

## Edinburgh and Glasgow to give UK lead on e-Science

The Universities of Glasgow and Edinburgh have been awarded £5.5 million to establish the National e-Science Centre – NeSC – to lead the development of e-Science for the whole of the UK.

‘e-Science’ is scientific investigation supported by high-performance computing and digital communications.

Many aspects of science are being transformed by rapid increases in the rates at which observational data are collected. The NeSC will co-ordinate and support the work of eight Regional e-Science Centres around the UK, and will include an e-Science Institute based in Edinburgh to host workshops and visiting scientists.

The NeSC has two major roles:

1. to lead the UK effort to set up a Grid infrastructure to facilitate e-Science, and
2. to establish the e-Science Institute as a centre of international repute.

Increasingly, computational models are essential to designing and managing experiments as well as to interpreting data. The NeSC will support collaboration using high-performance communications, facilities for steering experiments, and computational models requiring resources from multiple sites. Application areas will include the physical, biological and earth sciences, engineering and commerce.

e-Science depends on new middleware, called the “Grid”, which provides computing power in much the same way as the familiar National Grid provides electricity. An operational version of this is Globus, developed by Ian Foster and Carl

Kesselmann in the USA over the past five years. Our first job is to help establish it, and related software, such as Condor and Storage Resource Broker (SRB). We have to play ‘catch up’ fast, and already have a working Grid supporting ScotGrid and GridPP. We are being urged to have demonstrable results *this autumn!*

The achievement of persuading the e-Science Core-Programme Director, Tony Hey, that he should place NeSC in Scotland was based on the strong track record of EPCC and the two universities’ departments of Physics and Astronomy, and Computing Science. They were already working together on Grid research, so were well placed to benefit from the decision by John Taylor (Director General of the UK Research Councils) to allocate £120 million to e-Science over the next three years. John Taylor would like results in time to influence the current spending review, so everything has happened rapidly.

The director of the NeSC is Professor Malcolm Atkinson, seconded from Glasgow, and Professor Richard Kenway of Edinburgh is chair of the executive.

The e-Science Institute will be located in 13-15 South College Street (replacing Edinburgh Research and Innovation), where we will hold training activities, meetings and research workshops, and host visiting researchers. One of our first coups has been to attract the Global Grid Forum 5 and the High Performance Distributed Computing Symposium 11 to Edinburgh in July 2002.

*Malcolm Atkinson (NeSC)*

## [ CONTENTS ]

Edinburgh and Glasgow to give UK lead on e-Science	1
Digital preservation seminar	2
Microsoft Select Scheme changes	2
New data from the Data Library	2
EMWAC moving and growing	2
Knowledge Economy Task Force funding	3
Teaching, learning and student support	
Business processes	
ESP in SCWEIMS	
Exploding CD-ROMs	3
Autumn holiday	3
Communications and Information Technology Committee	4
Improving IT support	
Short- and long-term planning	
C&ITC Working Group on Windows 2000 Server issues	4



*Professor Malcolm Atkinson,  
Director of the NeSC*

## Digital preservation seminar

**Brenda Moon Room,  
Main Library, George Square  
24th September 2001, 2pm**

The seminar will address the issues of Digital Preservation in the context of Edinburgh University (see July issue of *BITs*).

Among the speakers will be:

**Kevin Ashley** (UK National Digital Archive of Datasets, University of London Computer Centre), **Neil Beagrie** (Assistant Director, DNER Office & JISC Digital Preservation Focus), and **Deborah Woodyard** (Digital Preservation Co-ordinator, British Library). See the project Web site for more details and full agenda, at <http://www.lib.ed.ac.uk/lib/sites/digpres/>

To book a place, please contact Najla Semple (tel 511422, email [najla.semple@ed.ac.uk](mailto:najla.semple@ed.ac.uk)). Places are limited, so book soon!

*Najla Semple (EUL)*

## Microsoft Select Scheme changes

Microsoft is bringing in a new version of the Select Scheme, with different arrangements for upgrading and maintenance. Unfortunately we don't yet know exactly when or how these changes will apply to our Select Scheme. Maintenance (which allows you to upgrade to a higher version of a product) is going to be phased out, and its replacement, Software Assurance, will only be available for the most recent version of a product, thus making it more expensive to upgrade older versions (e.g. Office 97, 2000).

Because the timescales for all this are unknown at the time of going to press, we can only give a general recommendation that, if

you are planning to upgrade your Microsoft software, it is likely to be cheaper to do this before the end of the year.

