



Edinburgh at forefront of data curation

The University is to play a leading role in setting up a Digital Curation Centre for the UK, and hence to support both the dissemination and the long-term viability of digital data.

The JISC and the eScience Core Programme have entrusted the task of establishing the Digital Curation Centre (DCC) to the CANDO Consortium. Based on relationships established by the National eScience Centre (NeSC), the Consortium comprises four partner institutions: the University of Edinburgh (lead partner) and the University of Glasgow, which together host the NeSC; UKOLN, at the University of Bath; and the Council for the Central Laboratory of the Research Councils.

The Centre will have a research programme, funded by the EPSRC and led by Prof Peter Buneman of the School of Informatics, and an outreach/ service/development set of activities, funded by the JISC. The Edinburgh contribution includes staff from across the campus: the National eScience Centre, the School of Informatics, the AHRB Centre for Studies in Intellectual Property and Technology Law, Wide-field Astronomy Unit, MRC Mouse Atlas and, via the EDINA National Datacentre and University Data Library, from the University's Information Services Group.

The 'can-do' consortium (a 'Collaborative Associates Network of Data Organisations') will use the integrating ideas of collaboration, curation and continuing access for data held in institutional and national data repositories to ensure that the DCC engages with and benefits from the progress being made by leaders within communities of practice across the wide range of scholarly and scientific disciplines, nationally and internationally.

Our overriding purpose is to continue improvement in the quality of data curation and digital preservation, recognising that data have importance as the evidential base for scholarly conclusions, and for the validation of those conclusions. In the interests of securing consensus, we propose the term *curation* to cover the active management and appraisal of data over the corresponding lifecycle of scholarly and scientific interest: it is thus the key to reproducibility and reuse.

The DCC is not itself to be a digital repository, nor an attempt to impose policies and practices of one branch of scholarship upon another. Rather, based on insight from a vibrant research programme that addresses wider issues of data curation, it will develop and offer programmes of outreach and practical services to assist those who must curate data. The challenge is to build the DCC and its associate network in ways that promote the positive interplay between research, development, services and outreach.

Peter Burnhill (Director, EDINA, and Director (Phase One) DCC)

The University's Knowledge Management strategy

Comments on the latest draft of the Knowledge Management Strategic Plan are flowing in, and are much appreciated by the team which is working on the next version. Further comments are still welcome. The second open meeting about the Plan is on 4th February, in the DHT Lecture Theatre, George Square, at 1PM. The Plan is at http://www.ipc.isg.ed.ac.uk/km_index.htm and the comments board at <http://www.ipc.isg.ed.ac.uk/isgcomment.html>

Helen Hayes (Vice Principal)

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Active Directory and NetWare: account expiry and deletion

In keeping with the strategy ratified by the C&IT Committee, the process of aging, expiring and deleting accounts on Active Directory and NetWare is under way. After 1st March 2004, Active Directory accounts and Novell NetWare accounts which meet the criteria outlined in paper E of the C&ITC meeting in October 2003 will be removed. In summary, if an account is not renewed, it is kept for an expiry period and then deleted. For staff the expiry period is 30 days, for students it is 270 days, and for Associates it is immediate.

The Automation Service provides the mechanism by which accounts are flagged for expiry. Accounts associated with the Unix platform – for example Staffmail, Student Mail, holyrood, waverley and the archive service – will be brought into this scheme at a later date, to be announced separately.

Computing Officers who have access to the EUCS Automation Portal can see the Active Directory and Novell NetWare accounts belonging to their School which are due to be expired. They need take no further action over accounts that are no longer required. If they want to retain any Associate/Visitor accounts in the list, the Portal provides the facility to update the expiry date. Should an expired account be missed, then the entry associated with that Universal Username can still be updated and the account will then be recreated on the Active Directory and Novell NetWare platforms.

As part of the process, School Computing Officers will be sent an email message each month to let them know how many of their Associate accounts are due to expire within the following 30 days.

Please be aware that once an Active Directory account has expired it can not be used to log in to computers in open-access labs and lecture theatres.

If you manage user accounts in a School and are not yet registered for Automation Portal access, please email archteam@ed.ac.uk with your details.

Background information

The background papers are on the C&ITC website, at <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/ucsinfo/cttees/citc/>

- Paper D, 11th March 2003
- Paper C, 6th May 2003
- Paper E, 24th October 2003

Details of Universal Usernames and account handling, plus links to details of the Automation Service, can be found at <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/isd/archpub/>

Garry Scobie (EUCS)

MyEd – for Alumni

Development & Alumni launched its alumni portal to over 98,000 alumni on 16th January. Promoted in the recent **edit** alumni magazine, this facility will allow alumni to take advantage of the new MyEd portal described in the December issue of *BITS*, and is the first live service using this infrastructure.

