


# Forcing down the cost of PC ownership



**SELECTPC**

# MVM 01/001

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<http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/firstaid/map/>

Buying and setting up a new PC has never been easier!

The Medicine and Veterinary Medicine Support Team in Computing Services has introduced a new co-ordinated purchasing scheme for desktop PCs within its faculty group. This scheme, called SelectPC, enables PCs to be purchased and maintained simply and with maximum efficiency. After a tendering process involving the University's three PC suppliers, Research Machines was chosen to supply the computers. The scheme has the approval of the University's Procurement Office, and it has been adopted as policy by the faculty group.

The main features of SelectPC are:

- straightforward purchase arrangement, with additional discount.
- fast and easy set-up: PCs are installed with standard applications and are made network-ready using a single CD.
- improved support, including fast restoration after system or application failure.
- reduced Whole Life Cost: the cost of a PC over its whole lifetime is several times its initial purchase cost; SelectPC helps to minimise this cost.

SelectPC will in due course allow the transition to an increasingly standardised computing infrastructure within the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine, with a consequently improved level of support.

The SelectPC scheme has been piloted successfully, with more than forty PCs already installed under the scheme. For further information about SelectPC see <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/usd/firstaid/map/basics/selectpc.html>

Vlad Zirojevic (EUCS)



## June holiday

Computing Services is observing the Queen's Jubilee Holiday on Monday 3rd June, so there will be no reception, user support or other staffed services on that day.

David Muxworthy (EUCS)

## The dark side of email

Junk mail—'spam'—is one of the banes of all our online lives, and EUCS is often asked about what people can do to minimise it. This topic, and our advice about it, are covered in <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/fmd/unix/docs/mail/junk/>

The overwhelming challenge is to put in central blocks for spam which do not also block legitimate University mail, but anything that can be done is actively considered. See the following two articles for recent developments.

Scott Larnach (EUCS)

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## University attacked by email

The University was subjected to another attack of 'collateral spam', starting on 27th April and emanating from networks in the USA. The mail had the subject lines "DO ME NOW!!" and "FREE SEX!!". It was forged to appear to come from ed.ac.uk addresses, and was sent to millions of addresses worldwide. Messages to non-existent addresses were bounced back to Edinburgh, and at its peak we were rejecting one million bounced messages per day. This incident caused many hundreds of telephone calls and many thousands of email complaints all through the University from unhappy people incorrectly complaining to the University about this email.

This is the second major attack of this type that the University has suffered. Building on the knowledge of the attack earlier this year, EUCS purchased new hardware for the mail relays which, when put to the test in this attack, coped well with the extraordinary load; normal University email was barely affected. JANET's Incident Response Team and the police were again notified. Some external sites again blocked mail coming from Edinburgh University and are being persuaded to re-establish communications with us.

Much as we regret what has happened, there is unfortunately nothing the University can do to stop these abuses, and stop our good name being sullied in this way; the international community has to act to prevent such activity. Many other institutions and businesses are similarly affected. All we can do, and have done, is report the matter to the authorities and to the ISPs who provided the miscreants with access to the Internet, and respond as best we can to the misdirected complaints we receive.

*Brian Gilmore (EUCS)*

## Fighting junk mail

Since late April, the University's central mail relays have been rejecting mail from addresses in the Realtime Blackhole List, 'RBL'. This is the best-regarded of the available lists of known junk mail originators and relayers, and is made available for the UK academic community by the JANET authorities.

Since then we have rejected an average of 21,000 messages a day, which we estimate to be some 50% of the flow of junk mail through the relays. We are unaware of any legitimate traffic being affected. In May we routed traffic for **holyyood** through the mail relays and expect a similar improvement on that host.

We will continue to investigate ways of dealing with the ever-increasing volume of junk mail on the Internet. For more information about our use of the RBL please see <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/fmd/unix/docs/mail/using-other-isps.html#black>

*Scott Larnach (EUCS)*

## Beware the 'back' button!

PC users are advised to install the new 'software patch' issued by Microsoft to correct six security vulnerabilities in Internet Explorer for Windows, including one which makes use of the 'back' button risky. The update is available at <http://www.microsoft.com/windows/ie/downloads/critical/q321232/default.asp>

*Nick Stroud (EUCS)*

## ...and beware music 'CD's

Some music publishers are producing discs (technically not CDs, though they look just like them) with a copy-protection scheme which can disrupt computers. Do not try to play such discs in a PC or a Mac!

