

EUCS Specialist Services Issue

Specialist Services are for everyone

The EUCS Specialist Services Division brings together a range of diverse but important services, which are best managed centrally rather than on a per-College basis. From Web and database services through multimedia and information services to desktop support, software distribution and the open-access labs, the specialist staff in the Division are involved in a wide range of activities.

The Division comprises seven teams:

- ▶ **Information Tools** provides Web, streaming media and database services and support.
- ▶ **Information Services** looks after the EUCS Web site, the IT training operation, and edits and publishes EUCS documentation.
- ▶ The **Desktop Services Team** is responsible for the forthcoming Managed Desktop service and for looking after the systems in the open-access labs, the EUCS IT training suite and the Learning and Resource Centre.
- ▶ The **Graphics and Multimedia Team** runs the Graphics and Multimedia Resource Centre (GMRC) at The King's Buildings.
- ▶ **EdVEC** is a self-supporting research-led group involved in leading-edge virtual environment technologies.
- ▶ The **Commercial Projects Team** is a self-supporting unit tasked with raising external revenue to support the work of EUCS.
- ▶ The **Software Services Team** is a small group which manages software site licensing and distribution.

Although each team comprises specialists in its own area of expertise, this does not mean that the services on offer are of restricted interest. For instance, Desktop Services is developing a managed desktop service for staff PCs—clearly of interest to a very large number of people in this University. Similarly, the GMRC is used by a wide range of staff and students from across all three Colleges.

One might expect that specialist teams would work in the background, contact with service users being through the EUCS Support Teams. However, in fact there is a great deal of close interaction between service users and specialist staff, to the benefit of all parties: academic staff and postgraduates gain directly from the expert advice on offer, while specialists can adjust the service based on their direct exposure to the changing requirements of the service users.

It is clear that an important future direction for this University will be eLearning. EUCS is looking to how it can best support this activity; many of the services described here are relevant. For instance, the GMRC is considering how to support production of digital media objects for eLearning (*e.g.* digital video clips), while the delivery of those objects will be through the streaming media service provided by the Information Tools Team.

Specialist computing services will always be required in an organization as large, dynamic and diverse as this University. It is EUCS's firm intention to ensure that the specialist services which it offers continue to be relevant and cost-effective.

Chris Adie (EUCS)

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Chris Adie, Manager of Specialist Services Division

Information Tools

Delivering online learning and information has been redefined in the era of the World Wide Web. The EUCS Information Tools Team provides Web and database services and technical expertise to exploit them for research and teaching activities. We use these technologies to provide applications within EUCS, to enable it to improve its support to customers. By arrangement we also build applications for Schools.

Web Services

EUCS now provides and supports all the key technologies – Web site hosting, application and database hosting, and streaming media services – that together enable the creation and delivery of attractive and compelling eLearning content to users across the University and beyond.

Our Web site hosting service provides well over 100 virtual servers for many organisations across the University. Access to this free-for-use service is coordinated by Information Tools.

We offer PHP and Cold Fusion application servers, supported by a range of databases – MySQL, Microsoft Access and Microsoft SQL-Server 2000. Our Cold Fusion service, which provides an excellent tool for the rapid development of database-driven Web applications by programmers and non-programmers alike, has a well established reputation and an active community of local developers.



Within a teaching and learning environment, there are increasing demands to integrate different technologies within a single application. We provide the reliable delivery of audio, video and animated content in all three popular streaming formats (RealMedia, Windows Media and QuickTime) through our streaming media service. In addition to providing media on content 'on demand', we also offer, in association with MALTS, a live encoding and webcasting service for local events and lectures. The *Enlightenment Lectures* of 2002 were all broadcast using our live encoding and streaming server infrastructure. The *Adam Smith Lecture* (<http://www.ed.ac.uk/events/lectures/enlightenment/adamsmith.html>) is still available.

Database Services

Databases may lack the technological glamour of the new Web-related technologies, but often they are the very foundation on which both everyday and high-tech application systems are constructed.