The initiative depends on broad institutional teamwork, involving Development & Alumni, EUCS (which manages the authentication service, EASE, used by the portal), and MIS (which manages the MyEd portal itself).



Alumni will be able to authenticate and ‘single-sign-on’ to alumni-specific content presented through ‘channels’ within MyEd. These channels permit respondents to submit their annual questionnaire feedback whilst also offering access to a directory search facility that enables contact between those alumni signed up to the directory. The system can be customised by choosing generic channels and a ‘skin’ – the interface colour and style.

The technology platform used for this release will host the staff pilot of the MyEd portal scheduled for mid April, and pave the way for multiple user groups to gain personalised access to University of Edinburgh services and systems through a single secure portal gateway.

News of the launch is on the Development & Alumni website (at <http://www.dev.ed.ac.uk/>), whilst information about MyEd is on the MIS Portal Services website (at <http://www.eportal.mis.ed.ac.uk/Services/MyEd/support/support.htm>).

Mark Wetton (MIS)

Theft and blackmail by email...

A recent spate of messages purport to come from a bank and ask you to confirm account details. *Don't do it!* Another email ruse threatens to install pornography or delete files unless a (small) ransom is paid, but people who pay up soon get asked for more. Be wary of any improbable email, and if you are really worried by a message, open up all its headers and forward it to abuse@ed.ac.uk.

New Version of SpamAssassin

Over time, spammers adapt to the prevailing anti-spam technology and modify their output to get around it, leading to a decrease in the effectiveness of the University's current version of SpamAssassin. This is illustrated by the narrowing of the gap between messages accepted by the mail relays ("accepted") and those not filtered by SpamAssassin ("SA<6") (see second graph at <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/fmd/unix/docs/mail/graphs/>).

EUCS is deploying a new version of SpamAssassin on the mail relays, which should be more effective at dealing with current spam trends. This will affect the way messages are scored, and because spam recognition is not an exact science, the effects are not entirely predictable. We therefore remind you to check regularly in the folders where suspected spam is stored, to make sure that no legitimate mail is being misfiled. This is particularly important if you use a low spam threshold such as 3, which may be sensitive to subtle changes (we normally recommend a threshold no lower than 4).

Scott Larnach (EUCS)

Three ways to avoid problems with WebCT

1. Make sure your Virus-Checking is effective

The increasing use of electronic submission of files, using email or a Virtual Learning Environment such as WebCT, highlights the need to keep virus-checking software up-to-date. The filesystem on the WebCT server is checked daily, but an infected file could be on the system for a short while. If you download student submissions to your own computer, check them before you do anything else. You should also remind students to keep their own virus-checking software up to date (see <http://mft.ucs.ed.ac.uk/pcvirus/avsoftware.html>).

2. Make your own course backups

Staff using WebCT are reminded to use the backup facility *regularly*. We take backups of the whole system, but these cannot be used to restore individual courses. It is essential that course designers use the designer's backup facility to make complete backups of courses (go to control panel → manage course → backup course). The WebCT server will hold up to three backups; you should also make a copy on your own desktop computer.

3. Be aware of service alerts

Staff using WebCT should sign up to the alerts list, for notification of changes to services, maintenance downtime, or work on MIS systems which may affect authentication to WebCT. To join the list, send an email message to majordomo@lists.ed.ac.uk with the text (*not* the subject line) `subscribe webct-alerts`.

Wilma Alexander (MALTS)

Challenges and Rewards

Work as a Computing Officer brings rewards as well as challenges, and it was with particular pleasure on a Spring evening in 2000 that I watched as, in a crowded venue on the island of Tiree, members of the local community responded eagerly to the songs, stories and poetry of their local bards, lost to them for generations, now being brought to them by the Internet.

That work (www.tiriodh.ed.ac.uk) has now led to the award of £1.395m from the Heritage Lottery Fund to *Tobar an Dualchais (Kist O Riches)*, a £2.98m project to conserve, digitise, catalogue and provide online access to 12,000 hours of analogue audio recordings held in the archives of BBC Alba, Edinburgh University's School of Scottish Studies, and the John Lorne Campbell Collections. For further details see <http://www.ed.ac.uk/news/projectaid.html>

The EUCS Information Tools team defined, piloted and costed the specification for the technologies underlying the project, and will continue its involvement as the project gets underway in 2004. The Data Library will develop the online catalogue to the collection as part of its growing portfolio of audio, video and image collections delivered through its EDINA services.