For full information on how to upgrade, please see the Microsoft Select Scheme Web pages at [http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/tsd/software/Special/msoft\\_menu.shtml](http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/tsd/software/Special/msoft_menu.shtml)

More information on the Select Scheme changes will be published here as it is received.

*Charlotte Moon (EUCS)*

## New data from the Data Library

The Data Library has obtained several new datasets for use in research, teaching and learning:

• **Euromonitor's Global Market Information Database** was purchased in conjunction with the Library and provides market research on countries, consumer markets and companies.



• **Generalized Geological Maps of the World and Linked Databases** on CD-ROM contains three basic digital datasets: the raw components of a generalized geological map of the world, mineral deposit sites, and associated descriptive data. An enhanced version of SurVew, a viewing utility packaged with these three datasets in proprietary format, is included.

• **UNSTATS UN Common Database for statistics** is a wide-ranging subscription database which covers all countries and areas, and selected series from more than 30 specialized international data sources (e.g. ILO, IMF, OECD, World Bank, UNESCO, FAO, WHO and more), going back to 1950. Topics include agriculture, education, environment, household, industrial production, international trade and transport.

Recently acquired from the Data Archive are **The Scottish Health Survey 1998** and **The Scottish Social Attitudes Survey 1999**.

For further information on these and other datasets contact Edinburgh University Data Library (email [datalib@ed.ac.uk](mailto:datalib@ed.ac.uk)).

*Stuart Macdonald (EUCS)*

## EMWAC moving and growing

EMWAC—the European Microsoft Windows NT Academic Centre—has operated in the University for over eight years, and has become a leading training provider for the Academic sector.

We are now moving on, joining a company called ITS-Feda to become ITS-EMWAC from 1st September. This partnership will enhance our training operation in new premises in George Street, Edinburgh, and in regional centres in Reading and Bristol. We will be able to offer a broader range of services, including:

- Novell, Linux and Microsoft training
- hardware and software supplies including firewall services
- remote management

Information about EMWAC can still be found at

<http://www.emwac.ed.ac.uk/>

*Vanessa Ranaldi (EMWAC)*

## Knowledge Economy Task Force funding

The University has received £437,262 to promote the use of Communications and Information Technology (C&IT). This is our share of £2.5m which the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council (SHEFC) has allocated for 2001-02 to support the recommendations of the Knowledge Economy Task Force (KETF).

Internal bids were received which totalled three times the University's allocation—a positive sign of interest in C&IT use.

Proposals were judged on:

- how they contributed to furthering strategic objectives—single data entry, single data sources and self-service systems;
- the benefits to the University;
- the pervasiveness of the work.

### Teaching, learning and student support

The following projects in this category are being funded:

- Edinburgh Student Portal (ESP), the University part of SCWEIMS, the Student-centric Web-based educational & information management system.
- Applications for teaching and administration of Economics 1.
- Teaching and self-assessment materials for Mathematics and Statistics courses.
- The Edinburgh Electronic Curriculum project in the Faculty of Medicine to support the new medical curriculum.
- The creation and integration of the Careers Service Web site with the ESP.
- An undergraduate recruitment Web site, with Prospectus information and entrance requirements.

### Business processes

The University is re-engineering some of its business processes to make increased use of C&IT:

- The Registry will develop Student Systems projects, and implement on-line matriculation.
- An Employment Lifecycle project will enable staff to deal with staffing matters on-line, *e.g.* to produce contracts of employment.
- Two Financial Management projects will be developed: *e-Transfers*—a Web-based replacement for the current internal ordering system; and *e-Remittances*—to distribute remittance advices electronically, firstly to staff for payment of travel expenses, and subsequently to suppliers.

### ESP in SCWEIMS

The SCWEIMS project was funded by SHEFC for three years. ESP (the University of Edinburgh aspect of SCWEIMS) has the potential to provide a single one-pass authentication to University digital services for every student.

ESP allows existing and new services to be brought together with personalisation. It provides a channel for passing information to groups of students (*e.g.* all first year, all on a single course). Information flows can be mandatory (*e.g.* regarding exam registration dates) or elective (*e.g.* from the job clearing house).

Linkage to virtual learning environments will allow course-specific messages (*e.g.* essay marks available). Announcements could be sent to a student's mobile phone.

The Portal also provides a channel for students to pass information to the University.

Similar funding is expected in the following two years.

