



Continuity testing – averting disasters

While most of us were easing gently into the New Year, the EUCS Network Team was carrying out a radical test of the procedures which keep the University’s data network running.

On 3rd January, the King’s Buildings router – a critical component of EdLAN – was switched off to simulate a major malfunction, and crucial services were restored on (cheaper) backup equipment. This was to simulate a catastrophic failure in the network backbone.

Within its limited scope, the test was a success, in that critical services were restored in the allotted time. Several important lessons were learned. First, significant differences in configuration commands on the backup equipment were found to be a major slowing factor. Second, the network has changed considerably since the backup equipment was installed, in the number of Gigabit connections and the extensive use of Virtual Networks, which the backup equipment was not designed to cope with. This led to an investigation into a different way of routing, and a realisation that backup equipment will have to be replaced more frequently than originally planned.

Finally, some interesting logistical issues emerged, from overcoming the security system to gain access on a holiday to the fire alarms going off in the middle for what was a real fire in another part of the building. Had the fire spread we would have lost not only the main router, but the backup equipment as well (but that would have been the least of our worries).

Information about this test – part of a continuous programme of testing and development – is given at <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/nsd/continuity.htm>

Scott Currie (EUCS)

Upgrade for MIS desktop community

The promised PC upgrades for admin staff users supported by MIS are now under way.

All office PCs in Corporate Services Group, Administration, Communications & Student Services Group and the three College offices will be upgraded to the University’s supported Windows XP service by August. File and print services will move from the old Novell setup to a new Windows 2003 server base, providing users with reduced sign-on to most office applications.

The MIS desktop user community will retain its current email and ed diary services and the IIS5 web publishing service. Users will be able to take advantage of any College/School/IS-hosted systems available

via the supported desktop. Previously unavailable client-server systems such as Student Record, Postgraduate and Salary forecasting will be available to any authorised user from June.

There are numerous advantages in this change. Crucially, it will provide the best possible virus protection, which is essential in the modern online world. Software can be updated automatically, so everyone stays in step with the best version. MIS has run a supported desktop for many years, so appreciates the benefits in speeding up support and problem-solving that this brings. Other improvements will be explored once the migration is complete.

Bryan MacGregor (MIS)

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University wins records management award

The University of Edinburgh has received the Records Management Society Award 2005, for its work in preparing for the implementation of the Scottish Freedom of Information Act. The University Records Manager, Susan Graham, received the Award on behalf of the University at the Society's annual conference at Bournemouth. Dr Paul Duller, the Chair of the Records Management Society, said that the University had received this award for its "outstanding contribution made to the entire Scottish HE Sector in the lead up to the implementation of the Freedom of Information Act".

The Award recognises excellence in the field of records management and related disciplines. Many people throughout the University contributed to this achievement, which Principal Timothy O'Shea described as a recognition of the foresight of the University, and of the quality work that was carried out in preparation for the Freedom of Information legislation.

The University intends to use the sound base it has laid in this area to ensure that it reaps the maximum benefits from effective records management practice.

Freedom of Information and Data Protection legislation means it is more important than ever that our records are accurate, and that we manage them appropriately and effectively. Records management helps everyone in their day-to-day work, by:

- helping you to do your job better, by supporting ease and efficiency of working;
- protecting you and the University, by showing what the University did and why;
- saving time, by ensuring that information can be found easily;
- reducing costs, particularly space costs, by ensuring you keep only the records you have to;
- ensuring records can be relied on and have a high value as evidence if necessary.

Susan Graham (Records Management)



The records management team

Secure Electronic Delivery

Documents delivered direct to you

The Library's Interlibrary Loan service exists to borrow – from other libraries in the UK and overseas – materials which are not held within Edinburgh University Library.

About 90% of requests handled by the Science and Medical sites are for copies of journal articles; in other disciplines, this figure is about 60%.