With the huge increases in processing power of desktop computers and the increasing sophistication of desktop database software, many of the small-to-medium administrative systems that require database technology now run on users' workstations rather than on a central database service. Consequently we provide support to users within their own database environment. To support larger projects, or projects requiring sophisticated database management packages, we

provide centrally-managed services:

- ▶ **Ingres on holyrood** is a general-purpose database system capable of handling large and complex databases as well as simple applications. The implementation conforms closely to the database language standard SQL and is therefore the vehicle for SQL training.
- ▶ **Microsoft SQL-Server** runs on a Windows 2000 Server and is primarily provided to support the Cold Fusion service. It provides efficient access and sophisticated backup and recovery capabilities necessary for Web-based applications that update data. SQL-Server databases are easily maintained through a simple but comprehensive graphical interface.
- ▶ **MySQL**, recently introduced for Unix, is the final component in our database service structure. This is a relatively simple product, designed for fast operation but with limited recovery capabilities. The MySQL service is available to support the PHP Web scripting language.

Training

We contribute to EUCS IT training courses on:

- ▶ Database design
- ▶ Database programming (various products and languages)
- ▶ HTML and Web authoring (and various authoring tools)
- ▶ Web authoring for Streaming Media

Service Support and Consultancy

To enable users make best use of the infrastructure provided, Information Tools provides helpdesk, advice and consultancy through its Database and Web teams.

We welcome *early involvement* in projects, as problems identified early are much more easily rectified. In particular, as good database design is the foundation of so many applications, early involvement of the Database team in projects using database technology can be especially beneficial.

We offer support to Schools and Colleges operating their own database or Web servers. In addition, we provide Cold Fusion, Ingres and Oracle database support to EDINA, which operates some large databases in providing their national services.

Projects

Information Tools accepts commissions to build applications that use advanced database or Web technologies for Schools or research projects. We have completed a number of such projects, ranging from single-user Microsoft Access database applications, used for local research or administrative purposes, to comprehensive Web/database applications exploiting the full range of the technologies we support. We welcome early involvement in projects, especially applications funded from research grants, where we can often help identify and cost applicable solutions.

A recent example of our involvement in a successful research project is the *Survey of Scottish Witchcraft*

(<http://www.arts.ed.ac.uk/witches/>), undertaken by the then Department of Scottish History (now the School of History and Classics) under the leadership of Julian Goodare. The researchers in this project were equipped with laptop computers containing a sophisticated Microsoft Access database, which enabled them to record the complicated processes of witch denunciation and investigation. The results of the individual findings were periodically merged, providing each researcher with his or her own up-to-date copy of all the data available, thus allowing each to add to the findings of the others. The project's results are published on the Web at <http://webdb.ucs.ed.ac.uk/witches/>. The comprehensive data is available for downloading for research purposes, with a simplified subset available for searching and linking. For the graphically inclined, interactive graphs (allowing the comparison



from *The Survey of Scottish Witchcraft*
(<http://www.arts.ed.ac.uk/witches/>)

Space limitations mean that we can illustrate only two of the many University projects to which the Information Tools Team has contributed.

of different districts), and maps (showing the geographic location of trials) are provided.

EUCS Call Management System

Information Tools is responsible for a number of Web and database applications which support the functions of EUCS. The most significant of these is the Call Management System (CMS), which tracks and maintains details of contacts between users and EUCS. The CMS is also used by MIS, computing officers in some Schools, and external organisations such as SAC and UKERNA. The CMS was built using Microsoft SQL-Server and Cold Fusion – technologies which we provide for users.

Contact and more information

Details and contact addresses are available on our Web pages:
<http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/tsd/infotools/>

Information Tools Team (EUCS)



from *Charting the Nation* (<http://www.chartingthenation.lib.ed.ac.uk/>)

Information Services

EUCS Information Services Section (ISS), based on the ground floor of the Main Library, is responsible for:

- ▶ Documentation (paper and on-line): about 235 paper documents are available, from large course workbooks to the popular two- or four-page task notes. Many documents are also available in PDF or HTML format. Comprehensive information about EUCS documents is available at <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/usd/iss/docs/>
- ▶ Web site: ISS coordinates and manages the EUCS Web site (<http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/>), publishes a substantial amount of the material, and provides tools and an internal EUCS house style.
- ▶ IT Training: ISS offers about 75 training course titles, using a pool of about 60 tutors and demonstrators, drawn mainly from the EUCS Support Services Division, but also from elsewhere in EUCS and the Library. Full course information is available online, including lists of vacancies and a booking form, at <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/usd/iss/courses/>
- ▶ Publicity: ISS coordinates information disseminated about EUCS as well as service developments. It publishes *BITs* (which has a circulation of 3,600), the Director's termly

Briefing, general introductory publications, course and publications catalogues, and information packs for new members of staff.

