

University Web site to be comprehensively redesigned

Consultation events on 17th December

The World Wide Web has very rapidly established itself as a primary source of information for a vast number of people around the world, and every organisation that wants to look good in the world must look good on the Web.

As in many other organisations, the University's Web presence has grown unevenly, as resources permit, and without clear guiding principles. New legislation has come into force since the last major overhaul of the site. To some extent the University is judged by the quality and attractiveness of its Web site, by prospective students, potential sponsors and collaborators, colleagues in other universities, and the media. For all these reasons it is important that we now look afresh at our Web site, with a view to a far-reaching redesign.

The post of University Web Editor was moved from Communications and Public Affairs into the Academic Support Group last year, to allow our site to be fully integrated into the academic and support information flows of the University, and to establish closer links with content providers and other sources of Web expertise. The Web Editor was further supported in this work with the creation of the University's Web Publishing Advisory Group, under the chairmanship of Professor Roland Ibbett of the Division of Informatics. This group includes representatives from all Faculty Group offices, the Academic Services Group and Support Group 2, and reports to the Information Policy Committee under Vice-Principal Richard Field.

The initial priorities have been:

- to redesign the University's home page, making it as easy as possible for all visitors to find their way quickly to the information they're looking for.
- to create templates to make it easy to maintain the central site.

This work is nearing completion, and the Advisory Group now wishes to consult widely throughout the University, to reinforce the importance of creating an attractive and easy-to-use Web site, and to receive feedback on its specific plans for the structure of the new site.

The consultation events will be held on **17th December**, in George Square and at The King's Buildings. Full details are given on the back page, and online at <http://www.ed.ac.uk/test/>

Everyone with an interest in the University's appearance on the Web is warmly invited to attend one of these sessions.

Roland Ibbett (Informatics)

The Library's millionth visitor

Many congratulations to the Library, its Web Editor Steve Scott, and the systems and other support staff behind the scenes, on recording the one millionth visit to Library Online, EUL's main Web site, within a single calendar year—with usage still climbing steadily.

Library Online is at <http://www.lib.ed.ac.uk/>

Nick Stroud (EUCS)



[CONTENTS]

University Web site to be comprehensively redesigned	1
The Library's millionth visitor	1
EUCS to assist RSLG	2
EDINA & MIMAS in joint 'learning' project for FE	2
Access arrangements at JCMB	3
Oracle campus agreement	3
Service resilience for Accommodation Services	3
More global computing efforts	3
Digimap update	4
Digimap Carto	
Maintaining PCs and Macs	5
e-procurement progress	5
Setting PDFs for printing	5
Software news	6
NAG libraries and documentation updated	
New Microsoft Select Scheme	
MATLAB bulk purchase	
Microsoft Office 10 for the Mac	
Microsoft Windows XP Pro	
Windows XP	
Online Library service for Chinese Studies	7
New EuroStudies Gateway	7
BCS: Video across the Internet	7
Internet Librarian conference	7
Journal of Information Law & Technology	7
The GMRC pays tribute...	8
Changes to the University Web Site	8
Christmas vacation services	8

SEASON'S GREETINGS

EUCS to assist RSLG



Peter Burnhill

Peter Burnhill, head of the Data Library and Director of the EDINA National Data Centre, is to join the e-science sub-group of the Research Support Libraries Group (RSLG). The other members are:

- Ian Halliday (Chair), Chief Executive, PPARC
- Richard Durbin, Head of Informatics Division, The Sanger Centre
- Tony Hey, Director of the e-science Core Programme, EPSRC
- Herbert van de Sompel, Director of Development, British Library
- Karen Stanton, Director of Information Services, University of Nottingham

This sub-group's remit is to advise RSLG on e-science through the development of a national strategy to ensure that UK researchers in all disciplines have access to world class information resources. Particular attention will be paid to the sharing of (very large) datasets generated by experiment, survey and observation.

