

New way in to the Main Library: the *Information Services Helpdesk*

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From 1st August this is the central first contact point for enquiries to the Library, Computing Services, MALTS and the Data Library.

email: IS.Helpdesk@ed.ac.uk

tel: 503409

- The new Helpdesk has been formed by amalgamating the Library Service Desk and EUCS Reception.
- EUCS Reception in the Main Library closed on 31st July.
- The EUCS Reception points in JCMB room 3210 at The King's Buildings, and in Thomson's Land at Moray House, are not affected.
- If you want to visit a central area Support Team without making a prior appointment, please come to the new Helpdesk.
- Email and telephone links to the Support Teams have not changed:

Humanities & Social Science	HSS-Support@ed.ac.uk	tel 513000
Medicine & Vet Medicine	Medical.Support@ed.ac.uk	tel 503027
	Vet.Support@ed.ac.uk	
Student Support Team	Student.Support@ed.ac.uk	
- Disability Computing Support Service (for both staff and students):

Disability.Computing.Support@ed.ac.uk	tel 511197
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- The Support Team at The King's Buildings is unaffected by this change:

Science & Engineering	Science_Support@ed.ac.uk	tel 505013
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- MALTS contacts (MALTS@ed.ac.uk, ellearnhelp@ed.ac.uk, webct@ed.ac.uk, tel 504097, AV & classroom services at 55 George Square) are unchanged.
- External users should enquire at the new Helpdesk – in person, by email to IS.Helpdesk@ed.ac.uk, or by telephoning (0131) 650 3409.



*William Drummond of Hawthornden (1585–1649): an unlikely subject for an IT newsletter?
See page 4 for the connection!*

The Information Services Helpdesk

Information Services has launched an integrated Helpdesk service to handle all enquiries from users – face-to-face, by phone and by mail (both electronic and traditional). The service will be developing over the next few years, to deal with enquiries submitted by any medium and to ensure a consistently high-quality response.

A joint IT/Library Helpdesk replaces the existing Main Library Service Desk from the beginning of August, with staff from the Library Desk and EUCS Reception together providing an integrated version of their current services. Helpdesk staff will be able to answer questions currently handled at EUCS Reception and the Service Desk, and will refer more complex enquiries to the appropriate team in Information Services.

Telephone and email contact with the College Support Teams and the Data Library remains as now. Staff and postgraduates who come to the Helpdesk for computing or Data Library support will be referred on to the correct Team, though can save time by making an appointment in advance – by phone or email – and asking for the Support Team by name at the Library's Entry Control point.

The integrated Helpdesk will be a major improvement for our users, some of whom find it difficult to understand the present distinctions about where to ask for help.

New information screens

Three new large plasma screens have been installed in the Main Library to provide users with practical information such as Library opening hours, daily alerts, a health message (from the external company Youth Media, which provided the screens), the day's events in the Wolfson Suite, and details of computer availability in the open-access labs.

Pam Clouston (EUL)

Surplus PCs for students

EUCS has a small number of surplus Windows and Macintosh computers that were replaced in this year's open-access lab upgrade cycle.

In accordance with Procurement guidelines on the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Regulations (WEEE), we are now offering these surplus computers to Schools within the University for student use.

The PCs are from Research Machines, with Pentium III 667MHz processor, 256Mb RAM and 20Gb hard disk.

The Macintoshes are iMacs, with G3 400MHz Processor, 256Mb Ram and 10Gb hard disk.

If your School would like these computers for student use, please contact Alan Reid (email Alan.Reid@ed.ac.uk).

Alan Reid (EUCS)

Staffmail and SMS (student mail) update

EUCS has installed new dedicated front-end servers to host the webmail services. This should help to alleviate some load problems, and provides a platform that makes it easier to grow the services in the future.

At the same time we have upgraded the webmail software and the framework it runs in. This new version supports many new features, some of which we have been eagerly awaiting. The major new features are:

- better attachment handling: attachments can be deleted from messages, and composing messages with attachments is simpler;
- more customisation options, including the ability to change the look and feel using 'themes';
- better archiving support: you can now upload previously saved folders;
- importing mail from other mail services is possible using the Accounts function;
- better support for importing address books from other applications;
- improved searching facilities: the results of a search can be saved into a 'virtual mail folder' so that they can be easily accessed again and again without redoing the search;
- pilot support for access from mobile devices, e.g. handhelds and mobile phones.