Please let me have your comments on our various services: email j.murison@ed.ac.uk, tel 511202.

John Murison (EUCS)

On-line course administration

You can book for all our courses on-line. The on-line booking page is being extended to include a description of the course objectives and pre-requisites. We will also be collecting, on-line, feedback during and after the course to determine how you found the experience, the training facilities and the learning materials, and whether you were able to use the skills learnt. Your feedback helps us decide whether a course has been of benefit, and to make adjustments if necessary.

Your feedback is our most valuable tool in getting course provision right. We would value additional feedback at any time, be it by email, telephone or face-to-face. In fact, why not come and talk to us about your views or ideas on how we may improve our courses? (See John's contact details, above.)

Jenny Arnott (EUCS)

New IT training suite

Following the fire in South Bridge in December, EUCS vacated its former training suite in Appleton Tower, in order to help accommodate the AI Department there. We moved in to our new Computing Skills Centre at 19 Buccleuch Place in January. This provided us with four training rooms, coffee rooms, storage and office space. The two ground floor training rooms, equipped with PCs, each take up to 12 attendees; the two rooms in the basement seat 9 or 8 attendees using PCs or Macs.

While the new space is very welcoming, we were not able to match the facilities we had in our old accommodation, in particular a large 23-seater training room. Because of this, we are pleased to announce two new facilities:

- ▶ The two ground floor training rooms are now linked by an 'overflow' facility. This allows a tutor to present in one of the rooms and have the presentation delivered to the second room simultaneously, by way of a radio microphone and a projection of the tutor's PC screen. This facility allows us to take up to 24 attendees on one course.
- ▶ We have developed a 20-seater seminar room. The room is equipped with a PC and projector, and can also accommodate meetings around a table for eight people.

The rooms in the Computing Skills Centre are primarily used for EUCS scheduled training courses. However, when they are not in use other University departments and external organisations may book them. For details, please refer to <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/usd/iss/courses/venue.html>

Tracey Athay (EUCS)

good modern site, though, and University staff do not have the luxury of being able to stop all their old work in order to take up the new. Traditionally, therefore, Web sites have been cobbled together pretty much by hand and allowed to grow 'organically'.

ISS coordinates the EUCS Web site, and has initiated a project to redesign it completely. This involves careful examination of what users need, how they are most likely to find the information they need, and of how a Web site can be managed and kept up-to-date with a minimum of maintenance effort.

The long term goal of our present work is to move our site into a Content Management System, which has been described as the 21st Century way to manage a Web site. Meanwhile we have much other work to do in preparation. As well as making the EUCS Web site look more attractive and making it easier to find information, we are keen to adopt XHTML (the XML-based version of HTML) and Cascading Style Sheets, which achieve one of the great ideals of Web publication—the separation of content from presentation. This will need careful investigation and assessment, since some older browsers and computers do not recognise XHTML and CSS, and we realise that people will not want—or be able—to upgrade their existing setup just to be able to read our Web site. On the other hand, new generations of users will expect to be able to read Web sites on mobile 'phones, PDAs and whatever other new electronic gadgets appear, and the XHTML/CSS combination should be a big help in catering for them, as well as supporting such special needs devices as Braille printers and screen readers.

Nick Stroud (EUCS)

eLearning for IT training

We are considering supplementing our face-to-face IT training with eLearning materials—that is, learning materials which you can access online via a Web browser. eLearning can be used to reinforce what has been learnt on a tutor-led course, and it provides an alternative for people who are not able to attend a training course.

eLearning allows not only for the delivery but also for the *management* of learning: individuals can keep track of what courses they have taken, they can see the whole range of courses available, and they can take pre- and post-course tests—and see the results.