RSLG members include Senior Vice-Principal Professor Michael Anderson from Edinburgh, and Lynne Brindley, Director General of the British Library, under the chairmanship of Sir Brian Follet; see <http://www.rslg.ac.uk/>

Nick Stroud (EUCS)

EDINA & MIMAS in joint 'learning' project for FE

EDINA & MIMAS—the JISC National Data Centres at Edinburgh and Manchester respectively—are to make available over 300 hours of specially-commissioned online learning materials, which have been designed for use in 'virtual learning environments' (VLEs) at further education colleges. This activity forms part of the National Learning Network, which is part of collaborative action being taken by the British Educational Communications and Technology Agency—BECTa, the JISC and other key agencies in the learning and skills field.

Online learning objects

BECTa commissioned the materials from a range of commercial and academic suppliers. Referred to as 'learning objects', these Web-based learning materials were developed as short 'chunks of learning', rather than as full courses. In all there are about 1,200 learning objects. These are used to assist delivery of topic content and practice or assessment activities, and designed so they can be adapted for different purposes, for inclusion within existing curricula.

The initial offerings cover a wide variety of subject areas to meet the needs of students attending the different course levels offered within further education. (Level 3 is equivalent to Advanced GNVQ and GCE A Level.) Examples include:

- Amenity Horticulture, Level 2
- Application of Number, Levels 1,2,3
- Art and Design, Levels 1,2

- Business Studies, Levels 1,2
- Communications, Levels 1,2,3
- Generic Science, Level 1
- Health Studies, Levels 1,2,3
- Hospitality and Catering, Levels 1,2
- Key Skills: Communications, Levels 1,2,3
- Mathematics, Level 2

The full list is at <http://ferl.becta.org.uk/features/elearning/subjects/Totallist.doc>

This is the first major venture by the JISC National Data Centres into service provision for such a wide range of students in colleges. MIMAS and EDINA are giving this high priority. Granada Learning (<http://www.learnwise.net/>) has produced a customised version of LearnWise as a management tool for the repository of materials and as a limited-function Virtual Learning Environment.

The prototype materials are being tried out at a selected group of colleges, including St Helens College, at which Moira Massey (EDINA), who leads the scoping study, is based. Further work will be undertaken in Edinburgh, where a new member of staff will start work with the project in January. Illustrations of the prototype materials, together with more information about the learning resources, is at <http://ferl.becta.org.uk/features/elearning/newsletter2.pdf>

National Learning Network:

<http://www.nln.ac.uk/>

BECTa:

<http://www.becta.org.uk/>

JISC:

<http://www.jisc.ac.uk/>

Peter Burnhill, Moira Massey (EUCS)

Access arrangements at JCMB

In order to comply with the mandatory requirements of the University's insurers, Computing Services has effectively had to create a separate building within the James Clerk Maxwell Building at The King's Buildings. Visitors to offices in the EUCS part of the JCMB must now enter via EUCS reception at the east door. User support, the computing labs, Job Reception and the Graphics and Multimedia Resource Centre are all reached via the JCMB main entrance: there is no longer an internal route from the other EUCS offices.

David Muxworthy (EUCS)

Oracle campus agreement

MIS holds a 'campus licence' for the use of Oracle software at Edinburgh University. The agreement covers use of the designated Oracle technology by all staff and students at the University for any University purpose. MIS believes that this agreement offers the University a cost-effective way of using this software.

The initial agreement, taken out in April 2000, was funded by MIS, EUCS, Accommodation Services, and Estates and Buildings. It was agreed that, as additional use is made of the software, all participants should see some reduction in their costs by sharing them over a wider base, so a scheme was devised to enable additional users to take advantage of the agreement at the same discount levels.

Since the price is fixed, the more users there are the bigger the discounts. During 2000/2001 a further four departments have taken advantage of this agreement. The cost established at the outset of the licence will be maintained or reduced but not

increased as a result of changes to Oracle's pricing model.

For more information about the Oracle Campus Licence, including products, platforms and overall pricing model, please check out the MIS Web site at <http://www.mis.ed.ac.uk/services/Oracle/campuslicence.htm>

Mark Ritchie (MIS)

Service resilience for Accommodation Services

Accommodation Services, with support from MIS and the IT suppliers OSL and Quest, have moved to resilient operation on their database systems.

The solution uses Quest's Shareplex For Oracle product to maintain a second up-to-the-minute copy of all data in the AS Property and Accommodation Management (PAMS) database. In the event of a database or other server failure, users can easily switch over to the copy database with minimal or no loss of service or data. This approach is necessary in enabling Accommodation Services to meet the increasing demands of all its customers for round-the-clock support.

