

New Open-access Computing Laboratory



Archaeology, Geography and Computing Services collaborated over the summer to enable the opening of a new 60 seater open-access computing lab situated at the High School Yards. The machines are 1.7Ghz Pentium 4 PCs and are fitted with flat panel screens (see above) as an energy saving experiment. As with the other open-access labs, this lab is administered by Computing Services; it brings the number of open-access computers available to all students over the 1150 mark.

The lab will be open initially 9am–5pm, Monday to Friday, and some of this time will be allocated to the supporting departments for teaching, but it will become a 24hr access facility once appropriate security arrangements are in place.

Mike Baillie (EUCS)

The Managed Desktop Project

EUCS Desktop Services Team started a major project in September, the ‘Managed Desktop Project’. Its aims are:

- To develop a managed desktop service based on Windows XP which is attractive to, and suited to the requirements of, University staff in Colleges and Schools.
- To develop a student lab desktop based on Windows XP for the centrally-managed open-access labs in time for the start of academic year 2003/2004.

A project mailing list has been set up. To subscribe, please email majordomo@lists.ed.ac.uk with a message consisting of the single line:

subscribe ucs-desktop

A project area within EUCSinfo has been set up: please see <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/projects/mdt/>. This area will provide access to our project documentation (as it is written) and project reports. The project mailing list will be notified when these pages are updated.

Graham Newton (EUCS)

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University Library: late opening on Wednesdays

Please note that all Library sites will delay opening, for staff training, until 10:15am on each Wednesday in November (6th, 13th, 20th, 27th).

Mary Allison (Library)

Moving On

Christine Rees

This summer, Christine Rees moved to take management responsibility for bibliographic and multimedia services at the EDINA national data centre (<http://edina.ac.uk/>). Having had a leadership role within the University's Computing Services in planning and implementing developments in the personal computing systems arena over the past ten years, this represents a fresh challenge.

In at the beginning of the widespread use of desktop computing, Christine oversaw all of the systems developments in the open-access computing labs.

Her EUCS colleagues and many technical staff throughout the University will miss her contribution to the management and development of such challenging areas as the establishment of the Learning Resource Centre, the progression of the Novell Network infrastructure, and in more recent times the early development work on Microsoft's Active Directory and Exchange.

However, she does not move far, at least physically, remaining in the Computing Services offices at George Square, and keeping the same telephone number (50 3335). But now she has oversight of online delivery of some fourteen bibliographic services, one impending online film service and a variety of projects, including that for a national digital repository of online learning materials.

Formal thanks are properly due, and we wish her well in her new role.

Peter Burnhill (EUCS), Andrew McKendrick (EUCS)



Nick Stroud



After working on *BITs* as technical editor and then editor for over ten years, Nick Stroud has relinquished the editorial chair – the October *BITs* was his final one. Computing Services is planning a major overhaul of its Web site (EUCSinfo), and Nick as Web editor will be focussing on this part of his work.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Nick for his sterling efforts over the past decade, and to congratulate him on managing to produce an informative newsletter month by month.

Brian Gilmore (EUCS)

New Version of Red Hat Linux

Red Hat Linux 8.0 is now available from our local mirror site. We continue to provide previous Red Hat releases from this server. You can find installation instructions on our Linux web site at <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/fmd/unix/platforms/linux/>. We have recently added the HTTP (web) access method to the list of installation options.

We have been able to provide this mirror without removing any older versions. We may not be able to do this in future. It is likely that we will drop the 4.2 and the 6 releases next year and may stop mirroring the non-i386 architectures. We will continue to mirror updates for all older releases. We will give plenty of notice prior to any removal of old releases; for now they remain.

We also lend CDs to people who are not able to install their systems over the network, and can write CDs for people if they send us blank recordable CDs. We need three CD-Rs for each release and another CD-R if you want the updates (another two if you want sources as well). Alternatively, we can write a complete release on a single DVD-R. Note that DVD+R, DVD+RW and DVD-RAM formats are not supported.

To be informed of updates to the Linux archive, subscribe to the mailing list called linux-updates@lists.ed.ac.uk by emailing majordomo@lists.ed.ac.uk with the words **subscribe linux-updates** in the message. The archive is updated nightly.