Gill Chetty (EUCS)

Web sites for the 21st Century

Along with many other departments and organisations, EUCS has produced a Web site which is excellent in places, indifferent in others, and increasingly difficult to maintain as it steadily grows. The present site has been in existence for about five years, during which time nothing in the computer world has stayed the same. Many people have become more comfortable and familiar with the Web and have expectations which older sites do not meet. It takes time, effort and knowledge to produce a

Enterprising Projects

The Commercial Projects Team is a small group which finds ways to raise external revenue to support the work of Computing Services—in other words, making a profit! It engages largely (though not entirely) in software development projects, undertaken for both commercial and public sector customers.

In 2001–02 the Team realised a profit of over £350k—including royalty income from previous development activities. Such profitability allows Computing Services to employ about ten more staff to provide services to the University than could be funded using University money alone.

Recent commercial customers have included Traakan Inc and Rockliffe Inc, both in Silicon Valley, California. A major current public-sector project is the further development of the Janet Videoconference Service Booking System.

However, because of the downturn in the global economy, we have had to turn increasingly to public-sector customers and to assisting research projects in order to continue to be self-sufficient.

Further information about the Commercial Projects Team can be found at <http://www.enterprise.ucs.ed.ac.uk/>

Chris Adie

Desktop Services

The Desktop Services Team provides operating system and software services to many high-profile computing facilities throughout the University, and covers some outlying sites as well as the main campuses.

In the *Open-access Computing Labs*, the Team provides the software infrastructure—including the operating system and over 100 software items—for over 1,200 PC and Macintosh systems, seven file servers and 36 printers. Based on Windows NT4, these systems are available to over 22,000 staff and students. Through liaison with School computing staff, we also provide the software infrastructure and background technical support to a further 500 PCs in dedicated School computing labs based in all three Colleges, and (through liaison with MALTS) to 25 PCs in the University lecture theatres.

The Team also provides services to the *Learning and Resource Centre* in Level 2 of the Main Library, and to the *Computing Skills Centre* in 19 Buccleuch Place.

At present we are heavily focused on a crucial development project—the *Managed Desktop*. The service resulting will not only ease the migration of the open-access computing lab infrastructure to Windows XP and Active Directory, it will also offer a fully customisable configuration system for staff PCs. The objective is to reduce the support effort required to maintain PC operating systems and software.

Some of the features of the Managed Desktop service:

- ▶ Fast, consistent, automated software installation
- ▶ Fully customizable
- ▶ Wide hardware support
- ▶ Fast recovery after system failure

Some technical aspects of this project are described here.

The aim is that the service will work in all College networking environments and will cover a wide range of PCs and software applications. It should reduce the need to “fiddle” with your desktop configuration, and should make it much easier to fix if you break it!

For further information on the Managed Desktop project, please visit <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/projects/mdt/>

Graham Newton (EUCS)

PIE

In collaboration with School computing officers and staff in the EUCS College support teams, the Desktop Services Team has developed what we call the “Pre-Installation Environment” (PIE). This facilitates the installation or removal of an operating system on a PC, using configuration information held centrally and managed by a computer administrator.

PIE is not operating system-specific: although we are currently using it to deliver Windows XP, it could easily be used for other operating systems. Once the desired operating system is installed, PIE transfers control to that OS, and no longer

exists on the machine. The current implementation of PIE has support for over 350 network cards, wireless network cards and PCMCIA network cards, yet is small enough to fit onto a single standard DOS format floppy disk. PIE is a crucial part of the delivery mechanism for the Managed Desktop service.

James Jarvis (EUCS)

Software Installation

We all know that software is becoming more complex to install. Sometimes you are faced with five installation CDs and an installation manual the size of *War and Peace*. If this weren’t enough, your boss has just told you that the 70 PCs you are responsible for require this software by the end of the day! With these pressures in mind, you soon realize that doing it all manually isn’t an option: a more scalable solution is required.