MIS has licensed this product for use with all administrative systems, and hopes to bring other customers online during 2002.

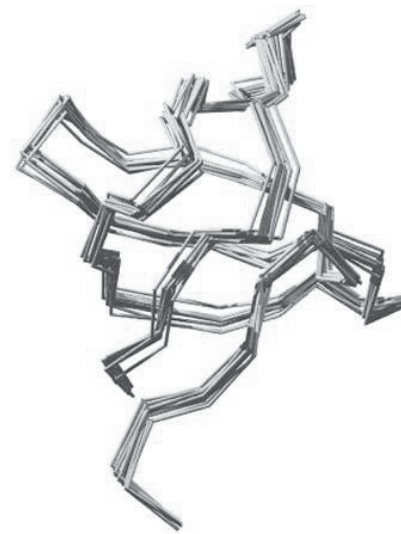
For more details of this service, contact Mark Ritchie, MIS Development Services Manager (Mark.Ritchie@ed.ac.uk) or Sandy Agnew, Accommodation Services IT and Communication Coordinator (Sandy.Agnew@ed.ac.uk).

Details of the Shareplex product are available on the Quest Web site at <http://www.quest.com/>

Mark Ritchie (MIS)

More global computing efforts

Having seen the mention of Seti@home in last month's issue of *BITs*, I thought readers might like to hear of other distributed computing projects, including some which could be of more practical benefit than Seti@home. These include Folding@home (<http://folding.stanford.edu/>), which aims to discover why proteins fold and eventually cause diseases such as Alzheimer's, Genome@home (<http://genomeathome.stanford.edu/>), and the cancer project in Oxford University's Chemistry department (<http://www.chem.ox.ac.uk/curecancer.html>).



In the hope that colleagues will be interested in devoting their computer's spare time to such projects, I have set up University teams for many of them, to increase the chance that our efforts will show up in the results tables. You can find out all about this if you look up 'distributed computing projects' in EUCSinfo's A-Z index (at <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/>), or directly at <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/ucsinfo/distrib.html>

Alistair Knock (Italian)

Digimap update

This reports on a number of recent changes to the Digimap service. Digimap users now have unlimited access to the Ordnance Survey's most detailed mapping product, Land-Line.Plus. Changes to the agreement with Ordnance Survey mean that the original 30% limit on this highly detailed dataset has been removed, and the amount of Land-Line.Plus data which may be downloaded by any institution has been increased.

The 1:50,000 Scale Colour Raster maps and data, which mirror the Ordnance Survey's popular Land-ranger series, have been available through Digimap since September. A 'neighbourhood view', containing the new data, has been added to the list of 'views'. This has a display scale which provides an intermediate step between the detailed view (Land-Line.Plus data) and the local view (Meridian™ data). Note that Edinburgh University users also have access to a 'street level view', based on raster data from XYZ Mapping, purchased by the Data Library.

The quality of the maps has been improved through updates to the Land-line.Plus, Meridian2 and Strategi® data. Unfortunately the aerial photography has been removed from the Digimap service.

Queries regarding aerial photography or help with Digimap should be sent via email to digimap-help@ed.ac.uk.

Digimap Carto

Digimap Carto is an advanced feature of Digimap which has been available in beta form but has now been released with major improvements. Carto is a more sophisticated Web application to allow greater control over the maps

