



Data Library becomes newest unit in ISG

The University's Central Management Group has agreed that Edinburgh University Data Library (EUDL) and the EDINA National Data Centre should be managed as a planning unit within Information Services Group (ISG), rather than as a Division of Computing Services (EUCS). Thus from 1st August ISG consists of EUCS, EUDL, the Library, MALTS and the Office of Lifelong Learning (OLL).

The change recognises the growth in EUDL's size and activity, and will increase links with University-wide and national initiatives, whilst ensuring continuity of service to the many University staff and students who make use of the data and online services provided through the Data Library and EDINA National Data Centre.

You can find out about the Data Library and its services at <http://datalib.ed.ac.uk/> or in the twentieth birthday special feature in the January 2003 issue of *BITS*, available through <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/bits/>

Information about EDINA – which was designated in July 1995 as a National Datasets Centre by the Joint Information Systems Committee – is at <http://www.edina.ac.uk/> EDINA supports delivery of about thirty national online services and development projects, the latter mostly concerning eLearning and information infrastructure. Over the eight years since its designation, external funding has grown and now supports over forty staff, here in Edinburgh and in a regional office at St Helens College, the latter reflecting both the UK user-base and the widening remit to serve the needs of further education as well as the university and research community.

Peter Burnhill
Director, EDINA & Data Library

MindGenius: a tool for mind-mapping

The University now has a site licence for the Mind Mapping package MindGenius.

Mind Mapping is a technique invented by Tony Buzan in the late 1960s. Instead of using lists and paragraphs as a way to take notes or think about a subject, a Mind Map starts from a central concept image and radiates ideas outwards. It uses colour and images to stimulate both left and right brain, and to make the map easier to remember. There is an overview of the technique and some examples at <http://www.mind-map.com/>

While Mind Mapping could be useful to anyone, it can be particularly helpful to people with dyslexia, who often prefer to think visually. Seeing information presented graphically can increase both creativity and retention. The map can contain a lot of information stored at many levels but can be seen as a whole, unlike a block of text.

MindGenius allows you to create Mind Maps on a Windows PC. You can control colour, direction and layout, add images and icons, and attach documents to map branches. You can save the map as a Word document, PowerPoint presentation, Project file, HTML file, graphics file or in a range of other formats. You can download an evaluation copy to try out the features, from <http://www.mindgenius.com/>

Schools and colleges can order copies of MindGenius from EUCS for £10 each (inc. VAT). These copies can only be used on University owned or controlled PCs. Please send internal order forms (GL220) to EUCS Purchasing, JCMB, The King's Buildings. For home use, you can buy a personal copy for £35 plus VAT (see the Student Offers web page at http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/tsd/software/student_offers.shtml).

There is no paper documentation, but MindGenius has comprehensive online help.

Charlotte Moon (EUCS)

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Do you want to get rid of any old IT equipment that still works? See page 3 to find out how it could help people to overcome disabilities!



National/Interregional Agreement Issues: A Strategy for the Future

By now many of you will be aware of the University's participation in National and Interregional Agreements. The agreements themselves are very good and provide many benefits to the University. However, along with the upside there is always a downside ... and the downside brings ... problems ... challenges – or new ways of working.

Supporting all the manufacturers' equipment whilst allowing full choice to the end user is a tricky balancing act. On the PC contract we now have HP/ Compaq. Using all the resellers on the National Notebook and Printer contracts brings issues for Procurement – not least supplier and contract management – and for support officers (a learning curve with new suppliers' personnel and equipment).

It is much easier to manage fewer suppliers but the supplier selection must be done fairly. It is not acceptable to say “we only want to buy Dell” but it is acceptable to say “we want to reduce our support costs by having one PC supplier, one Notebook supplier and one printer supplier.” However this has to be done fairly, which usually means a “tender within the tender” benchmark exercise. This is what the Medical Support Team did for its SelectPC scheme, which ended up with RM as the supplier (see <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/usd/firstaid/map/basics/selectpc.html>).

To do this University-wide would probably not be practical, but to do it for each College, School and Academic Unit may be.

The National Printer Agreement

The National Printer Agreement has been awarded to five suppliers, from which Procurement will select one or more after a benchmark exercise has been carried out. This benchmark will take

into account the whole-life cost of the equipment. However even before buying a printer, the user should ask: is it really necessary? Can I share an existing one? Do I need a printer or a copier? Who will be using this machine? How many copies will it be producing? What will the running costs be?

The National Notebook Agreement

There are five resellers on this agreement and the University has only purchased from two of them – which is fine for reducing support costs but not so good for having to explain to the other suppliers why we don't buy from them.

A Strategy for the Future

I would like some guidance on how we deal with these issues and how we can get the best out of these contracts whilst keeping our costs down.

