Data Library Special Issue

Looking back—and forward

"It was 20 years ago today…"

1983 was a significant year in the history of computing. A full switchover to TCP/IP saw the Internet enter its modern age. Lotus 1-2-3 introduced pie charts and bar graphs to the IBM PC, newly launched in Europe. And MS-DOS version 2.0 "also supported hard disks and subdirectories".

At that time the University of Edinburgh had a Program Library Unit (PLU), based in 18 Buccleuch Place. Its function was to convert software written for IBM mainframes to work on the UK-based ICL mainframes, and to distribute this to UK universities on magnetic tape. PLU was also commissioned to write the program SASPAC, used for over 20 years for the extraction of census data. The University's central computing facilities were provided by the Edinburgh Regional Computing Centre, later to become EUCS.

As disk storage on the machines of the period was a very expensive commodity, file space was strictly rationed. A group of researchers interested in working with data, such as census statistics and government surveys, came together to petition the Program Library Unit and the University Library. They wanted a University-wide provision for files that were too large to be stored on individual computing accounts.

In response, the Data Library was set up as a small group within the PLU with Trevor Jones, a Sociology lecturer, as part-time manager, with 1.5 staff (one programmer and one computing assistant). Peter Burnhill took over in 1984, and Alison Bayley joined in 1985 as a part-time programmer. (Peter continues to this day as Head of the Data Library, with Alison as his deputy and manager of the Data Library services team.)

The Year 2023

How should we prepare for the next twenty years? One approach is to take the long view. An excess of science fiction reading in the 1980s led me, at interview, to define 'a data library' as "a bit like inter-Galactic library loan". Later, the adopted theme for the IASSIST Conference was *Numbers, pictures, words & sounds: priorities for the 1990s*. So imagine, in 2023, the student/researcher, of uncertain age, sitting in the corner of noisy canteen, trying to complete that overdue multimedia essay: fingers of eGlove tapping away; light reflecting on the VideSpecs? Technology will move on: personal mobile workstations with even easier access to networks and to servers that can process, as well as play/view/copy/amend/mix, and more. That priority for library-like provision, offering access to evidence (data) for use in research, learning and teaching will remain, however; it is likely to remain for as long as we have a university.

So, what else to plan for? Will students require online access to course material? Will lecturers take to the *Virtual Learning Environments* (VLEs) that are now emerging within universities and colleges, and how will they be managed to ensure that they are robust and given priority? Further, will the so-called open archive, pre-print and e-print movements, that show signs of succeeding, lessen dependence upon the appetites of commercial publishers? Certainly, scholars want speedy dissemination, backed by procedures that ensure enduring preservation and access; but scholars, as authors, rarely make good publishers—who then are to be the new publishers, of data as well as of

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Peter Burnhill, Head of the Data Library and Director of EDINA

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findings? There is need to look again at university publishing: at ways of providing services that assist researchers in making available, in electronic form, their provisional and supporting material as well as their finished material.

I believe that all this means that the Data Library will continue to be an interesting place in which to work, as well as something at which this University will continue to excel. The word *library* has its place as a proper noun, and the University Library was one of the Data Library's parents back in 1983. But the word also serves as a portmanteau verb: the act of organising the discovery, location and access methods for the evidence, whether

in the form of statistic, text or film, for our 2023 student to use in that essay. The term *digital library* will hopefully come to include—rather than exclude—'data', and for our part we aim to help add what has been learned in creating libraries of numeric data to these broader developments.

We also aim to put to best advantage that bird's-eye view gained by hosting the EDINA national data centre, which—combined with long-time involvement with IASSIST—has allowed us to observe several different futures in the making. The trick is in choosing between them.

Peter Burnhill (EUCS)

Support for Learning and Teaching

Various items in this special issue of *BITs* describe how the Data Library has assisted researchers in several disciplines. But the Data Library also supports staff and students in the *other* vital activity of academic life—education itself. While 40% of enquiries to the Data Library logged last year were from staff, 30% were from postgraduates and 30% from undergraduates. The Data Library has an open door policy: the door in question is on the second floor of the Main Library building. Students frequently drop by to discuss their research topic for a class paper or dissertation, or to find out about data sources, or digital maps, or to be shown how to extract data from a difficult interface. Some discover us from our Web site, some are sent by their tutors, others are referred by support staff in the Library or Computing Services.