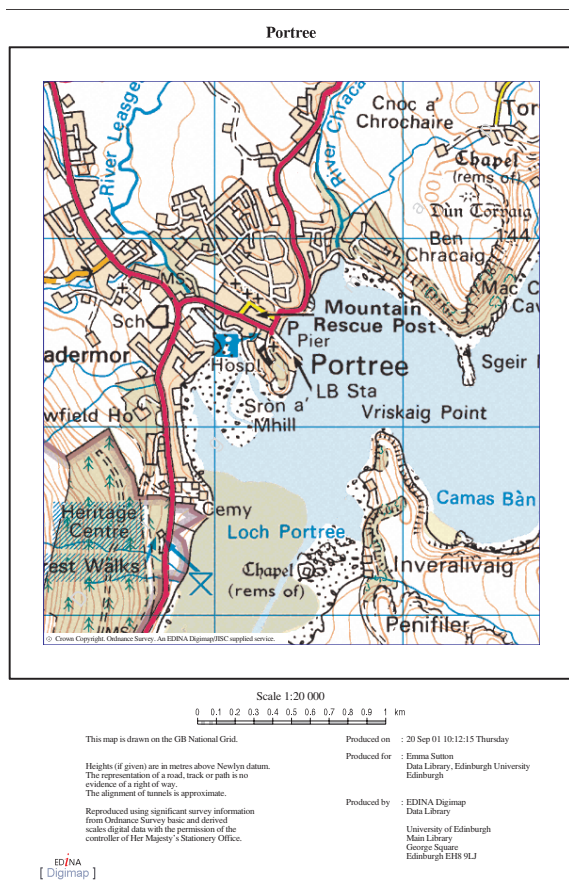
you make. You can select which features will appear in the map, the geographic extent of the map, and any reasonable scale.

Another advantage is that it can be printed on A4, A3 or A0 size paper.

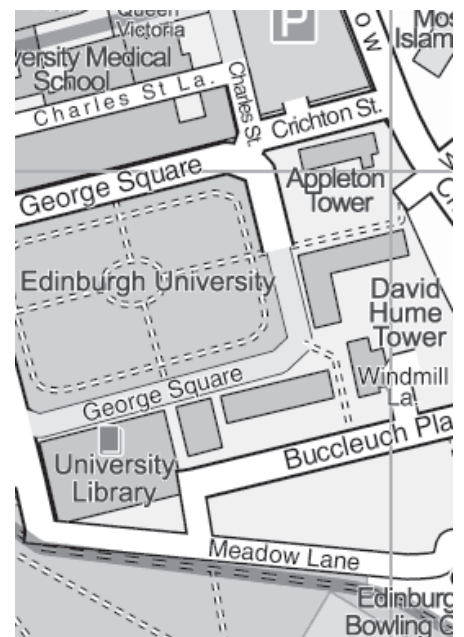
Digimap Carto has extra requirements over and above the basic Digimap mapping service. For example, it is a Java applet, so you will need to have a Java plug-in installed on your computer. Digimap Carto should run on Netscape 4.x or higher and Internet Explorer 4.x or higher. There is a help page within Digimap which provides more information.

The following datasets are currently available through Digimap Carto:

- Land-Line.Plus
- Land-Form Panorama
- Meridian2
- Strategi



1:50,000 Colour Raster sample; Crown copyright. Ordnance Survey.



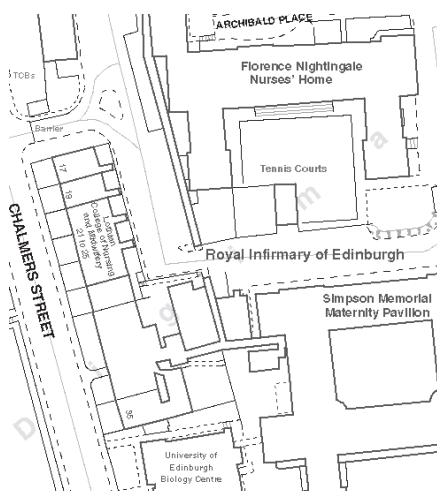
1:10,000 Edinburgh CityMap © (1999) The XYZ Digital Map Company Ltd, (part derived from Cities Revealed @ photography © 1998 The Geoinformation Group (R) Ltd).

The 1:50,000 Colour Raster dataset is not yet available, and the facility to combine features from different map products in the same map is not yet available: version 2 of Carto will include this.

Because Digimap Carto allows greater freedom over choice of scale and map extent, you may notice that your map takes longer to appear than in the basic mapping service. We are monitoring this and working to improve this aspect of the service. You should notice an improvement in the speed of map delivery in version 2.

Help pages relating specifically to Digimap Carto are available. These include a full printable tutorial, information about system and software requirements, and hints to printing a successful map. If you have any queries about this new facility please contact one of your local site representatives, Robin Rice (Data Library) or Ann Sutherland (Special Collections), email digimap-help@ed.ac.uk.