Academic and research staff who are applying for funds for the digitisation, cataloguing and online delivery of cultural assets – particularly to bodies such as the Arts and Humanities Research Board (AHRB) – are strongly encouraged to contact their EUCS Support Team as a first step in obtaining consultancy and advice at an early stage in developing proposals.

John Smith (EUCS)

eSkills seminars for students

The Student Support Team is running a series of seminars on IT, for students who have made a start using libraries and computers and who would now like to learn a bit more. The seminars consist of a short talk and demonstration, followed by practical work and an opportunity to follow this up with supported self-study. They are aimed mainly at undergraduates, but all students and staff are welcome to attend.

If you know of any students who might benefit, please pass on details of the seminars to them. There's a notice suitable for a School noticeboard on the Student Support website. Some of the materials used in the seminars are also in use in School computing labs or can be adapted for use in class teaching. We would be interested to hear from any staff who think this might be of help to them.

Further details are provided at <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/usd/ungrad/>

Noel Millar (EUCS)

The EUCS Managed Desktop Project in the School of Law – a success story

The School of Law is completing its migration to the EUCS MS Windows XP Professional Managed Desktop Environment, and is happy to share its experiences with *BITs* readers.

The School has managed a system based on MS Windows 98 for the past few years with great success. However, Microsoft is soon to withdraw support for Windows 98, hardware support is becoming more difficult and there is inevitable demand for new technologies. Another solution was required.

The deployment infrastructure set up by the EUCS Desktop Services Team allowed Bob O'Malley in the College Support Team to devolve administration to Nick Dyson (the School Computing Officer) and provide him with system support.

The School's computing labs, with a hundred workstations, are now a locally customised version of the open-access labs, bringing the benefits of consistency to their users. MS Windows XP Professional's plug-and-play support has enabled the School to extend student provision by using non-standard 'repaired' hardware (technical barriers made this too difficult in Windows 98).

Staff in the School (with sixty workstations) have their own environment, customised by Nick from resources in the Managed Desktop Project, along with several specialist software packages which Bob added to the application set.

The same remote administration and diagnostic tools are available to the School Computing Officer, College Support Team and Desktop Services Team, thereby increasing the depth of technical support immediately available.

Kenny MacDonald (EUCS)

eProcurement update SCIQUEST

We are upgrading the SciQuest tool which has been on pilot for 14 months. This will add workflow to suit our Schools and the possibility of punchout to selected suppliers' own sites. An amendment to the tool to allow electronic VAT-zero-rating will be developed as the next upgrade.

The new version will be installed by late March in the pilot Schools (Chemistry, Biological Sciences and SBCLS). We have agreed a licence for up to 2,000 users this year, 4,000 next year and site-wide thereafter. The Project coordinator is Margaret Lochhead, our new Procurement Officer.

HEeP

The current pilot for ordering stationery and computer consumables online is rolling out to users across the campus. We are currently planning the integration of suppliers' sites as a punchout from eFinancials, using the eProcurement module via the HEeP interface, a HEFCE-sponsored initiative.

There will be more information in future issues of *BITs*.

The amounts spent via eProcurement from August to December 2003 were:

	No. of Users	No. of Suppliers	No. of orders online	Online Spend
Sciquest Selectsite	167	39	2,537	£230,851.75
Supplies Team	25	1	700	£146,981.00
Guilbert	25	1	350	£128,535.00
Library EDI Orders	10	7	n/a	£185,000.00
TOTALS:	227	48	3,587	£691,367.75

Karen Bowman (Procurement)

Making eCPD work

The eCPD (electronic Continuing Professional Development) service was launched in November in the Playfair Library, and was open to all University of Edinburgh staff interested in distance education through eLearning.

The eCPD team is organising a series of events in the coming months, the first of which is a seminar with Dr Allison Littlejohn (senior lecturer in the Centre for Academic Practice at Strathclyde University, specialising in the use of C&IT in learning and teaching), and Anne Tryggeset (currently involved in a market research project in this University to assess CPD needs).

The seminar is on 24th February, from 2-4pm, in the Prestonfield Room, John McIntyre Centre, Pollock Halls. For more information, email cuna@lifelong.ed.ac.uk.

Cuna Ekmekcioglu (OLL)

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Nick Stroud, Computing Services.

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Contributions to *BITs* are welcomed.

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