Lecturers are encouraged to approach the Data Library for help with discovering or creating datasets for use in teaching a particular subject or method. The Data Librarian can provide classroom demonstrations of online data and tools to students at the request of teaching staff. A partnership with the School of Social and Political Studies has been maintained for several years, with Data Library staff helping to teach particular modules in the postgraduate curriculum.

Datasets which are purchased as CD-ROM subscriptions are mounted on the server of the Learning and Resource Centre nearby, where students can access them independently. Getting started guides written by Data Library staff have proved popular for self-help in using these resources.

Recent project work has focused on learning and teaching with data. A national survey of university teachers uncovered examples of uses of numeric data in teaching, and barriers to its use, in an enquiry led by the Data Library. (The final report can be found on our Web site: **http://datalib.ed.ac.uk/**)

The Data Librarian was commissioned to write and update the *Internet for Social Statistics* tutorial as part of the Resource Discovery Network's popular subject-based *Virtual Training Suite* (see **http://www.vts.rdn.ac.uk/**).

Robin Rice (EUCS)

IASSIST

The International Association of Social Science Information Services and Technology (IASSIST) was founded in 1974. It aims to foster and promote a network of excellence for data service delivery, to advance infrastructure in the social sciences and to provide opportunities for exchange of sound professional practices. The membership of IASSIST includes information system specialists, database librarians or administrators, archivists, researchers, programmers and managers.

For many years Data Library staff have been active members of IASSIST. Peter Burnhill is immediate past President, Robin Rice chairs the Web Site Committee (of which Stuart Macdonald is a member)—see **http//www.iassistdata.org**—and Alison Bayley is Assistant Treasurer. IASSIST holds an annual conference in the USA or Canada for three years out of four and in Europe in the fourth year. We hosted the conference in Edinburgh in 1993.

These conferences and our membership of IASSIST have proved invaluable, giving staff the opportunity and forum to explore developments in the Data Library world and to learn from and interact with their peers.

Alison Bayley (EUCS)

Robin Rice, Data Librarian

Alison Bayley, Manager,
Data Library Services Team

Perspectives from Data Library users

The following articles were contributed by members of the University who have made use of the services provided by the Data Library.

Desperate for data…

It is a somewhat overdrawn, but not entirely unfounded, truism that social researchers divide into those who are good with numbers and those who are good with people. Even where there is a will to combine quantitative and qualitative methods, the effort of acquiring expertise in one field or the other is often sufficient to dissuade us from bridging that well-trodden divide. In geography a small group of us have a very strong will to combine qualitative data on health trajectories with quantitative contextual information on where people live. We are quite good with the qualitative interviews, and reasonably well versed in the manipulation of spreadsheets and the management of SPSS. But there has still been the thorny issue of interfacing with the spatially-tagged quantitative data we need to mix our methods in the way we want. And it is here that we have found the Data Library to be such a sound resource.

On the one hand, there are the many interesting datasets kept on site or easily accessed via the Data Library, together with an even vaster array of user-friendly information held on these and related sources. On the other hand, there is the expertise to help manage the interface of postcoded interview material (for example) with key datasets, notably the Census. Quite apart from the help directly available from library staff when needs are urgent and time is short, from which we have already benefited, there is the option to learn how to 'do it yourself', which we look forward to taking up in the wake of the release of the 2001 Census next year.

Susan Smith (Geography)

Social mobility in Scotland

Social mobility is the relationship between people's occupational class and the class in which they grew up; the study of it often pays particular attention to the role of education in mediating between the two. It was a popular subject of sociological debate in the 1970s, when Scottish researchers participated in an international network of social mobility studies, the conclusion being broadly that, although Scotland probably had greater chances of upward mobility than England, it was not out of line compared to the normal experience of other European countries.

The subject then faded somewhat until the mid-1990s when a new generation of mobility studies was born. This seemed an ideal opportunity once again to situate the Scottish experience in an international context: in particular, did Scotland's adoption of comprehensive secondary schooling by the mid-1970s have any effect on mobility? What would be the implications for the concept of social inclusion, a topic of current political interest? The practical opportunity to conduct such a study was presented by the new Scottish Household Survey, a very large survey (15,000 cases annually) sponsored by the Scottish Executive, and the enhancement in 1999 of the Scottish sample in the British Household Panel Study.