### The details

Further information is in SHEFC circular <http://www.shefc.ac.uk/content/library/circs/01/he1401.html>

*Sara Welham (Secretary's Office)*

## Exploding CD-ROMs



RM has found that a CD-ROM disc containing small cracks can shatter in some high-speed CD-ROM drives (48x or higher speed). In very exceptional circumstances, fragments of the broken disk can be expelled through the front cover of the drive at high speed, and could cause serious injury. This can even happen when the cracks are invisible to the naked eye.

RM has been particularly proactive about this problem, and has given us a list of the machines that may be affected (see <http://www.procure.ed.ac.uk/computer/ordering/new.htm>). The problem could affect other manufacturers, but at this stage neither Viglen nor Dell has made any announcements.

Further information can be seen at <http://www.rm.com/safety/>

*George Reid (Procurement)*

## Autumn holiday

Computing Services will be observing the Autumn Holiday on **Monday 17th September**, so services such as reception and user support will be closed on that day. All Library sites will also be closed.

*David Muxworthy (EUCS)*

## Communications and Information Technology Committee

### Improving IT support

The need for computing support within the University continues to grow throughout all faculties.

At one time, prior to the desktop era, virtually all computing support came through the central provision of services. As time has gone on, more and more emphasis has been placed at the grass roots on a component of local computing support in the form of Computing Officers. In fact, a recent head count by the C&IT Committee—C&ITC—showed that the number of staff employed in the category of computer support within departments is now of the same order of magnitude as those employed within central computing services.

In order to improve the mesh between central service provision by the University and implementation of computing support at a local level, the C&ITC has set up important new mechanisms for input into the planning process by IT professionals from the different faculty groups and central services. These involve three new initiatives:

1. A strategic working group for long-term planning: the 'star-gazing' group,
2. Individual working parties charged with examining specific technical issues, and
3. An annual technical conference, to exchange ideas and encourage technology transfer.

### Short- and long-term planning

Working parties have been set up to address short-term issues in the following areas: Authentication & Directories; Desktop Consistency; the Windows 2000 Server; and Wireless Networking.

These working parties will report direct to the C&IT Committee, with consensus or minority reports making specific recommendations on technical issues. The aim is to streamline the process of technical evaluation of changes to provision of computing support, and to provide fora for discussion of practical solutions to problems at the interface between central provision and the local user community.

The star gazing group, made up of representatives from each Faculty Group, has a longer-term remit to examine more strategic issues, and to manage a new annual technical conference. Its first meeting is in late August, where nominations for its chair will take place, and a provisional set of themes (and a time) for the conference will be discussed.

Further information on these developments is given on the C&ITC Web site, which lists representatives on the different groups. If you have opinions on the subjects currently being discussed, or have suggestions for new topics, please let the appropriate group know through your representatives.

The C&ITC Web site is at <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/ucsinfo/citees/citc/>

*Ian Main (Geology & Geophysics)*

### C&ITC Working Group on Windows 2000 Server issues

For all those in the Edinburgh computing community who are interested in, or already using, the Microsoft Windows 2000 Server platform, we would like to draw your attention to a new working group charged with the task of investigating the use, development and support of this platform at the University of

Edinburgh. The committee will report to the C&IT Committee on a regular basis and provide a final recommendation early in 2002.

We are particularly keen to hear from those of you who are interested in employing, or are already using, the Windows 2000 Active Directory functionality in their workplace, and those who are considering upgrading NT4 servers, or migrating from Novell Netware to Windows 2000, in the near future. Other inquiries about other aspects of Windows 2000 Server such as its Web- and data-serving abilities are also invited. Please note that at this stage Windows 2000 Server is not supported by EUCS, this is not a help desk service, and we are not in a position to address specific technical problems.

Please contact Steven Law (email [steve@maths.ed.ac.uk](mailto:steve@maths.ed.ac.uk)) in the first instance.

*Rachel Ellaway  
(MVM Learning Technology Section)*

### Edinburgh BITs

#### Editor:

Nick Stroud, EUCS.

#### Published by:

Computing Services  
The University of Edinburgh  
for the Edinburgh IT community.

#### Contributions:

Email: [BITs@ed.ac.uk](mailto:BITs@ed.ac.uk)  
Telephone: 0131 650 3345

#### Distribution queries:

BITs is distributed through departmental offices; 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,  
<http://www.printing.ed.ac.uk/>

#### BITs on the Web:

<http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/bits/>

#### Some acronyms explained:

<http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/ucsinfo/acronyms.html>

Contributions to BITs are welcomed from all readers.

*Copy deadline for October BITs:*

**Tuesday 18th September**