Robin Rice, Emma Sutton (EUCS)



1:1,250 Land-Line.Plus

Maintaining PCs and Macs

There is a National Higher Education Contract for the maintenance of personal computers and peripherals, established through an EU tendering exercise. It is with Xenon, the service arm of Viglen, and Getronics (once the service arm of Getech and now a separate company). The price is very reasonable at £25-30.

The Contract is managed for the UCISA Hardware Group by the Southern Universities Purchasing Consortium. More information is provided on the main contract Web site at <http://www.jpmsg.ac.uk/hotnews/national/computer/computermaintenance.html>

George Reid (Procurement)



e-procurement progress

We are pleased with the feedback we have been receiving in response to the publication of the Procurement Office's plans to streamline the entire range of procedures involved in procurement, and to "invest to save" in the University's business processes.

The proposal to the Management Information Committee contains the main details, and this has now been made available on the University Web site, through the Procurement news Web page at <http://www.procure.ed.ac.uk/home/news.htm>

Karen Bowman (Procurement)

Setting PDFs for printing

The Adobe Portable Document Format—PDF—does an excellent job of moving documents around and keeping them almost identical to the original, but it also has many pitfalls if not set up correctly. If you want to send a PDF document to Printing Services it is important that you avoid these pitfalls.

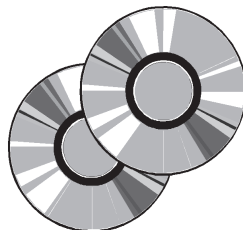
From a cost perspective, a correctly set up PDF file can avoid the unnecessary reformatting of large documents and goes a long way to ensuring that a file which leaves one computer arrives at another as intended. We are working on a more seamless approach to on-line ordering and transfer of files for production, but in the meantime we have realised that saying "just send us a PDF" doesn't solve the problems.

We can supply you with the relevant PDF Job Option which can be loaded in Adobe Acrobat Distiller, and provided certain other aspects are set correctly in your Distiller software, this should ensure that the resulting PDF files are suitable for Printing Services to work from—particularly if your document is not of a standard size. You can use the already installed "press optimise" feature and this works in most cases. This is only an interim procedure though, and more information on the on-line project will follow.

For information on how PDF, and other files, should be supplied, and how to set up Distiller for printing, please see <http://www.printing.ed.ac.uk/estimates/originals.htm>

Stuart McLean (Printing)

Software news



NAG libraries and documentation updated

Since NAG—the Numerical Algorithms Group—was founded in the early 1970s, we have made available libraries of numerical software from NAG on our central service machines. Latterly these have been available on departmental and personal machines also. Further details of NAG products can be found at <http://www.nag.co.uk/>

On **holyrood** the NAG C library has recently been upgraded to Mark 6 and the NAG fl90 library to Mark 4. Documentation and access information for all NAG products is now available on the Web at <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/tsd/programming/nag/>

NAG libraries and other NAG products may be obtained from EUCS Purchasing.

John Blair-Fish (EUCS)

New Microsoft Select Scheme

A new Microsoft Select Scheme (Select 5) starts on 1st December. The arrangements for buying new copies are the same, but there are some important changes if you need to upgrade existing software.

The existing Maintenance option (now known as Upgrade Advantage) is still available, and covers you for new versions up to 31st October 2003, but you must buy it before 31st July 2002.

A new alternative, Software Assurance, also provides cover for new versions up to 31st October 2003, but can only be purchased if you have the current version of the product. Again, Software Assurance must be bought before 31st July 2002.

Software Assurance can also be bought with a new copy at any

time during the two-year agreement period.

Full information and pricing can be found on the Microsoft Select Scheme home page at http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/tsd/software/Special/msoft_menu.shtml

MATLAB bulk purchase

The suppliers of MATLAB advise us that the University could obtain discounts on the copies it buys if the orders could be coordinated into a single bulk purchase. If you are thinking of purchasing MATLAB in the next year, please contact the Software Coordinator (email C.Moon@ed.ac.uk, tel 503347).