Graeme Wood (EUCS)

Energy Saving in the Open-access Labs

The issue of leaving the open-access lab computers switched on all the time is a major problem. The reason they are on is basically down to two things: we have to send out necessary overnight upgrades to the machines (this currently takes place during the quiet period at 11pm); and also, more significantly, Microsoft NT does not have built-in power management facilities.

However, there is some good news! This summer we implemented a new system in the lab machines which provides

power management functionality. Approximately half the PCs are now powered down overnight: we send out any overnight upgrades to the machines just after each lab closes and then power down the machines soon after. We expect this change to save an estimated 44,730 hours of "PC power" per week.

We plan to extend the scheme to all PCs not in 24 hour opening labs next year when we expect to move to Windows XP.

Mark Sammons (EUCS)

eDiarying via Exchange

An electronic diary system has been on the wish-list of many academic departments for some time. EUCS has purchased a server and installed it into the Microsoft Active Directory forest in order to pilot the introduction of an eDiarying Service. (Please see <http://www.microsoft.com/windows2000/technologies/directory/ad/default.asp> for a description of Microsoft Active Directory.) This system joins and interworks with the MIS Microsoft Exchange server currently delivering services to their client group.

Exchange supports many applications, but the pilot will focus on the features of eDiarying, and report on issues which arise. The system will give staff the facility to hold and display personal diaries and share them with other authorised users, with the appropriate security and administration features needed to control who can see and interact with the system. To the end user, the Exchange Calendar is part of Outlook (Entourage on Macintosh), and there is a Web interface via Outlook Web Access (OWA).

Several areas are of immediate interest here, in addition to the usefulness of the eDiarying system. For example, there are several important technical and administrative issues where two organisations are running Exchange servers within the Active Directory domain: we need to define a backup strategy for Exchange, tackle vital security matters, and handle the support issues for users.

The pilot is soon to begin, and will initially be made available to EUCS teams. Exchange Calendar needs Exchange Mail running in the background to act as the conduit for accepting and declining meetings. There is no intention of running Exchange Mail as a service, but Computing Services needs to examine the issues that this restriction will create, and put together recommendations for the deployment of Outlook/Entourage/OWA along with the existing Staffmail system.

Academic departments who have already shown an interest will be invited to take part in a second pilot once these issues have been resolved, when draft documentation and training will also be available.

George Howat (EUCS), Gillian Kirkwood (EUCS)

Anti-Virus News

McAfee Virus Removal Tool

In the light of recent reports concerning the W32/Bugbear virus, PC users may be interested to know of a cleanup utility from McAfee to handle a number of known infections: it includes detection for all known variants of W32/Bugbear, W32/Elkern, and W32/Klez. It can be downloaded from <http://vil.nai.com/vil/stinger/>

False Detection of Virus

There have been recent reports of false detections of the W32/Insane.dam virus when using the 4229 DAT files and old (and unsupported) engine versions 4.0.70 and 4.1.40. PC users seeing such a detection are urged to update their engine to the current version, 4.1.60, to correct this false detection.

For information on the anti-virus

software available to all University of Edinburgh users please see <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/usd/iss/ol/issues/viruses/index.html>

Garry Scobie (EUCS)

Fujitsu Hard Drives

MIS has highlighted a problem with batches of Fujitsu hard drives that were sold to PC manufacturers, including RM and Viglen. To date MIS have discovered 2 faulty drives in RM machines and 7 faulty drives in Viglen machines. Further information is given at <http://www.procure.ed.ac.uk/computer/ordering/new.htm>

Please contact the Procurement Office if you have encountered hard drive problems with recently purchased RM or Viglen machines.

George Reid (Procurement)

EDINA News

EDINA is the JISC-designated national data centre based in Edinburgh University Data Library.