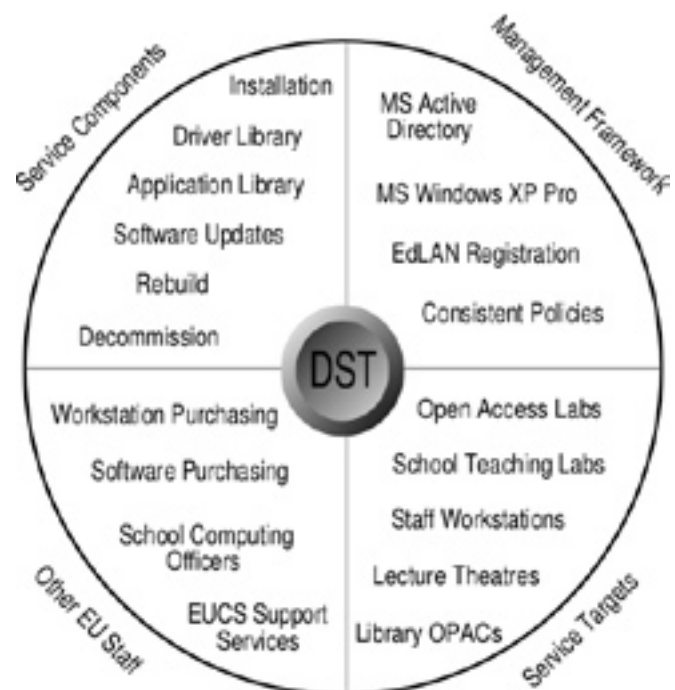
The Desktop Services Team can provide an “MSI” (Microsoft Installer) file that will install common and not so common software applications to machines in the Managed Desktop scheme at the press of a button, subject of course to licensing constraints. Even user interaction is no longer required, as the MSI files contain answers for all of the questions you would normally be asked as part of the installation process.

Developing an MSI file is a difficult and specialized business, involving “repackaging” the software application. For this we are using Wise Package Studio, a scalable, enterprise-wide solution used extensively in large organizations throughout the world.

There are currently over 100 software applications for which MSI files are being prepared, both by the Desktop Services Team and the College support teams.

Graham Newton (EUCS)

The Managed Desktop Project is broader than the Desktop Services Team. The Team is the focal point for desktop development, delivery and support.



Graphics and Multimedia Resource Centre (GMRC)

The Graphics and Multimedia Team runs a Resource Centre offering computer graphics, printing, audio, video, multimedia and more. It's for do-it-yourself use, supported with on-demand assistance, training and consultancy. So long as you are on the University's payroll, or a matriculated student, you are welcome to use the Resource Centre.

Almost everyone needs the facilities from time to time, for: experimental results, temporary signage for a building, an archaeological find, a legal contract, a plumbing diagram, a video of a guest lecture, an article in an old journal, a VIP visit, an exhibition in the National Portrait Gallery, slides for a lecture, a picture for a Web page, a diagram for a publication.

The Centre handles 3,000 to 4,000 visits per year. The most popular facilities are scanners, colour printers and CD-recorders, but we offer plenty more: video editing, DVD recording, a 35mm film recorder for producing slides, memory card readers/writers, data transfer to and from laptops, audio editing and computer music, digital camera and camcorder, 3D modelling with 3D Studio Max, Web animation with Flash, streaming media for putting audio and video on the Web.

Value for money

For University staff, the Resource Centre is fast and cheap. If you have the time and the money, you can get graphics and multimedia work done for you; but time and funds are scarce—for urgent jobs, unfunded jobs, vaguely defined jobs or small jobs, a little do-it-yourself work in the Resource Centre, with support from the staff there, is a good option. Typical uses include turning preliminary work into persuasive presentations for grant applications, trying out new technologies, developing eLearning material, and preparing conference posters.

For students, the skills and experience

gained in the Resource Centre can be very marketable. Dave Kwant, a recent graduate, has won awards at mountain film festivals in Britain, Canada and France with his video epics of extreme canoeing. Using the Resource Centre, Dave learned to produce the video with all its effects and titles, compose and produce the music and the sound track, design the graphics and produce all the printed materials. More prosaically, many students from time to time use the Centre to prepare illustrations for essays or dissertations. Many have course work requiring our facilities—preparing maps for geological survey work, for instance.

Free access to the facilities can release astonishing imagination and creativity.

Help is at hand

Each user brings a unique task. A flexible regime allows us to respond to individual problems with personal attention.

We do present formal training courses (see <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/usd/iss/courses/courselist.shtml#D>), but most users do not want to book on a course before they use our services. We therefore have help and advice constantly available in the Centre. We also have pages of useful guidance online at <http://graphics.ed.ac.uk/gmrc/howto/index.shtml>

We welcome requests for group training. Course organisers, for example, can book sessions for their classes to be introduced to the facilities they will need—poster printing, scanning, or whatever.

eLearning

Preparing visual material for eLearning, and adapting, converting and enhancing existing material, is a growing area of demand. We aim to offer the relevant technologies and standards.