The Data Library helped us by giving us quick access to the dataset from the first Scottish Household Survey (1999), which then allowed us to define what new questions had to be asked to allow mobility to be studied in the same way as in other countries — questions on mother's and father's occupations when the respondent was aged 14, which were duly asked in the 2001 survey. That led to a grant from the British Academy to finance the coding of these questions. The resulting dataset is now the biggest that there has ever been in Scotland for studying this topic. The availability of that dataset, and the Scottish sample from the Household Panel Study — also supplied by the Data Library — then allowed us to gain a much larger grant from the ESRC to fund the analysis of the data. In short, the Data Library staff has helped to bring into being an important new dataset on social mobility, available in due course to all researchers, and — more specifically — to the gaining of two important research grants for the University.

Cristina Iannelli and Lindsay Paterson
(School of Education)

Environmental risk

I have been working on a research study looking at exposure of cases and controls to environmental risk factors. The Data Library has allowed me to find missing postcodes using the utility Address Manager on site, and has also provided the Census rural/urban categories for a given list of postcodes. Another aspect of the study makes use of the Agricultural Census which the Data Library has used to generate summary information in a form which is useful for my study. This has been invaluable in the analysis of the dataset and has allowed the full exploration of study hypotheses.

My experience of contacting the Data Library has been very positive and the staff are all very friendly. Particular thanks go to Robin Rice, Stuart Macdonald and Alison Bayley, who have all been helpful over the years.

Sheena Macdonald (Community Health Sciences)

Crime and economic growth

I used the Data Library to investigate the relationship between the level of crime and the level of economic growth as part of my undergraduate degree in Politics & Economics. The Data Library was able to provide me with access to several of the large-scale cross-national data sources commonly used in published social science research, for example the International Crime Victim

Perspectives from Data Library users (continued)

Survey and the World Bank Development Indicators. Once I had access to the datasets the help and advice of the Data Library staff quickly enabled me to match the available data to the questions I was attempting to answer.

Paul Norris (Social Policy)

Econometrics

I am a PhD student in Economics working on Applied Economet-rics. I have been in touch with staff of the Data Library since the first year of my studies, as data collection is an essential part of my work. I am very happy with the service they provide since they are usually very efficient, quick and always available.

The Data Library proved significant for my research as I managed to retrieve information that was crucial for my research methodology. Specifically, through the Datastream financial database I have been able to collect information in various economic formats on a sample of more than 3,000 British firms for more than 30 years. This dataset is a proper 'balanced panel' and permits use of the most advanced panel data techniques—the main objective of my research.

Laura Serlenga (Economics)

Opening doors to data

Edinburgh University Data Library assists academic staff and students from a variety of disciplines to acquire and use numeric or encoded research data for analysis, teaching and presentation. Usage of our services continues to increase (by around 25% last year).

In addition to helping University users identify and obtain suitable data quickly and in a usable format, Data Library staff act as liaison for a number of online services from national data service providers, as follows:

The *UK Data Archive* at the University of Essex (http://www.data-archive.ac.uk/)

In addition to its traditional archiving role for social science research data, from January 2003 the UK Data Archive is co-hosting the *Economic and Social Data Service* (ESDS); this is funded by the ESRC and the JISC, and run by the Universities of Essex and Manchester. ESDS extends and replaces most of the existing archiving and social science data dissemination services currently offered by the UK Data Archive and MIMAS. This should enable greater interoperability between resources within the new 'JISC Information Environment'.

The UK Data Archive also hosts the *Census Registration Service* (CRS), which provides a one-stop shop for users within UK Higher and Further Education for use of the following resources from decennial censuses (including 2001):

- Census Dissemination Unit from MIMAS (University of Manchester)
- Census Geography Data Unit (UKBORDERS) from EDINA (University of Edinburgh)
- Census Interaction Data Service (Universities of Leeds and St Andrews)
- Samples of Anonymised Records from the Census Microdata Unit (University of Manchester)

MIMAS at the University of Manchester (http://www.mimas.ac.uk/)

MIMAS is a JISC-funded national data centre.

- MIMAS provides access to UK Population Census datasets via Casweb (Census Area Statistics on the Web). A new service is planned to coincide with the release of the 2001 UK census data in the Spring of 2003.
- MIMAS provides Landmap, which contains satellite images and elevation maps of the UK.
- As part of ESDS MIMAS will provide a new Interactive Data Service giving access to a portfolio of key international and UK national databases.

EDINA at the University of Edinburgh (http://edina.ac.uk/)

EDINA is a JISC-funded data centre based in Edinburgh University Data Library.