The new service will *only* be accessible using EASE. We intend to make this generally available from the start of August and run both the old system and new system in parallel for a month. At the end of August the old system will be changed to redirect to the new one. At that time, if you are using the web to access your mail, you will have to use EASE. This should make the interaction between the mail service, MyEd and the EUCS Call Management System seamless.

The services can be accessed as follows:

Staffmail: <https://www.staffmail.ed.ac.uk/>

Old Staffmail, until the end of August:

<https://staffmail.ed.ac.uk/>

SMS: <https://www.sms.ed.ac.uk/>

Old SMS, until the end of August:

<https://sms.ed.ac.uk/>

Further upgrades to the service are being planned. The next major work will be to move the message store from locally attached storage to the new Storage Area Network. We hope to complete this on the SMS server by the beginning of the next semester, and on the staffmail server shortly afterwards. This should improve the data throughput on the servers and thus improve performance.

Graeme Wood (EUCS)

So, is podcasting for you?

The media have recently been giving substantial coverage to 'podcasting,' a relatively simple way to create programmes – usually in MP3 audio – that can be downloaded from the Web and played on a PC, or on a portable audio device such as the Apple iPod. (For more about podcasting see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Podcast>)

Free podcast 'aggregators' such as iPodder, iPodderX and iTunes enable users to find podcasts easily, and have led to a podcasting culture that provides audio programmes on a wide range of topics with many potential uses, one of which is in higher education. Podcasting can no longer be seen as a fad; it offers a practical method for delivering audio and video, and has application in many areas of learning, such as recordings of lectures, textbook excerpts, language learning, and critical commentaries.

Of course, EUCS already provides a comprehensive streaming media service, and this is often the most suitable way to deliver audio and video content in learning materials, particularly where copyright, licensing and IPR issues are involved.

If you want to try podcasting, EUCS can provide facilities on its web- and media-hosting services to ensure that content can be delivered in a timely and reliable manner, and can be managed for the longer term advantage of the University.

The streaming media team would be delighted to hear from staff and students who are considering the use of podcasts for research or learning, and who would like advice and assistance: please send email to podcasts@ed.ac.uk. There is further information at <http://webhelp.ucs.ed.ac.uk/services/media/podcasts/>

John Smith (EUCS)

EUCS computing courses

The new EUCS training schedule, running from September to February, is now available online at <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/usd/cts/courses/>

From November onwards we will have a training room within the Wolfson Suite in the Main Library. This training room can be booked by Schools; please make enquiries to eucs.training@ed.ac.uk.

Tracey Athay (EUCS)

Training courses for e-learning development

The MALTS e-learning team is offering a series of online courses for staff who are interested in developing their skills and understanding of e-learning techniques. Places are now available on the first two courses: *e-tutoring* and *objective testing*.

Both courses are wholly online, run for six weeks, and require a couple of hours a week. Since these are online courses there is flexibility about when the work is done, though participants would be expected to 'drop in' to the course three or four times each week, rather than just make one long 'visit'.

The first run of these courses for this year will be from 8th August to 16th September, and we anticipate running them again in early 2006. Places will be allocated on a first come, first served basis. There is no charge for either course. It is important that participants stay fully involved over the whole length of the course: please don't request a place if you think you may subsequently have to drop out.

If you would like more details, or to request a place on either course, please send a message with your name, School, and the course requested to elearnhelp@ed.ac.uk.

Wilma Alexander (MALTS)

WebCT Workshops

MALTS has enhanced its WebCT workshops to meet the developing needs of its user community. Two new half-day workshops are suitable for any staff who wish to use WebCT to provide course resources and learning tools.

WebCT Fast Track lets you explore the most commonly used tools in WebCT and build your own course.

WebCT Extra is more open-ended, covering a range of more complex tools and allowing you to work through your own WebCT problems with the tutor.