The GMRC staff: Marie Cope, John Wexler, Gretchen Miller

Let us know what you want

We upgrade our facilities often, but we don't buy every new technology. Let us know if we have not got what you need.

Is there a need for more GMRC-type facilities accessible from George Square, Old College, Holyrood, and elsewhere? Please let us know what you think.

Where, when, contact

The GMRC is in room 3901 of the James Clerk Maxwell Building at The King's Buildings. It is open to all University staff and students. Most of its services are free of charge. They are available for do-it-yourself work, bookable or "walk in", from 9:30AM to 5:30PM Monday to Friday. Contact Mrs Marie Cope, Resource Centre Supervisor, on extension 504965, or e-mail graphics.support@ed.ac.uk. For more information see our Web page <http://graphics.ed.ac.uk/gmrc/>

John Wexler

Edinburgh Virtual Environment Centre (EdVEC)

EdVEC is an independent research unit within the College of Science and Engineering, but functionally is part of the Specialist Services Division of Computing Services. Its mission is to research and exploit the development and application of virtual reality (VR) and virtual environments in academia, industry and commerce, and to support the teaching and research needs of the University. EdVEC's approach to VR is unique amongst its global peers, in that we focus almost entirely on

the generation of *real-world* based content, capturing and modelling real-world objects, scenes, people and movement. EdVEC houses a nationally unique 3D Data Capture Centre and has attracted £2 million in external grants and commercial contracts over the last few years. EdVEC is closely allied with the University School of Informatics: we collaborate on research, teach the visualisation course, and initiate and supervise a number of final year and MSc student projects. We are a self-financing unit and as such rely entirely on external research awards and commercial contracts, of which we frequently have as many as six running concurrently.



CD label for an EdVEC project—designed in the GMRC

Some recent and past projects

Virtual Laboratory Developers Tool Kit: An early eLearning project which developed tools for the creation of interactive 3D virtual environment teaching material over the Web. Modules included anatomy models, a virtual geology field trip and a 3D tool to manipulate satellite imagery.

Michelangelo: A collaborative project involving whole body imaging. Other body scanning projects have included a feasibility study into body appearance, and projects with Scottish companies for purposes of virtual clothing, virtual humans and sports training.

Tacitus: A collaborative project with Edinburgh College of Art to explore the use of haptics (touch feedback device) in the initial stages of 3D design.

SceneStealer: A Scottish Enterprise award to develop a product to create virtual sets from photogrammetry for the film, TV and games industries. We are seeking to exploit this product commercially.

Tiny-In: A collaborative project exploring the problem of providing the media industries—from existing material and with finite resources—with means of generating high-quality content to fill the bandwidth provided by digital and webcast TV.



'Golden Boy' with virtual friend—football in Old College

3D Object Scanning: for consumer science studies, involving dental casts, hair shape capture, museum artefacts, geological and bone samples, etc.

Full Body Motion Capture:

- ▶ Collaborative research with Gartnavel Hospital, Glasgow to help investigate Rett Syndrome.
- ▶ Development of a database of human gestures, in collaboration with Glasgow University.
- ▶ Numerous commercial projects involving training scenarios, consumer science studies, dance and animation for computer games, and support for student projects.

For enquiries or further information, please look at our Web pages:

<http://www.edvec.ed.ac.uk/>

Roy Middleton (EUCS)

Software Services

How many software programs do you have installed on your computer? How many others can you access through network servers or central service computers? Probably 10–20 at least, which, multiplied by the number of staff in the University, is a lot of software.

A considerable amount of this software is supplied by EUCS, and we try to ensure that as much as possible is bought under money-saving special agreements or site licences. The Software Services Team handles these agreements and licences. Purchase orders for software are handled by EUCS Purchasing; those requiring special attention are routed to us.

The Team has two roles: first, setting up new site licence agreements (based on perceived demand for the software); second, copying and distributing CDs, disks, licences and 'keycodes' which unlock software for use.

We administer around 30 site licences and special deals, including the Microsoft Select Scheme and Campus Scheme.

In total over 20,000 licences have been sold via the Microsoft Select Scheme since 1996. Each year new agreements are added and existing ones reviewed for renewal or cancellation.