New Web Site for EDINA

EDINA launched its new Web site at the end of September, complete with such Web-rooms as Reading & Reference Room, Data & Map Place, and Sound & Picture Studio; there is also a Development Project Area: please see <http://edina.ac.uk/>

EDINA Works with Others to Win New Project Contracts

1. Project TIES: Technologies for Information Environment Security. In partnership with EUCS, this is a 'test-bed' investigation into digital certificate technology for authentication, with other methods for authorisation, in both an institutional and a JISC Data Service Provider context. It is one of a number of projects funded in response to JISC circular o6/o2, which invited proposals for projects that would enable the wider application of emerging security technologies to the JISC Information Environment. A number of other institutions participate as Associate Partners. A grant of £126,000 is available over the next year.
2. JORUM+ : Joint Online Repository for University learning Materials. In partnership with MIMAS, the other JISC-designated national data centre, based at Manchester Computing, this is a major undertaking to scope, implement and develop a national online digital repository, with development facilities for online learning materials, forming part of the JISC Information Environment. A total grant of about £430,000 is available over the period to July 2005.

Peter Burnhill (EUCS)



Netskills Workshop: Effective e-Learning with VLEs

Tuesday 17th Dec 2002, 9:30am–4:30pm
Netskills, Newcastle upon Tyne.

This workshop is aimed at individuals who are delivering or preparing to deliver some aspect of their current teaching provision by means of a Virtual Learning Environment. The workshop covers analysis, planning and design of the pedagogical aspects of VLE courses. Technical and administrative aspects will *not* be covered.

The cost is £60 for participants from UK higher and further education. For more information, please look at <http://www.netskills.ac.uk/workshops/>

Netskills Team

WebCT for Use in Science and Engineering

Wednesday 27th Nov 2002, 2pm–4:30pm
Lecture Theatre "A", JCMB, KB.

Whether you already use one of the Virtual Learning Environments which the University provides or are thinking about it, come along and hear invited speakers talk about how WebCT has changed their teaching practice.

All staff are welcome – not just those in Science and Engineering. To help with predicting numbers for ordering coffee, please register your intention to attend by using the MALTS Events index (go to <http://www.malts.ed.ac.uk/>, then click on the bottom right hand link).

Wilma Alexander (MALTS)

OtherSides 2002 Exhibition

The fifth joint exhibition of the arts, crafts and activities of Information Services Group staff will be held in the Exhibition Hall on the Ground Floor of the Main Library. The formal opening, by Sheila Cannell, will be held on Friday 1st November at 12:30pm (doors open at 12 Noon); the Exhibition will run until Friday 13th December.

OtherSides is more than just art – we want to show the many talents and activities of the people who work in the University's Information Services Group.

For further details and a view of previous exhibitions please see <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/exhibit/> or email us at art.at.work@ed.ac.uk or othersides@srv4.lib.ed.ac.uk

John Glass (Library)

Frances Provan (EUCS)

ESRI Virtual Campus GIS Courses

As an add-on to the EUCS site licence for ESRI Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software, all University of Edinburgh staff and students are now eligible to enrol on the company's free online training courses. The Data Library is currently acting as the point of contact to assign 'seats' for these self-paced, Web-based courses.



Desktop GIS packages allow users to create maps from spatial data and perform spatial analysis. Increasingly, GIS is being used by researchers outside the Geography-related disciplines to add a new dimension to their analyses, or simply to illustrate their data on customised maps produced digitally.

There are currently 36 courses available, covering GIS theory and technology (using specific software tools such as Arcview 3.x or writing scripts with Avenue), and applying GIS to specific fields, such as hydrology, business, or health.

Individual courses typically require 18–24 hours to complete. The necessary software may be purchased under the EUCS site licence for departmental or home use, or used in the computing labs on campus, or downloaded from the course Web site as demo versions.

For more information visit <http://campus.esri.com> or contact the Data Library at datalib@ed.ac.uk to enrol on a course.

Robin Rice (EUCS)

Search Tip: "Just one College?"

The main search page at <http://www.catalogue.ed.ac.uk:8765/> searches Web sites spread throughout the University. If you want to search only pages in a particular College then bookmark one of:

<http://www.catalogue.ed.ac.uk:8765/hss/>

<http://www.catalogue.ed.ac.uk:8765/mvm/>

<http://www.catalogue.ed.ac.uk:8765/scieng/>

Graham Rule (EUCS)

EDINBURGH BITS

Editor:

John Murison, EUCS.

Published by:

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

Contributions:

Email: BITs@ed.ac.uk
Telephone: 0131 651 1202

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 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>

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Contributions to *BITs* are welcomed from all readers.

Copy deadline for December *BITs*:

Friday 15th November