Microsoft Office 10 for the Mac

The new Office products for the Mac (Office 10, Word 10, Excel 10, PowerPoint 10) are not available at the time of writing, but we expect them soon. Information will be provided on the Microsoft Select Scheme home page at http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/tsd/software/Special/msoft_menu.shtml

Microsoft Windows XP Pro

The new version of Windows, Windows XP Pro, is now available under the Microsoft Select Scheme. If you had Maintenance for your copies of Windows, you can obtain Windows XP for the cost of the CD (£19.15 including VAT). Note, though, that XP Pro is not yet recommended for general use pending further investigation (see following article). If you still want to buy a copy of Windows XP Pro, send internal order forms (GL220) to EUCS Purchasing, JCMB, The King's Buildings.

Charlotte Moon (EUCS)

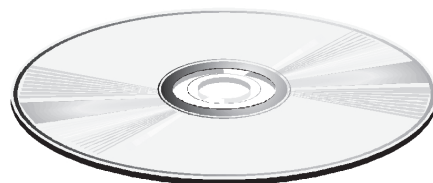
Windows XP

There has been much publicity in the past month about the new Microsoft operating systems XP Pro and XP Home. EUCS has still to evaluate some of the new features of XP Pro in the Edinburgh network environment. For example the relevant Novell client has not been released at the time of writing and some current applications may need to be upgraded in order to run correctly on XP Pro.

In view of Microsoft's announcement that it will not support its operating systems prior to Windows 2000 and Windows Me beyond next summer, EUCS is recommending for the time being that purchasers of new PCs specify that the pre-installed operating system should be Windows 2000 Pro; the earlier advice not to acquire Windows Me for University use still holds. There is no need at present for users of Windows 98 or NT4 to consider upgrading their systems, and in general EUCS advises against upgrading the operating system on an existing PC.

Evaluation of XP is continuing and a further announcement will be made in two or three months' time. The Home version of XP should not be acquired for University use as it was not designed for a heavily networked environment.

David Muxworthy (EUCS)



Online Library service for Chinese Studies

SINO-CS (the Scottish Information Network Online for Chinese Studies),



launched in May 2001, is part of the library provision for the SHEFC-funded Chinese Studies in Scotland Initiative that involves four universities in the region, with Edinburgh being the centre. As a project Web site, SINO-CS provides an information gateway to a wide range of resources in the subject area such as course material, reference bibliography, news and events, and Internet links for Chinese studies. It also delivers an efficient library service, currently in the shape of the Online Book Suggestion Form, whereby academic staff based in different institutions can send their requests to the subject librarian in Edinburgh and check the archived lists of their book recommendations and their status.

What is remarkable about SINO-CS technically is the multi-site collaboration enabled by the use of a Content Management System: the Web site developer and the content manager are located in two different institutions.

An essential component of the SINO-CS Web site is to ensure that greater structure is given to the creation and storage of information so that publishers can create and update content in an approved and controlled form whenever they choose and wherever they are. This has been achieved by separating the visual representation, content and structure into autonomous layers. Web page templates

automate the joining of these layers, thus creating a sophisticated and flexible content-rich site, which has little or no reliance upon the technical expertise of the content manager and therefore reduces overhead maintenance in terms of cost and resources.

You can find out about SINO-CS at <http://www.sino-cs.ac.uk/>

*Fiona Muhsin (Abertay),
Shenxiao Tong (EUL)*

New EuroStudies Gateway

The EuroStudies Gateway is a new initiative of the team responsible for the well-respected SOSIG (Social Science Information Gateway), and will provide access to Internet resources about Europe as a region — ranging from issues of international security to the introduction of the Euro. In addition, it will cover information provided by individual European countries, with a particular emphasis on those located in Central and Eastern Europe, which are generally under-represented on the Web.

A team of subject information specialists based at Information Services at the University of Birmingham is responsible for the content for the new EuroStudies gateway. They will be working closely with researchers based at the University's Centre for Environmental Research and Training (CERT) and the new European Research Institute (ERI) which brings together major research areas in Europe such as the Centre for Russian and East European Studies (CREES) and the Institute of German Studies (IGS).