The traditional solution has been photocopies sent by post. This has become rather outdated in the paperless world of Amazon, Expedia and Internet banking. British Library Document Supply Centre (BLDSC) has risen to the challenge, and has introduced **Secure Electronic Delivery (SED)**, whereby journal articles can be transmitted electronically directly to desktop computers.

Specifically, SED provides a link to the article on the BLDSC server. The link is active for 14 days or one viewing, whichever comes first. For more information, visit the BLDSC website at <http://www.bl.uk/sed/>

You pay the same price for SED documents as for paper copies, but the advantage is that articles should reach you at least 24 hours quicker.

To use the service you must have access to a personal or departmental computer: SED will not work in the open-access labs. You will also need Acrobat Reader version 6.0 or later; SED does not work with version 5. Digital Rights Management must also be installed on the computer.

It is important that you register with the Library before attempting to use SED. We can then establish whether SED is technically possible on your computer. Please therefore contact your 'home' Library site or the Interlibrary Loans Department (email webill@ed.ac.uk) in the Main Library for further instructions.

Marjory Lobban (EUL)

Get to grips with the GRID

During recent years momentum has built in the development and use of 'grid computing', whereby resources of computers, data storage and data held in many organisations and connected by the Internet can be perceived by collaborations as forming one big virtual computer. The academic drive for this is in seeking to allow researchers from many institutes or universities to cooperate in new ways by pooling their resources.

There are now major national and international initiatives to establish production-quality grid infrastructures that comprise operations and training, as well as the necessary enabling software services. These grids are welcoming diverse research communities, in the arts and humanities as well as in the sciences. They are interconnecting 'Campus Grids', where middleware such as Condor allows computers on a local area network to be a resource for batch-oriented computation. (There is a CampusGrid meeting in Edinburgh on 16–17 June; see <http://www.nesc.ac.uk/esi/events/556/>)

The National e-Science Centre has a training team which is dedicated to accelerating the uptake of these technologies. The schedule includes courses on the emerging European-funded EGEE grid, and on the UK's production grid the National Grid Service. There are full details at <http://www.nesc.ac.uk/training/>

If you would like to request additional training events, or would like more information, please contact Mike Mineter (email mjm@nesc.ac.uk).

Alison McCall (NeSC)

Workshop on high-speed networks

NFNN2 is a free workshop for people working at the technical level in high-bandwidth dependent science, who wish to gain an introduction to computer networks and their performance issues (TCP, LAN, end-user systems *etc.*).

Although NFNN2 is a general workshop, it will be of particular interest to those working with high-bandwidth Grid projects. It takes place from 12pm on 20th June to 4pm on 21st June at the National e-Science Institute, Edinburgh.

For more information, email nfnn@dl.ac.uk or visit <http://www.nesc.ac.uk/esi/events/533/>

Sue Fells (UCISA)

EUCLID Project: Phase 1



*Veena O'Halloran
Director of Registry*

The EUCLID Project is making excellent progress, and recently started an exciting stage of analysis with the support of colleagues from across the University.

'EUCLID' stands for **Edinburgh University Complete Lifecycle Integrated Development**. The project has been established to transform student administration at the University. The vision is to implement a single corporate student record system to support student interaction with the University from first enquiry to alumnus.

A crucial part of Phase 1 of the Project, now well under way, is to understand and document current student administration, because it is an essential element in analysing how we all want student administration to be carried out in the future.

From February to April a local systems audit was carried out to document the IT systems in use at a local level to support student administration. The project team accomplished this by visiting Schools and Colleges, and held over 60 interviews. The audit findings confirm anecdotal feedback about the diversity of local IT systems, and the levels of duplication involved in transferring information between local and corporate systems. Detailed findings and a copy of the team's report are available at http://www.projects.ed.ac.uk/euclid/PROJECT_Docs/BAindex.htm

The team is now running business process workshops to take this activity further, finding out about the processes and people involved in student administration.

The workshops are proving to be highly successful, with participation from a wide range of colleagues. The team sends sincere thanks to colleagues for all their input and enthusiasm. Many workshop participants have commented that the sessions provide a fantastic opportunity to learn about other units and services, while helping to support the EUCLID Project.