*Nick Stroud (EUCS)*

## EDINA phase 3 adds pictures

EDINA was established in 1996 as a national datacentre with a range of key bibliographic databases, and expanded in 2000 when it started providing geographical data services such as Digimap for Ordnance Survey mapping. In its third major expansion, EDINA is to host some 500 film and video titles as part of the JISC's image, moving picture and sound collections.

The image collections to be hosted include the BGS images of geological features, rocks and fossils, the Derby Earth Sciences 3-D images of fossils and rocks, the Magee collection of 3,000 photographs of Derry and North-West Ireland (1860-1970), and the Gertrude Bell Archive of the Middle East and Arab world (1868-1921).

The ten collections of moving pictures cover topics in nearly all disciplines. There is key primary source material in the Educational Television Films collection, in the 157 documentaries in the Films of Scotland collection which mirror changes in Scotland from the 1930s to 1982, and in the Post Office's Film Unit archive.

As previously announced, EDINA is launching a third, related service in time for next session. TRILT will provide an online listing of all national, regional and local TV and radio stations in the UK, up to ten days before transmission, with Web links, bibliographies, keywords and images, and will be kept after the transmission.

Full details are provided in the EDINA publication *Newsline* and at <http://www.edina.ac.uk/>

*Peter Burnhill (EUCS)*



The logo for EDINA, featuring the letters 'EDINA' in a bold, sans-serif font. The letter 'I' is stylized with a dot above it, resembling a person's head and neck.

### Web accessibility seminar

Martin Sloan, who has lectured widely on Web accessibility and the Disability Discrimination Act, will lead a seminar which should be of interest to all those in the University who produce Web sites, especially in view of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act.

The (free) seminar is at 10am on **Wednesday 12th June** in JCMB room 6301 at The King's Buildings, and is repeated at 2pm the same day in the Brenda Moon Room, Main Library. You can book online at <http://webdb.ucs.ed.ac.uk/malts/events.cfm>

*Nora Moge* (MALTS)

### Perception Roadshow

The online assessment system *Question Mark Perception* will be demonstrated at 1pm on 17th June in The Meadows Lecture Theatre (see <http://www.ebis.estates.ed.ac.uk/rooms/profiles/mead.htm>). This is a great opportunity to see all the features of this leading and very versatile Web-based tool. The roadshow is free, and you can book your place as in the previous article.

*Nora Moge* (MALTS)

### 3-in-1 computer

Do you, or your students, need to use a Mac, Windows and Unix?

The new Apple 'eMac' makes this very easy. It runs Mac OS 9 & X and Unix natively (though it is not one of the officially-supported Unix platforms), and with 'VirtualPC' it can run any version of Windows just as if it were a PC. This new Mac, produced exclusively for education, looks like the older iMac, but with a larger screen and a G4 processor. There are two models, with a read-only CD drive (£729+VAT) or a combination DVD/CD-RW drive (£879+VAT).

*Maureen Dolan* (Scotsys)

### Backing up data can be a matter of life and death

When a portable computer was stolen from Edinburgh Royal Infirmary last month, the results of a £280,000 research project into heart disease in Scotland went with it—and its owner had to admit that the data were not backed up, nor were his 20 years of lecture notes and the contents of a medical journal he was editing.

Fortunately the computer was recovered by the police with the data intact, and the relieved doctor immediately bought a CD writer and made back-up copies of all his files.

CD-writers and blank CDs are not expensive—but data is priceless!

*Angi Lamb* (EUCS)

### Mac OS X admin course

A five-day course on OS X support takes place at Moray House in the first week of July. For information please contact [G.Kirkwood@ed.ac.uk](mailto:G.Kirkwood@ed.ac.uk).

*Gillian Kirkwood* (EUCS)

### Education content meeting

The fourth meeting of the CETIS Educational Content Special Interest Group takes place at Moray House on 21st June. This open meeting will be of relevance to all FE/HE colleagues who are interested in the development and delivery of reusable educational content.

There is full information at <http://www.cetis.ac.uk/events/>

*Charles Duncan* (Meteorology)

### Why would Nigeria choose you?

Messages purporting to come from Nigerian officials, and recently even from a commando in Afghanistan, asking you to help export vast sums of money, are of course a hoax (as mentioned in *BITs* in February 2001). Take no notice of these messages! The capture of some of the culprits (<http://www.theregister.co.uk/content/6/25394.html>) is not likely to solve this problem.

*Jack McAulay* (CITS)

### New Library projects

The Library has won two grants from the JISC (Joint Information Systems Committee of the UK Funding Councils): one to lead a national project to encourage universities to use electronic publication; the other to join a partnership to address the 'scholarly publishing crisis' of the spiralling cost of academic journals.