EuroStudies will be significantly expanding and developing over the next few months. It is at <http://www.sosig.ac.uk/eurostudies/>

Bruce Royan (SCRAN)

BCS: Video across the Internet

Harry Hellyer of Indigo Vision will talk on 'Video across the Internet' at 6.30 pm on 5th December at The Royal Pharmaceutical Society, 36 York Place, EH1 3HU. All are welcome, whether or not members of the British Computer Society. An abstract will be published at <http://www.edinburgh.bcs.org/01-02/index.htm>

David Muxworthy (EUCS)

Internet Librarian conference

Internet Librarian International 2002 takes place in London on 18–20 March, and could be of interest to anyone using or developing Web-based information tools and resources. You can get a copy of the programme from Caroline Milner (email c.milner@rubicon-communications.com), or from the conference Web site at <http://www.internet-librarian.com/request.htm>

Bruce Royan (SCRAN)

Journal of Information Law & Technology

The latest edition of the Journal of Information Law & Technology is now available from the Electronic Law Journals Project at Warwick, at <http://elj.warwick.ac.uk/jilt/01-3/>

As usual there is a wide range of papers on law and IT issues, and international authors write on such diverse topics as cryptography, databases and data protection, domain name disputes, e-commerce, Microsoft and spam law.

The main focus of this edition is the use of C&IT in legal education, and there are four very interesting and detailed papers offering quite distinct perspectives on how C&IT has been used to enhance the teaching of law.

Julie Moreton (Warwick)

The GMRC pays tribute...

'A tribute to Edwin Morgan' is at the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Queen Street, until 3rd February, and features works by the artists Steven Campbell and Ron O'Donnell in honour of one of Scotland's greatest living literary figures. All of Ron O'Donnell's works in the exhibition were digitally processed in the Graphics & Multimedia Resource Centre, and printed using Computing Services' large-format printers.

Also produced in the GMRC, 'The opening of the third eye' is a video production recently premiered at the Kendal Mountain Film Festival to great acclaim (but nae prize—we wuz robbed!).

The Resource Centre is always keen to foster creativity and imaginative use of digital media technologies. Academic work must always have priority, and there are periods when our capacity is overloaded, but at other times we

welcome all sorts of novel and experimental projects. Do come and try out your own ideas!

The GMRC, where services are free to staff and students and consumables only charged at cost, is in JCMB room 3901, email graphics.support@ed.ac.uk, tel 504965, on the Web at <http://www.graphics.ed.ac.uk/gmrc/>

John Wexler (EUCS)



One of the pictures of Edwin Morgan prepared in the GMRC by Ron O'Donnell for the exhibition

Christmas vacation services

The University closes for the Christmas vacation at 5pm on 21st December, and reopens at 9am on Thursday 3rd January 2002.

Virtually *everything* is closed for this period.

All the open-access computing labs are closed throughout. Central computing facilities such as **holyrood** and EdLAN will run throughout the vacation, but mostly unattended; they will have dayshift cover only, on 24th, 27th, 28th and 31st December. There will be no telephone operator service during this period, nor any postal or internal mail deliveries.

EUCS Receptions, User Support and Resource Centres will be closed for the entire period, as will all University buildings, including the James Clerk Maxwell Building, the King's Buildings Centre, the Main Library and Appleton Tower.

David Muxworthy (EUCS)

Changes to the University Web Site: Consultation Event Monday 17th December 2001

10am-12noon George Square Lecture Theatre
2-4pm Swann Lecture Theatre

The Web Publishing Advisory Group and University Web Editor will present the proposed new University Web Site home page and sub-page designs. We shall also be seeking views on the overall structure of University Web publishing, and considering the main site and its relationship to the other sites in the structure.

Please come along and give us your views: everyone is most welcome. The programme for both venues is:

- Introduction by Ian Mowat, Librarian to the University (Chair)
- Restructured Web Publishing in the University, by Professor Roland Ibbett
- Overview of Web site design issues, by Wilma Alexander (SELLIC)
- Presentation of New Pages, by Bryan Martin (University Web Editor)
- Questions & Discussion

Please help us plan by emailing Jill.Evans@ed.ac.uk saying which session you wish to attend.

Edinburgh BITS

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Nick Stroud, EUCS.

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

Contributions to *BITS* are welcomed from all readers.

Copy deadline for January BITS:

Monday 10th December