Often we can buy in CDs to sell with the licences, but for many agreements we are allowed to copy them in-house; we use around 3,000 CDs each year.

Many of the site licence deals have been negotiated on behalf of UK HE/FE by CHEST (<http://www.chest.ac.uk/>), and we work with them to provide input on possible new deals.

For the future, there is the possibility of linking our online price lists to the University's new ePayment system. An EUCS project will also look at automating the distribution of software using the network, although we expect to be burning CDs for some time to come.

Software pricing and information on site licences can be found at <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/tsd/software/>

Charlotte Moon (EUCS)

VPN and Wireless services

The EUCS Wireless and Virtual Private Network (VPN) services, which were announced in previous *BITs* articles, are moving into a more operational phase during the Summer Term. The general features of the wireless service were discussed at a recent C&ITC meeting: see <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/ucsinfo/cttees/citc/2003-03-11/paperB.html>

Access to EdLAN via the Internet and wireless has been designed to offer security and privacy. Staff and students need to authenticate before access is permitted: however, self-registration for the service is available, via a simple Web form using the same username and password as you use for the staffmail or student mail (SMS) systems. When the service is available for use, the URL for self registration will be published on the Web via 'EUCS News and Events' (see <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/>), with references to further helpful information.

Wireless access points are being installed at various locations throughout the University as an ongoing activity over the Summer. Their locations will be announced as above.

The Web pages for the Wireless service (<http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/nsd/access/wireless.html>) and the VPN service (<http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/nsd/access/vpnservice.html>) provide up-to-date information and background. As previously noted, I can provide advice and assistance in making departmental wireless networks secure (email B.Byers@ed.ac.uk).

Bill Byers (EUCS)

C&IT 'star gazing'

This year's conference to look at the long-term development of C&IT in the University takes place on **9th April**, from 1PM to 5PM. All categories of staff are encouraged to attend. Details and a registration form are available at <http://www.hcrc.ed.ac.uk/~john/itc/>

John Lee (Architecture)

University eDiary service

The University eDiary (electronic Diary) Service is currently in Phase I of its roll-out programme.

The eDiary service helps staff manage their time more efficiently and makes it easier to share and create information with others, particularly when arranging meetings. The service is based on the principle that every registered user of the service has an on-line work diary which he or she can change and which other users of the service can see. This will enable staff to arrange meetings with colleagues based on the 'free/busy' information in their eDiaries.

Where a time-slot for an individual is shown as 'free', this does *not* mean that anyone can impose a meeting: accepting or declining attendance can only be made by the individual invited, or by someone (for example, a secretary) who has been given explicit write access to the eDiary of the individual.

The eDiary service will be implemented in several phases. The aim of Phase I is to establish a basic service using Microsoft Outlook Web Access (OWA); this gives access to the service via a Web browser, such as Internet Explorer or Netscape. Phase II, which will begin towards the end of April, will usher in support for a range of clients, including Outlook 2002 under Microsoft Windows, Ximian Evolution under Linux and Solaris, and (when available) Microsoft Entourage under Mac OS. These clients offer features additional to OWA, including synchronisation with most Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs).

The eDiary service can only begin to meet its full potential if (almost) everyone in a College, School or other unit gains access to it together. If your 'unit' is interested in using the eDiary service, please first consult the eDiary home page — <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/ediary/>

If additional information is required, please email ediary@ed.ac.uk.

Donald J. Morse (EUCS)

The 2003 Milner Lecture

The Laboratory for Foundations of Computer Science presents the 2003 Milner Lecture. Professor Frank Kelly, University of Cambridge, will speak on "Fairness and stability of end-to-end congestion control", at 5:15PM on **Wednesday 21st May**, in George Square Lecture Theatre. Details are at <http://www.lfcs.informatics.ed.ac.uk/events/milner-lecture/>

This is a public lecture, open to all. It is one of a range of events comprising the University of Edinburgh Informatics Jamboree, 21st to 23rd May 2003; see <http://www.informatics.ed.ac.uk/events/jamboree/2003/>

John Longley

(Division of Informatics)

EDINBURGH BITS

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Contributions to *BITs* are welcomed.

Copy deadline for May *BITs*:

Thursday 17th April