- Robin Rice (Data Librarian) and Sheila Noble (Library) act as co-site representatives for the *Digimap* service, which provides access to Ordnance Survey online maps and spatial data.
- The Data Library provides support for the use of the digitised boundary data service *UKBORDERS* provided by EDINA.
- EDINA provides free access to the digital version of the first two *Statistical Accounts of Scotland*, an historical collection of parish reports covering the 1790s and the 1830s.

Stuart Macdonald (EUCS)

Stuart Macdonald, Assistant Data Librarian

"It was 20 years ago today..."

(Continued from Page 1)

Early Data Library holdings were the 1981 UK population census, the big national surveys (eg the 'General House-hold Survey'), and research data from the Universities of Edinburgh, Glasgow and Strathclyde.

At this time, long before the World Wide Web (which only emerged in 1994), 'datalib' was based on *view*, a custom-written hypertext system within EMAS, the system that was hosted on the ERCC mainframes. Geographic information was a particular focus from the beginning, as the Data Library worked with researcher Jack Hotson to convert parish-based agricultural census data to grid square estimates. This allowed detailed visualisation of land use across the UK. UKBORDERS, the digital boundary map data server, was developed in the early 1990s as part of the Economic and Social Research Council's 1991 Census Programme.

Collaboration with the Department of Geography saw the establishment of the ESRC Regional Research Laboratory for Scotland, focusing on quantitative techniques in the Social Sciences. Soon afterwards followed SALSER, a Web-based 'virtual' catalogue of serials in libraries at the thirteen Scottish universities, the National Library of Scotland and the two major civic libraries of Edinburgh and Glasgow. SALSER remains heavily used to this day, providing public access to important specialist serials collections.

Links with the research community were cemented by the RAPID project, which associated research activity with the output of other work funded by the Economic and Social Research Council. Uniquely, RAPID included not only con-ventional monograph and journal publi-cations, but also new types of research output such as software, datasets and learning materials. Reusable components for self-paced learning were to become an integral part of the Data Library's role a few years later.

Such projects built up a wealth of knowledge within the Data Library, and a breadth of subject which was to serve it well for the most important event in its history—the launch of the EDINA national data centre in 1995/96. Along with BIDS at Bath and MIDAS (now MIMAS) at Manchester, Edinburgh was chosen as a JISC-funded centre for the provision of data services to the entire UK academic community, expanding its horizons far beyond its initial remit.

EDINA's new services to the UK had knock-on benefit for Edinburgh users as a critical mass of expertise was recruited. Bibliographic indexes such as BIOSIS and Ei Compendex helped with literature searches, and required 'information specialists'. The Digimap service provided flexible access to Ordnance Survey mapping data, and the online creation of custom-drawn maps; this required GIS specialists. All these new areas of activity required software engineers with a wide skill base.

With the launch of EDINA, the Data Library had to be redefined to ensure that it continued to fulfil its local remit, distinct from the national service provision. Donald Morse first took on the role of manager of the new Local Services team, and Joan Fairgrieve became the University's first Data Librarian. Both the present incumbents, Robin Rice as Data Librarian, and Stuart Macdonald as Assistant Data Librarian, have library qualifications, and experience of working in the library sector: Robin from Madison, Wisconsin, and Stuart from Glasgow and Edinburgh. Indeed, cooperation with Edinburgh University Library has remained a constant throughout the years, and has seen the Data Library bridge the conceptual gap between Computing Services and the Library. Relations with the Special Collections department of the Library have been particularly close, from the SCIMSS manuscript indexing project in 1995 to the NAHSTE project in 2002 (see December 2002 issue of *BITs*), the latter providing a comprehensive index to Edinburgh and Glasgow archives on the history of science, technology and the environment.

Although numerically small in terms of FTE, the Data Library Services Team is proud to retain its role directly serving University of Edinburgh staff and stu-dents. However it is not above seeking expert assistance and advice from its conveniently close colleagues in EDINA—approximately forty FTE in number.

Gavin Inglis (EUCS)

> ... cooperation with Edinburgh University Library has remained a constant throughout the years, and has seen the Data Library bridge the conceptual gap between Computing Services and the Library.

> ... the Data Library Services Team is proud to retain its role directly serving University of Edinburgh staff and students.

