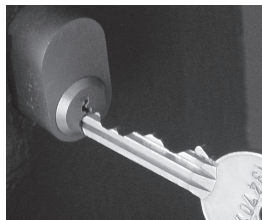


Making the Web more secure:

Please sign up to the University's Web presence!

Several secure network-based services are being created in the University—such as access to email over the Web, the new Edinburgh Student Portal, and a growing number of corporate services. Security between such a Web site and your browser on your computer is established using 'security certificates' to prove the authenticity of the site. Once installed at each end of the link, this certificate enables sensitive information to be encrypted for safe transmission.



The new student Web mail service is already using the University's security certificate, and the staffmail Web interface will be moved to it shortly, as will new corporate applications such as Webfirst (the University Finance system). The Edinburgh Student Portal will use this security system as soon as it comes online.

You can avoid being asked to accept a security certificate on each individual service by going through a one-off acceptance procedure for a University-wide 'root certificate'. This needs to be done on each computer you use, for example at your place of work and at home. The PCs in the open-access labs and Netscape in the Mac open-access labs have already had the certificate installed on them.

It will take you less than two minutes to install the University's root certificate, by following the procedure outlined at

<http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/fmd/unix/docs/certificates/install.html>

Keith Farvis (EUCS)

Information Technology Conference

The University's Communications and Information Technology Committee (C&ITC) has created a 'Stargazing Group', which has the remit of considering possibilities for future developments and uses of technology in all activities in the University. The first major action of the Stargazing Group is to organise an IT Conference, probably next February, to help members of the University to address these issues.



There will be four themes:

- ★ teaching and learning styles
- ★ enabling research
- ★ system administration
- ★ reports by working parties

The last item refers to working parties which are set up from time to time by C&ITC to investigate topics such as (currently) desktop consistency issues, Windows 2000, authentication and directory services, and wireless networking. These topics potentially have major implications for large numbers of computer users, but many others could be taken up also. The Conference should be an opportunity for people to address them, and perhaps find out more about the options that may be becoming available.

The Conference will be flexible in structure, with some sessions having a number of presented papers, others a more round-table format, and in any case plenty of opportunity for discussion. Preparations are still under way, but a more detailed announcement will be made fairly soon, among other places on the C&ITC Web site at <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/ucinfo/cttees/citc/>

John Lee (Informatics/Architecture)

[CONTENTS]

Making the Web more secure:	1
Please sign up to the University's Web presence!	
Information Technology Conference	1
Microsoft Windows Millennium Edition (ME)	2
Mailing lists for mature and international students	2
The Library	2
Online improvements	
Staff training on Wednesday mornings	
British Computer Society	2
Don't help the spammers and hackers!	3
Enhanced Streaming Media Services	3
Procurement: making it easier to buy things	3
eProcurement	
New electronic catalogue	
Laptop preferences	
Sending orders direct to suppliers	
How to test for cracks in a CD-ROM	
Final farewells	4
The tilde vanishes!	4
Upgraded 'news' system	4
SETI@home widens the search	4

Included with this issue:

Learning Technology Supplement
no. 6: The Video Issue

Microsoft Windows Millennium Edition (ME)

Windows ME is designed primarily for home use. In the March edition of *BITs*, EUCS indicated that there was no apparent reason not to purchase Windows ME for use in the University, and that support for it would probably increase as it became more established.

Unfortunately, we have recently noticed problems running some third-party software, and this leads us to feel that *we should advise against purchasing Windows ME* for use in the University environment at this point in time. We will investigate these problems further and report again before the end of the year.

Therefore, we continue to recommend use of Windows 98. Note, however, that the Windows 98 option will not be around for much longer, as Microsoft currently intends to withdraw Windows 98 licence availability after June 2002. EUCS is actively investigating alternatives and expects to issue further advice on future operating system options within three months.

Brian Gilmore (EUCS)

Mailing lists for mature and international students

The Students' Association—EUSA—has set up mailing lists to enhance University life for students from abroad, and for mature students. Full details, including instructions for subscribing to either or both lists, are provided at <http://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/equalopps/subscribe.html>

Please tell international and mature students about these lists. Comments are welcome, to equal.opportunities@eusa.ed.ac.uk.

David Watkins (EUSA)

The Library

Online improvements

Several major improvements have been made to the presentation of information in Library Online, including the main Service and 'How to' pages (at <http://www.lib.ed.ac.uk/>). A new version of the Catalogue was introduced over the summer, simplifying the presentation of search options. Further details are given in the online help.

