states that you must obtain an individual WinZip licence for each workstation that can access WinZip through the network.

Free zip programs are available, for example PowerArchiver for Windows (<http://www.powerarchiver.com/>), which is used by a number of other UK universities. They may not cope with as many file formats as WinZip or PKZip, however.

Charlotte Moon (EUCS)

Learning and Resource Centre



Events schedule in the LRC

Several sessions have been arranged in the Learning and Resource Centre in the Main Library in May for people who are seeking specialist help in certain areas.

Knowledgeable staff will be on hand to help with queries and difficulties. This month's sessions are:

1st May: spreadsheets, and Powerpoint presentations

7th May: electronic journals

14th May: Programming (C, C++, Java)

28th May: Programming followup

Full details are on the LRC Web pages, at <http://www.asg.ed.ac.uk/lrc/Events.html>

Jenny Ansett (EUL)

May holidays

The 21st and 22nd of May are University holidays, and most EUCS services – such as Reception, User Support and the Data Library – will be closed on those days.

Major Library sites will be open, with reduced services. Computing Lab supervisors will be on duty from 9am to 5pm. The Learning and Resource Centre will be open but unstaffed, though the Lab supervisors will make sure that the printers are working.

The Main Library is opening at 8:30am from Monday to Friday this term, as an experiment. Normal staffed services will only begin at 9am, as usual, but it will be possible to use the Computing Labs and LRC from 8:30.

Jeff Phillips (EUCS)

Has anyone seen the server?

The University of North Carolina has finally found a network server that has been missing for four years, though it has been reliably handling network traffic all that time. Working with Novell, IT workers tracked it down by meticulously following cables until they literally hit a wall. The server had been mistakenly bricked up by maintenance workers.

Gary Stewart (EUCS)

Edinburgh BITS

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Contributions to *BITS* are welcomed from all readers.

Copy deadline for June BITS:

Wednesday 16th May