The EUCLID team is producing two outputs from each workshop: a set of process maps, which give a high-level picture of the process that is easier to analyse than a paragraph of text; and a narrative account which provides the detail of the actions taken and their purpose.

Both of these outputs will be used to inform the development of a vision for student administration. You can review the documentation as it is completed by visiting the EUCLID website at http://www.projects.ed.ac.uk/euclid/MAPPING/mapping_index.htm

For regular updates about the EUCLID Project, please register to receive copies of the newsletter, by sending your name and email address to euclid@ed.ac.uk.

Veena O'Halloran (Registry)

Storage consolidation

Computing Services is pleased to announce that an agreement has been signed with Access Computing for the delivery of a Storage Area Network (SAN) to address the data storage requirements which affect the whole University. The new SAN will complement the existing research Storage Area Network.

The immediate focus of the project has been to address the storage requirements of College servers and the services provided by IS and MIS. Much care was taken to ensure that the solution was open enough to be of use for the more general storage requirements of Schools. Storage space on the SAN can be purchased and there is a large backup infrastructure. It is possible to add cheaper storage later.

More details will be published in next month's *BITs*, and more information is available at <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/projects/storage/>

If you would like to discuss your own School's requirements please contact Keith.Farvis@ed.ac.uk.

Scott Currie (EUCS)

Extra Library opening

The Main Library will resume late opening (till midnight) from 6th June until Tuesday evening, 21st June. This is to allow for extra study time for medical students, whose exams finish on 22nd June.

Arrangements will be the same as on previous occasions, with an outside security company providing the staffed presence.

Pam Clouston (EUL)

eJournals easier to find in Library Online

The Library's technical staff have restored an online service that has been particularly missed of late: the A-Z lists of eJournals. This is based on data from the Catalogue, so should always be consistent and up-to-date. The list, and a search facility, are at <http://tweed.lib.ed.ac.uk/ejournals/ejz.asp>

Liz G. Stevenson (EUL)

Software news: SPSS and Sample Power

We have had a request to add 'Sample Power' to our SPSS Chest site licence. Please let us know if you are interested in this: the more people involved, the lower the cost.

Several products can be added to our SPSS Chest site licence, including SPSS Maps and Clementine for data mining. A full list of the additional products can be found on the Chest website at <http://www.eduserv.org.uk/chest/software/spss2004/overview.html#Heading22>

Frances Provan (EUCS)

VideoActive Workshops

The VideoActive team, based at Glasgow Caledonian University and Lancaster University, is running a workshop at the JISC Regional Support Centre in Glasgow on 15th and 16th June. The workshop costs £100, all inclusive. Full information is at <http://www.videoactive.ac.uk/>

Ross Little (Glasgow Caledonian)

New frontiers at ALT-C 2005

The 12th International Conference of the Association for Learning Technology, the UK's largest academic conference on learning technology, takes place at the University of Manchester on 6-8 September. This year's theme is 'Exploring the frontiers of e-learning: borders, outposts and migration'.

The programme is online, along with details of accompanying workshops, at <http://www.alt.ac.uk/altc2005/programme.html>

Sue Fells (UCISA)

E-breaks

Notes and presentations from the informal seminar series of 'e-breaks' held in 2004-2005 are available on the [elearning@ed](mailto:elearning@ed.ac.uk) website at <http://www.elearn.malts.ed.ac.uk/issues/news/ebreaks.phtml>

The series will continue in the next Academic Year, running fortnightly in the same venue, the Wolfson Suite in the Main Library building on Mondays at 12.30.

We already have a range of suggestions for topics that people would like to see covered in the series, but would be delighted to hear from you if you have suggestions for topics or an offer of a presentation.

Contact Wilma Alexander at MALTS (email w.alexander@ed.ac.uk, tel 516543).

Wilma Alexander (MALTS)

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Contributions to *BITs* are welcomed.

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