The Information Service previously provided on the second floor of the Main Library has been replaced with a new set of services including a general enquiry desk on the ground floor and the online "Ask a Librarian" at <http://www.lib.ed.ac.uk/lib/faqs/ask.shtml>

Staff training on Wednesday mornings

The Main Library opens at 8:30am on weekdays in termtime, except on Wednesdays in November (7th, 14th, 21st, 28th) when staff training delays opening until 10:15am.

Sheila Cannell (EUL)

British Computer Society: high-speed NHS networks

This month's BCS meeting is about 'Achieving high-speed data networks in the NHS: Myth or Reality?'. Ian McGrath (Head of IM&T at Ayrshire and Arran), Andy Comrie (Infrastructure Project Manager for the New Royal Network site), and Gavin Greig (Pan Lothian NHS Data Network team with Cable and Wireless) will give short presentations, followed by a panel discussion with the audience.

The meeting is at 6.30pm on Wednesday 14th November at the Royal Pharmaceutical Society, 36 York Place; all are welcome.

David Muxworthy (EUCS)

Don't help the spammers and hackers!

There are countless people around the world who run programs which are endlessly probing every part of the Internet, looking for other computers which they can use for their own ends. A recent study has shown that if you set up a computer at home with an "always-on" connection to the Internet via cable modem or dedicated line, it will be scanned within just 12 hours in case it can be broken into and used to send junk email or to mount an attack on other computers.

If you have an always-on computer at home you might like to check up on the tips which are offered at http://www.cert.org/tech_tips/home_networks.html

In fact there is good advice here for office computers as well.

Jack McAulay (CITS)

Enhanced Streaming Media Services

In the coming weeks EUCS will be adding support for Microsoft's Windows Media technologies (<http://www.microsoft.com/windows/windowsmedia/>) to its existing streaming media service, which will then support the delivery of all popular streaming media formats: Real, QuickTime and Windows Media.

With the addition of Windows Media, content developers within the University now have access to comprehensive and fully managed services for delivering online learning materials.

For further details about the Streaming Media Service see <http://webhelp.ucs.ed.ac.uk/services/media/>

John Smith (EUCS)

Procurement: making it easier to buy things

eProcurement

The Principal's recent letter and meetings with staff emphasise the need for the University to exploit C&IT for maximum efficiency in its business processes, and to lift as much as possible of the administrative burden from the shoulders of academic staff.

The Procurement Office is exploring ways of playing its full part in this process, and has recently presented a new 'eProcurement' Strategy for consideration by the University's Management Information Committee. This is aimed at streamlining the entire ordering process, from initial product and supplier selection right through to payment, with full audit-trail documentation. Our current efforts in developing the Strategy include:

- Monitor HE, public sector & Scottish developments.
- Evaluate the outcomes of pilot trials of one-to-one eProcurement (in Chemistry, the Library, Electrical Engineering & Supplies).
- Introduce and evaluate pilot trials of *procurement cards* and *travel lodge cards*.
- Analyse the use of an internal catalogue for the internal market.
- Find an interfacing solution for the University's Finance System.

Further information is available from **Karen.Bowman@ed.ac.uk**; comments are welcome.

Karen Bowman (Procurement)

New electronic catalogue for office supplies

The Supplies Office and one of its major suppliers have produced a comprehensive online catalogue listing over 9,000 product lines. The majority of these items are not held in stock in the University, but can be ordered by departments when required, and will mostly be delivered within a very few working days.

If you use the online catalogue, please note that all prices listed are exclusive of VAT. Orders *must* still be produced on a GL230 and sent to the Supplies Office, Infirmary Street, for processing/recharging; *no* orders will be accepted online or directly to the supplier, though this is under review as part of eProcurement.

If you have any queries about the online service, please contact Sharon Scott (tel 502508).

The Supplies Office still maintains a good stock of the most commonly required stationery and consumable items. These are listed, together with a link to the online catalogue, on the Supplies Office Web site at **<http://www.procure.ed.ac.uk/supplies/>**

Evelyn Bain (Procurement)

Laptop preferences

It would be useful to receive some feedback on laptop requirements: what is it about a laptop which makes it something you would want to buy?

Beside obvious reasons such as price, quality, compatibility etc, what aesthetic features (such as pointing device, weight) help to sell a particular manufacturer's machine? Please email your responses to **george.reid@ed.ac.uk**.