Are there Service Level Definitions in use within the Support Groups now? Has the end user got carte blanche to buy from any of our authorised suppliers?

Since all the information for these contracts is now being held on the Cupid Database at Procureweb, where should our pages link to? The Mainsearch page or the Buyers guide?

As one of the representatives from the Scottish Consortium JCACP I attend meetings in connection with the PC, Notebook and Apple contracts. During these meetings and site visits we cover all aspects of the contract from initial marketing of the agreements through to contract management, service, roadmapping, manufacturing, pricing, web pages, vendor rating, environmental issues and anything else we feel we need to discuss. If there is anything you think we should be asking, please let us know.

New Technology Issues

Many of you will by now have seen, or even used, a Tablet PC. These devices are being marketed as various things: notebooks, PDAs, or even PCs. Are they the missing link between Notebooks and PCs?

Tablet PCs do present us with a number of issues, not least of which is – which contract do we use to buy them? By allowing RM/Samsung or Compaq to sell them under their existing arrangements, are we rubber-stamping something that has not been evaluated at all under that particular contract, or are these 'PCs' just a new form factor of the existing equipment? Are they something end users need (rather than want), or are they the next Newton?

To help answer these questions and meet these challenges I have joined the cocentric, scicos and medicos groups. I already participate in the sunmans, sgmans and pcmans groups, and would like to join any others that would be helpful to both parties. Would an end-user list be any use?

I would be interested in your views on these issues, whatever your job is in the University – whether you are responsible for support or are an end user (tel 508035, email george.reid@ed.ac.uk).

George Reid (Procurement)

eProcurement update

During June, the pilot of the SciQuest eProcurement service handled £26,646 of orders for 475 chemical and scientific consumables lines to 17 different suppliers, for three Schools. It is to be upgraded and rolled out further during next term. This method saves paper, fax costs and staff time. For more information or to see a demonstration, email Karen.Bowman@ed.ac.uk.

Karen Bowman (Procurement)

Too good to throw away, not good enough to keep?

With the very rapid development of computers and related equipment, you may occasionally find yourself having to dispose of "old" computers which still function perfectly well for basic tasks such as wordprocessing but which cannot cope with the latest demands of the IT world.

If you can't upgrade the equipment for your own use, for example by adding more memory or a bigger disk, the next best thing is to find a home for it where it can go on doing useful work. If you are prepared to give it away, it could be a lifeline to someone needing to overcome disability – and local organisation **pass IT on** would be delighted to arrange this for you.

pass IT on gives donated equipment to people with disabilities in the Edinburgh area. Everything from a P166 upwards is accepted at the moment and components which can be used for upgrades are also welcome.

You can find out more in several ways:

tel: 0131 476 1645 email: info@passiton.sco.net

Web: <http://www.passiton.sco.net/>

Post: 14 Wardie Avenue, Edinburgh EH5 2AB

Robert Gormley (EUCS)

Active Directory: progress

EUCS has been making steady progress towards the full implementation of Active Directory, which will eventually replace Novell NetWare as the University's networking system for desktop computers.

The overall design is now complete. Student accounts are set up with data from Registry, and staff accounts with data from Human Resources. A process has been set up for adding equipment such as computers and printers to the Directory.

An 'Automation Service' has been established through which Computing Officers in schools and colleges can administer their part of the Directory, for example to reset passwords for their staff and students.

The service is under final testing at the time of writing and will shortly be rolled out to Computing Officers. We will next concentrate on providing courses and documentation for the Computing Officers who will be managing their own local sections of the Active Directory, and on fine-tuning the system to deliver the best performance.

Regular updates on our progress are published at <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/projects/activedir/>

Scott Currie (EUCS)

Upgrades to Unix and mail servers

Mail server upgrades

Last month the student mail server was upgraded, doubling the available disk capacity, and the faster system should improve responsiveness. A similar upgrade to the staffmail service is planned for this month.

New version of IMP webmail client

Along with the hardware improvements we are upgrading the webmail client to the latest version of IMP, which has many new features including improved customization and address book handling. The old version of IMP will be maintained for a short time but we recommend that people who use the webmail client move to the new system as soon as possible. Existing preference settings will be transferred to the new client, but only once, so if you update your preferences or address book in the old client, they will be lost.

Mail Quotas

As a result of these upgrades we are happy to announce that the default mail quotas for everyone will increase, from 40MB to 80MB for undergraduates and taught postgraduates, and from 100MB to 200MB for staff and research postgraduates. We believe that this is one of the most generous default quota allocations of any university mail system, but we will always seek to increase it as finances allow.

Recycling

The old hardware replaced by the mail server upgrades is being redeployed to upgrade the **holyrood** service, increasing the memory on the system and adding considerably to the amount of disk space. The remaining system will host a data replication service for disaster recovery, mirroring data from important services such as the mail servers and the University's main Web servers.