Contacting the Data Library

Edinburgh University Data Library,
2nd Floor, Main Library Building,
George Square,
Edinburgh EH8 9LJ
Email: **datalib@ed.ac.uk**
Phone: 0131 651 1431
Fax: 0131 650 3308
Home page: **http://datalib.ed.ac.uk/**

The following staff provide Data Library Services to the University of Edinburgh:
Data Librarian:
　　Robin Rice (ext 511431)
Assistant Data Librarian:
　　Stuart Macdonald (ext 503304)
Data Library Services Team Manager:
　　Alison Bayley (ext 503303)
Director of Data Library:
　　Peter Burnhill (ext 503301)

The virtual Data Library – http://datalib.ed.ac.uk/

The Data Library's Web site includes up-to-date developments for data users, current events and data-related courses, as well as recent Data Library articles on its News page. It contains a subject-based online catalogue of current dataset titles and descriptions, and links to current and previous projects. The Web site also provides links to major national data services including EDINA, MIMAS and the UK Data Archive, and links to downloadable user guides and handouts. Data Library staff maintain an extensive set of annotated links to data sources to assist Web-based data discovery for students, researchers and teachers.

Users can access the Web site to sign up for a current awareness email list and to contact Data Library staff.

To reflect the increasing number of datasets stored and used locally, and the growing number of online data sources, providers and suppliers, we have recently assigned new subject categories to our holdings and to external data sources on the Internet, as illustrated above (see **http://datalib.ed.ac.uk/sources.html**).

Stuart Macdonald (EUCS)

Your eLearning questions tackled

MALTS is providing a trial consultancy service for Science & Engineering staff wishing to review ways of developing their use of electronic media for teaching. If you have questions about using multimedia for presentations, online tests, discussion boards, Virtual Learning Environments or other learning technology applications, you can make an appointment to discuss these with a MALTS staff member. For the trial period we will be based at the Graphics and Multimedia Resource Centre in JCMB (Room 3901), where there is a wide variety of hardware and software for creating and editing electronic materials.

The first consultancy session will be on the afternoon of 26th February. For further information please contact me (tel 516543, email **W.Alexander@ed.ac.uk**).

Wilma Alexander (MALTS)

RefWorks

The University has a six month trial to RefWorks, running from November 2002.

What is RefWorks?

RefWorks is a Web-based bibliography and database manager that allows you to create your own personal database by importing references from text files or online databases. You can use these references in writing your papers and automatically format the paper and the bibliography. If you're familiar with EndNote, ProCite or Reference Manager, RefWorks is similar, but is on the Web rather than installed locally on your computer.

How do I use it?

Please refer to the following Web page, where all is explained: **http://www.lib.ed.ac.uk/news/refworks.shtml**

Simon Bains (Library)

IT Security Working Party

The annual progress report from the IT Security Working Party, for the year to end September 2002, has recently been produced. While the bulk of the report is confidential, the following extract is taken from the section on the Incident Response Team: "The IRT was set up two years ago... It has logged some 214 significant incidents during the year (up from 106 last year) of which 45% (up from 30%) were hosts detected scanning out of EaStMAN (usually indicating they themselves had been hacked)... The overall effort required for IRT is now estimated to be almost two person days per week."

Scott Currie (EUCS)

Statistics software

The EUCS Statistics Software Group provides support in the form of courses, documentation, help and advice for three core statistical packages at the University: SPSS, Minitab and S-Plus.

- SPSS is the most widely used statistics package in the University, good for survey data, reports and charts as well as manipulating data.
- Minitab is easy to use, and good for experimental data and exploratory data analysis. It is often used on introductory statistics courses in the sciences.
- S-Plus is used for statistical programming, but also has menus for standard analysis and a wide range of graphs.

The Group provides some support for other packages. For more details please visit our Web site: **http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/usd/stats/**

Contact us through your EUCS user support team in the first instance.

Frances Provan (EUCS)

Auto-replies dangerous?

UK office workers are being advised to use caution when writing 'away from office' auto-reply email messages, according to the findings of a recent report by The Corporate IT Forum (**http://www.tif.co.uk/news/PR20021204.html**). The report suggests that criminals might buy lists of 'spam' email addresses, and then send mass mailings with the intention of gaining 'away from office' replies with details of holiday absences.

Scepticism about this 'danger' has been expressed in some quarters: for example, see **http://www.snopes.com/crime/intent/reply.htm** However, the following summary advice from the report is probably worth heeding:

DO's: Keep messages as bland as possible. Say that you are currently 'unable to deal with this query' or that you are 'out of the office on business'. Redirect enquiries to a colleague's business telephone number. Always prepare for your absence and pre-warn key contacts personally of your holiday.