#### Theses Alive!

This will set up a pilot UK service to support the simple submission of thesis metadata to a range of destinations, including our own Library Catalogue, the British Library, and the commercial 'Index to Theses'. Naturally, universities and authors need to be reassured that the authors' rights will be protected, and that the online version is authoritatively and unalterably the true research output. This project will therefore look beyond the technical questions to the procedural and legal steps required to make dissertations and theses 'come alive' on the Web.

#### Project SHERPA

'Securing a Hybrid Environment for Research Preservation and Access' is a consortium led by the University of Nottingham, and including Edinburgh, Glasgow, Leeds, York, Sheffield, Oxford and the British Library. As copyright agreements permit, research articles produced by university staff for publication in scholarly journals will be stored in 'open archives' at each partner institution, and searched as though in one logical database. The aim is to build a free corpus of research material, which in time will provide an alternative to the costly corpus available from commercial publishers.

Please contact me for further details ([John.MacColl@ed.ac.uk](mailto:John.MacColl@ed.ac.uk)), or see <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/dner/development/programmes/fair.html>

*John MacColl* (EUL)



## Open-access labs: Summer upgrade

The plans for upgrading the open-access computing labs during the summer are now at <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/futures/>

These plans incorporate feedback we have already received from the faculties and departments. However, additional feedback and comment on the detail is still welcome (email [C.Rees@ed.ac.uk](mailto:C.Rees@ed.ac.uk)).

In particular it is proposed that the Windows open-access computing labs will remain on NT 4 for one final year and the Macintosh system will remain on OS 9.1. We are aiming to minimise the changes and upgrades to applications software, but a department should notify us of any changes needed to specific teaching packages *now*, to ensure that they can be included in next session's configuration. We will certainly do our best to incorporate later requests, but cannot guarantee to do so.

*Christine Rees (EUCS)*

## Student login names to change

**'s' will be added on 23rd July**

On 23rd July, the login names allocated to all students under the University's Universal Username scheme are going to change. These are the login names that are used for such services as the open-access labs, some departmental labs, the student email service, dial-up, and the Web proxy. The new login name will be the matriculation number preceded by the lower-case letter 's'—as in 's9912345'. As a consequence, an email address based on the matriculation number will change from [9912345@sms.ed.ac.uk](mailto:9912345@sms.ed.ac.uk) to [s9912345@sms.ed.ac.uk](mailto:s9912345@sms.ed.ac.uk).

Why this change? The University has allocated every student and member of staff a Universal Username—a single username which can be registered on any University system. (Background information is in the October 2001 meeting of the C&IT Committee, at <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/ucsinfo/cttees/citc/>)

Many departments will need to make preparations in anticipation of the changeover, on local computing facilities and locally-maintained mailing lists. Students too will need to prepare for the changeover day, particularly by unsubscribing from mailing lists. Each student will be emailed with information about the change and what they need to do.

There are over 20,000 student login names to change on each system. We hope to complete the changeover within one day, but this cannot be guaranteed. Further information, details of the login name change and progress on the day itself will be shown at <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/fmd/mft/schanges.html>

If you have any comments or questions about the changeover, please email [change.over@ed.ac.uk](mailto:change.over@ed.ac.uk).

*Christine Rees (EUCS)*

## Software news

### SigmaPlot, SigmaStat site licence

EUCS has added SigmaPlot and SigmaStat to its SPSS site licence.

SigmaPlot is a technical graphing package which can interface with SPSS and Microsoft Office; version 8.0 can be launched from Microsoft Excel. SigmaStat provides statistical analysis and data visualisation, but note that it has not been updated since being bought by SPSS, so its long term future may not be assured.

SigmaPlot costs £150 per copy, SigmaStat is £100 per copy. Please send internal order forms (GL220) to EUCS Purchasing, JCMB, KB.

### Software exchange

EUCS has set up a Web site for staff to advertise spare software licences for transfer or sale to other departments. The URL is <http://webdb.ucs.ed.ac.uk/eucadmin/exchange/>

Click on 'Current List' to see items available. Please correspond directly with the contact shown—not with EUCS!

To submit an entry, read the conditions carefully, then fill in the form; you will need your surname and personnel number. Entries are displayed for one month.

*Charlotte Moon (EUCS)*

## Edinburgh BITs

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Contributions to *BITs* are welcomed from all readers.

*Copy deadline for July BITs:*

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