Graeme Wood (EUCS)

Graphics & Multimedia: audio recording

The Graphics & Multimedia Resource Centre has added a MiniDisc Walkman to its inventory of equipment available on loan, with a choice of good quality microphones. Minidisc is one of the most useful current technologies for simple trouble-free sound recording, giving excellent quality from a device that is smaller than a basic cassette recorder and simpler to operate. High-speed transfer of audio data from the recorder to a computer means that an hour's recording can be captured in a few minutes.

We also support DAT (digital audio tape) and most CD and DVD formats, and we have audio editing software for use in the Resource Centre. We normally loan equipment against the borrower's guarantee to make good any loss or damage – a letter from a school or a director of studies is usually sufficient. A MiniDV camcorder and a digital still camera are other popular loan items.

Contact us on 504965 or email graphics_support@ed.ac.uk. For full information see <http://graphics.ed.ac.uk/gmrc/>

John Wexler (EUCS)

Athens accounts

Athens accounts created before 28th July 2003 will expire, and cease to function, on 31st October 2003.

All Athens accounts expire every 12 months, in order to ensure that we comply with the licence regulations of our data providers. This ensures that accounts of users no longer at the University are removed from the system on a regular basis.

You can now register for a username and password that will be valid until 31st October 2004. Students must register a new account unless there is a very good reason to renew an existing one (*e.g.* Digimap users, or saved searches attached to an existing account). Staff are requested to re-register if possible, but may renew existing accounts if they prefer, using the form on Library Online at

<http://www.lib.ed.ac.uk/lib/resources/databases/athensform.shtml>

Registration is a simple process, and should only take a few minutes to complete. However, it is necessary to be on a University machine to register, or, if outwith the University, to be connected to the University proxy cache. For instructions on the registration process, see <http://www.lib.ed.ac.uk/lib/resources/databases/athensreg.shtml>

For information on connecting to the University proxy cache, see <http://webhelp.ucs.ed.ac.uk/docs/proxycache.html#external>

Any off-campus user who cannot easily come to the University or use the proxy cache to re-register may request to have an existing account renewed using the renewal form at <http://www.lib.ed.ac.uk/lib/resources/databases/athensform.shtml>

Comments and enquiries may be made via the form at http://www.lib.ed.ac.uk/resources/databases/athensquery_cms.shtml or sent to: Athens Administrator, Edinburgh University Library (email Athenshelp@ed.ac.uk, tel 511825).

Simon Bains (Library)

WebCT upgrade installed

MALTS, MIS and EUCS are implementing a substantial upgrade to the University's centrally supported Virtual Learning Environment, WebCT.

MALTS staff are migrating courses from the earlier version of WebCT and from the IVLE (which will be discontinued at the end of this Summer), to be ready for users in the new academic year. Academic staff will find the improvements offered by WebCT 4.0 will help them to create better online support for their courses.

Students will log into the new WebCT via the Edinburgh Student Portal (ESP), which will provide secured access to their courses. Information about the ESP and how students use it is on the ESP website at <http://www.esp.mis.ed.ac.uk/>

Staff will normally log into the new WebCT via an access page being established by MIS, using their universal username and a self-selected password. Although webct.ed.ac.uk will still exist as a web page, staff should not point students to it, but to the ESP, and should

if necessary alter course documents to refer students to

<https://www.esp.ed.ac.uk/>

Registry and MIS have been working closely with MALTS on this installation to ensure that WebCT is pre-populated with data about courses and students from Registry data. For all except a few special categories of staff and students this process will be automatic.

By the time this issue of *BITs* is available, teaching staff should have access to the new version of WebCT so that they can familiarise themselves with the new features of this version and start customising their courses as they wish.

MALTS and EUCS have arranged introductory, intermediate and advanced staff training courses for those interested in learning more about WebCT or exploring more advanced tools in the new version. You can apply for these using the standard EUCS course booking forms: see the 'courses' article on this page.

Wilma Alexander (MALTS)

IT training courses

EUCS has published its new course schedule. Details of all courses in the period September to February, including online booking, are at <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/usd/iss/courses/>

There are two brand new courses: 'Preparing Graphics for Websites' (code 1255, 9:30–12:30 on 8th October and 20th January) and 'Creating Accessible Websites' (code 1254, 9:30–5 on 21st October, 20th November and 27th January).

The WebCT courses mentioned in the previous article, all 9:30 to 12:30, are:

- WebCT Introduction (code 1217, on 14th August, 11th September and 8th October).
- WebCT Intermediate (code 1218, on 22nd September and 16th October).
- WebCT Advanced (code 1257, on 28th October).

Tracey Athay (EUCS)

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Contributions to *BITs* are welcomed.

Copy deadline for September *BITs*:

Friday 15th August