DON'Ts: Never say that you are away on holiday, out of the country, or away from the office between certain dates. Never put alternative personal contact details on an 'away from office' message. Never put home address details, home phone numbers or personal mobile phone numbers on messages. Never put a colleague's personal contact details on a message. And finally, never set 'away' messages on home or personal email accounts.

Editor

eProcurement for laboratory supplies

This term will see the start of a live pilot of eProcurement for laboratory supplies via a Web-based managed 'market-place'. Schools who wish to participate thereafter should ask their purchasing person to contact me as soon as possible, to express an interest and to get more information: email **Karen.Bowman@ed.ac.uk**

Karen Bowman (Procurement)

IT training—new venue

Computing Services and MIS were asked to vacate their IT training suite on level 3 of Appleton Tower, to provide accommodation for Informatics following the fire on 7th December.

I am pleased to report that basement and ground floor premises at 19 Buccleuch Place have been made available as a new venue for postgraduate and staff IT training. Work is now proceeding to equip the rooms appropriately.

The EUCS training schedule for January has been revised. Some courses have been cancelled and the remainder will be delivered in Room 2009a, the training room at KB. (You should have been contacted if you registered to attend any of the courses affected.) We hope that the new accommodation will be ready by the end of January, when we can resume our full schedule.

Thanks are due to all University colleagues who have helped us (many are still doing so) with this unexpected relocation.

John Murison (EUCS)

The aftermath of the 7th December fire

The scene on 6th January 2003 is still one of devastation

Photographs by Paul Hutton (EUCS)

7th December Fire

Effect on the School of Informatics

*The following summary of the effect of the Old Town Fire was taken from the School of Informatics Web site (*http://www.informatics.ed.ac.uk*/) on 10th December 2002.*

The Old Town Fire of 7th December 2002 destroyed the accommodation on South Bridge of approximately 25% of the School of Informatics at the University of Edinburgh, rated by the recent Research Assessment Exercise as the UK's biggest and best department for research in Computer Science. There were no serious casualties, and thanks to the efforts of the Fire Brigade, nearby student residences were saved.

The building at 80 South Bridge housed a volume of teaching and research equivalent to the entire Computer Science activity at many universities. It was used by some 300 people daily for teaching and research, and was the primary base for some 200 staff and students. It provided tutorial and laboratory space for a further 220 Junior Undergraduate Students.

We have lost over 150 workstations, a cluster of powerful servers, and associated infrastructure. We have also lost the Artificial Intelligence Library — a collection of AI literature unique in the world, an irreplaceable archive accumulated over the 40 years of Edinburgh's leadership in the field, since its beginning in the 1960s.

Although we have lost this archival collection, and many researchers have lost their personal archives, most of our current research data is stored electronically. We have recently rolled out a state of the art distributed computing environment, and, in this respect at least, we are well placed for disaster recovery.

The immediate disruption to our computing and administrative systems will be dealt with by the end of this week and by the same time a robust short-term plan for alternative accommodation will be in place to allow us to deliver the current research and teaching programme of the School in the New Year.

The good news is that the University has already started planning work for a purpose-built Informatics Centre for Communication, Cognition and Computation, which will draw all the activity in Informatics at Edinburgh — research and teaching, in Artificial Intelligence, Computer Science, and Cognitive Science — together under one roof. It is imperative that we now grasp the opportunity to accelerate these plans.

Stop Press

Following the fire EUCS is cooperating with Informatics to help them get operational again. This might affect some of our services, and we would therefore ask customers to be understanding.

Additional Stop Press

The School of Informatics is most grateful for the many offers of help and support from within and outwith the University. We hope colleagues will bear with us as we rebuild our systems, and we offer our best wishes for the New Year.

Michael Fourman,
Head of School of Informatics

Some photographs of the aftermath of the fire can be seen on page 7.

Open access computing labs

Following the 7th December fire which destroyed the School of Informatics building at 80 South Bridge, EUCS was asked to vacate the open access computing labs on level 5 of Appleton Tower to assist in the rehousing of Informatics.

Alternative accommodation has now been provided on the first and second floors of the Main Library in George Square, with a net loss of only six seats in the total open access computing lab provision.

Thanks to the staff of the Library and of Estates & Buildings who cooperated with EUCS in making this accommodation available at extremely short notice.

Mike Baillie (EUCS)