George Reid (Procurement)



Sending orders direct to suppliers of PCs, Macs, printers etc

There is a widely held misconception that all orders have to go through Procurement. As explained in the Procurement Web pages, you can send orders direct to any of the University's contract computing suppliers—as listed at **<http://www.procure.ed.ac.uk/computer/ordering.htm>**

However, this doesn't mean that you have to go to a PC supplier (Dell, Viglen, RM), for example, to buy a printer: there is a different supplier for printers (XMA). The difficulty comes in the 'crossover' areas of accessories (Micro-warehouse, Alipa, Simply, Westwood West) and consumables (Supplies Team), and there is guidance on our Web pages about this.

Remember, it is a particular commodity that is on contract with a particular supplier, not everything that a particular supplier sells. In doubt, call us for guidance.

George Reid (Procurement)

How to test for cracks in a CD-ROM

As announced in recent issues of *BITs*, there is a real danger that a CD will shatter in the drives of certain PCs. The danger is greatest if the CD is cracked, even if the cracks are invisible. You can render such cracks a little more visible by flexing the CD gently—holding it in the centre with one hand and gently moving the edges up and down with the other, as described at **<http://www.procure.ed.ac.uk/computer/ordering/new.htm>**

George Reid (Procurement)

Final farewells

As EUCS gets older, so do its staff, and the passing years are starting to take their toll. Several people who made significant contributions to the development of the University's C&IT environment have died in recent months.

John Henshall made major contributions to the development of the EMAS operating system, particularly file transfer and spooling, before retiring to Crete to run a tourist agency with his wife.

Morton Ogilvie led the IT training service for many years, from EMAS through the emergence of microcomputers to the latest software packages, still lending his affable charm to the University's IT courses in retirement.

Dave Sturgess rose through the operations ranks to become manager of the regional service computers at the Bush Estate in the 1980s, before moving to the Open University's IT group.

Tom Waugh was an internationally-recognised pioneer in geographical information systems and computer-aided mapping, and was working with the Data Library when he died this summer.

Callum Young, who died last month, was the chief network technician in the earliest days of networking, when hardware and cables had to be manufactured in-house; his parting gift to the University was to lay the foundations for EdLAN's fibre-optic backbone on which we all depend today.

There are further recollections of former colleagues at <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/ucsinfo/oldfriends/>



Callum Young retired to Drumbeg in Assynt, to run a croft, tend sheep, build a house, carve wood, and be happy out of the rat-race.

Nick Stroud (EUCS)

The tilde vanishes!

As announced in June's *BITS*, the Web addresses of individuals' Web pages on the central Unix server **holyyrood** will change in January. Web addresses of the form <http://www.ed.ac.uk/~username/> will be redirected to a new server as <http://homepages.ed.ac.uk/username/>

Most users will not need to do anything for this changeover, but you may wish to check your pages at the new address now. If you publish the URL of your home page, for example in an email signature file, you should update this soon.

Departments and Units in the University who publish on the

www.ed.ac.uk server for official purposes should not have the tilde (~) character in their Web addresses. Any who still do should contact the EUCS Web Help Desk (email w3hd@ed.ac.uk) for advice.

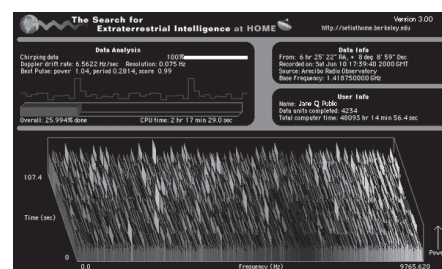
Graham Rule (EUCS)

Upgraded 'news' system

The system that handles news-groups for the University has been upgraded. Users should notice faster response and longer article retention times. Those who do not already use the service can find out more at <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/fmd/unix/docs/news.html>

Scott Larnach (EUCS)

SETI@home widens the search



Seti@home, which harnesses the idle processing time on personal computers around the world to search for signs of extra-terrestrial intelligence, was running out of raw data to give to its millions of participants. It has therefore installed a new digital recorder which accepts ten times as much data as its predecessor, enabling its global task-force to extend the search across more of the electromagnetic spectrum.

If you would like to lend your computer's spare time to this project, you can get the Seti@home screensaver from <http://setiathome.ssl.berkeley.edu/>

Nick Stroud (EUCS)

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
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
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 December BITS:
Thursday 15th November