MALTS will run these courses several times next session, starting on 25th August and 1st September. On both days the course times are:

WebCT Fast Track, 9:30–12:30

WebCT Extra, 2–5pm

For details, and to book, see <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/usd/cts/courses/>

Wilma Alexander (MALTS)

WebCT courses 2005–2006

In order to use WebCT for your 2005–2006 course you will need to change the 'WebCT active' field in the Course Delivery Data area of WISARD to 'Yes'. For details please see our FAQs at <http://www.elearn.malts.ed.ac.uk/webct/faqs.phtml>

This page also tells you how to add Designers and Teaching Assistants to your course.

At present 2005–6 courses are only visible to Designers and Assistants; student access will be given on 12th September (start of Freshers' Week). If this is unsuitable, please contact the WebCT Helpdesk, webct@ed.ac.uk.

To find out how to copy content from last year's course to this year's see <http://www.elearn.malts.ed.ac.uk/webct/resources.phtml>

If you want to share any courses, please use the request form at <http://www.elearn.malts.ed.ac.uk/webct/shared.phtml>

Wilma Alexander (EUCS)

New data subscriptions from the Data Library & Library

These new data are now available to University staff and students:

Digimap Historic Map Collection
Images of historic Ordnance Survey maps, 1843–1996. Users can view up to four maps simultaneously of the same location over time using a web browser, save maps for printing, and download the map data for use in geographical information systems.

Statistical Accounts of Scotland

This enhanced service provides all the functionality of the current free service with additional features such as: keyword searching; approximate searching; search results in context; full-text viewing with cut-and-paste.

2003 agricultural census data

Grid square data for Scotland, England and Wales are now available through the EDINA agcensus service; 2004 data will be announced shortly. Scottish Agricultural Summary Statistics (in PDF) are also available for the period 1912–1978.

Stuart Macdonald (EDINA)

130 Elsevier titles

The Library has purchased Elsevier's 'supplementary backfile package' in Computer Science, to complete the first Computer Science Backfile collection purchased in 2003.

The full list of 130 titles can be viewed at <http://info.sciencedirect.com/backfiles/collections/computerscience/fs.pdf>

All titles can be accessed through the ScienceDirect interface at <http://www.sciencedirect.com/>

Access is unrestricted on-campus, and off-campus requires an EASE username and password; see <http://www.lib.ed.ac.uk/resources/databases/athens.shtml>

If you have any queries, please email Sarah.Kelly@ed.ac.uk.

Sarah Kelly (EUL)

Helen Talbot retires



Helen Talbot retired at the end of June after a decade as Leader of the EUCS Support Team for the College of Science and Engineering.

Helen was a student at Edinburgh, then spent five years in Forestry before joining the computing centre in 1980 and embarking on a variety of jobs in ERCC, CAST and EUCS, eventually establishing her own highly successful team.

We wish Helen a long and happy retirement.

(Keith Nicol will lead the Team until a permanent appointment is made in the Autumn.)

Brian Gilmore (EUCS)

Drummond of Hawthornden

The Library is presenting an exhibition about William Drummond entitled *A Labyrinth of Delight* for this year's Edinburgh Festival.

Drummond was a significant man of letters, and one of the earliest benefactors of the University Library – gifting over 550 volumes.

The exhibition opens at the Talbot Rice Gallery on 6th August, to mark the 400th anniversary of Drummond's graduation from the University.

Jacky MacBeath (EUL)

Open Day at Printing

The University of Edinburgh Printing Service is opening its doors on **12th August 2005**.

The three locations – David Hume Tower Copy Centre, The King's Buildings Copy Centre in JCMB, and the main production unit at 13 Infirmity Street – will all be open to internal and external customers.

This is a perfect opportunity to see the wide range of services offered, including contract and procurement management, print management, fulfilment, and a wide variety of production services. One of the main attractions will be a preview of the new e-Printing Service (EPS) for online ordering.

If you would like to visit the Open Day, please register online at <http://www.pps.ed.ac.uk/about/printing/OPENDAY.htm>

Stuart McLean (Printing)

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<http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/ucsinfo/acronyms.html>

NB: if you fail to access a URL shown in *BITS*, please email BITS@ed.ac.uk.

Contributions to *BITS* are welcomed.

Copy deadline for September *BITS*:

Friday 19th August