

OS X Managed Desktop

Computing officers from across the University have been working hard on the latest Apple operating system – Mac OS X 10.4 ‘Tiger’ – to enable it to become one of the Supported Desktops in the University’s computing environment.

A firm foundation has been built and is available for interested computing officers to try. The technology preview consists of the following components:

- EdLAN database integration
- Daily background maintenance
- Unattended network (re)build
- Active Directory authentication
- OpenDirectory integration for Workgroup Manager settings
- Package management (the default set includes Sophos Antivirus and Apple Remote Desktop)

The project’s focus has now moved on to configuring and packaging applications. Interested computing officers are welcome to contact me (email K.MacDonald@ed.ac.uk) for further details.

Kenny MacDonald (EUCS)

Hackers endorse OS X

Anti-virus companies have found evidence that Apple’s latest operating system, Mac OS X, is attracting attention from the creators of viruses and other ‘malware’. The usual advice applies:

- keep the system fully up-to-date (on a Mac use Software Update);
- keep your anti-virus utilities up-to-date (for the Mac this is with Sophos (<http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/usd/cts/ol/issues/viruses/>));
- don’t run any program files if you don’t trust their origin; and
- don’t let your computer run anything without your permission (for example, on the Mac, in Safari’s general preferences make sure that “Open safe files after downloading” is unchecked).

Nick Stroud (EUCS)

eLearning conference

The fourth e-learning @ edinburgh conference will take place on 22nd March, from 9:15am to 4:15pm, in the National eScience Centre, South College Street.

This year’s programme focuses on the evaluation of e-learning. The keynote speaker will be Martin Oliver of the University of London, whose area of interest is e-learning in terms of “evaluation, course design and the relationship between technology and roles in Higher Education”.

Of particular interest will be the parallel sessions where projects, some supported by the e-learning Fund, will share views on evaluation; and the e-learning debate where external speakers have been invited to join Edinburgh staff in a controversial debate on the merits of e-learning. The programme for the conference is at

<http://www.elearn.malts.ed.ac.uk/issues/elearnconf06/>

Registration for the event is via the MyEd portal (details on the website); a few places are still available.

Jo Hamill (Information Services)

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Open-access labs: updates for Summer 2006

The Summer vacation is the traditional time for EUCS to update the PCs and Apple Macintoshes in the open-access labs. This article describes some of the changes that we plan to make during this period.

Introduction of power management

Following extensive development and subsequent trials in the Computing Skills Centre (EUCS training facility), Desktop Services will be introducing a managed power-saving regime in the open-access labs. Lab computers that have not been used for a set period of time will automatically enter 'Standby' mode. This typically reduces the power consumption from about 100 Watts down to less than 5 Watts. Most labs will benefit from this scheme, particularly those that are not open 24 hours a day. All lab computers will be 'woken up' at a set time during the night to install periodic security updates received from Microsoft. Considerable electricity savings are expected as a result of these changes.

It is anticipated that, following successful trials in the open-access labs, this technology can be extended to EUCS and School Computing Officers as part of a range of utilities developed by Desktop Services to assist in the management of the Supported Desktop. This will allow them to apply the power-saving technology based on agreed policies within their School or College.

'Core' applications

EUCS provides a number of software applications such as Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, PowerPoint and Access), SPSS, Minitab and S-plus in the open-access labs for general use. These are maintained centrally by EUCS and updates are usually provided where required. For session 2006–2007 we feel there is no need to update the current versions of the majority of 'core' applications. **If you have a teaching requirement for a newer version of any of them, please contact the Desktop Services Team no later than 31st March 2006.**

School software

EUCS provides a large number of software applications for School-based teaching and learning in the open-access labs. Many of these applications are complex and require a large amount of technical resource to allow them to be distributed – not only to the open-access labs (over 1,400 PCs) but also to the large numbers of PCs in School and College labs. In order for us to maintain and deploy these applications, **we need to know of your requirements for session 2006–2007 no later than 30th April 2006. We also need to know if you wish us to continue to provide existing applications, by the same date.**

Apple Macintosh OS upgrade

The version of the Mac OS will be upgraded from Panther (10.3.9) to Tiger (10.4.x) in all open-access Macintosh labs. This will provide better Active Directory integration, remote administration and an improved user interface.

Open-access labs mailing lists

The Desktop Services Team maintains several mailing lists to notify staff about changes in software or services that may affect them or their students, including:

- **Labtutor@ed.ac.uk:** This mailing list is for staff who provide applications for teaching and learning in the open-access labs, to ensure that they are consulted about changes that take place during the year and in particular over the Summer vacation.
- **Complabs@ed.ac.uk:** This list is targeted at School-based Computing Officers who provide their own labs and who need to know about service alerts (server downtime *etc*) that may affect the operation of their own labs.

If you feel that you should be included in either of these lists, please mail the Desktop Services Team (**desktop.team@ed.ac.uk**) with your name, School and interest in the labs, so that we can add you to the appropriate list.

Graham Newton, David Ross (EUCS)

WISARD only accessible through MyEd

WISARD – the Web Interface to Students, Admissions and Related Data – will soon be accessible solely through the MyEd portal.

As part of the University's continuing programme of delivering corporate applications solely via MyEd using EASE single sign-on, access to WISARD via the existing URL authentication will be switched off on 5th April 2006.

All WISARD users will therefore need to have an EASE account and password in order to log in to MyEd. For further details about obtaining an EASE account, see <https://www.ease.ed.ac.uk/userdocs/register.html>

Information relating to use of MyEd is available from the MyEd login page at <https://www.myed.ed.ac.uk/>

WISARD users who already have an EASE account can access the WISARD channel on MyEd now. It includes links to the WISARD user guide, system availability information and related applications such as TimeTab and DRPS.

Further information and reminders will be sent to all WISARD users, and of course the WISARD web page contains all the information you may need, at <http://www.registry.ed.ac.uk/Wisard/>

Please email RegUsers@ed.ac.uk if you need any advice.

Alex Hyde-Parker (Registry)

Ten years and counting: EDINA celebrates



Peter Burnhill, director of EDINA, cuts the anniversary cake, toasted by Derek Law and Mike Tedd, past and present chairs of the EDINA management board.

On 25th January EDINA, part of Information Services, celebrated ten years as a JISC National Data Centre. Over the last decade the Centre has offered UK further and higher education networked access to an expanding library of data, information and research resources – many of which are available to staff and students of the University of Edinburgh, at <http://www.edina.ac.uk/>

The anniversary celebrations included an afternoon event, followed by a Burns Night dinner and ceilidh, all within the University.

The purpose of the event was to look to the next ten years, with reflection on past achievement, shameless promotion of present activity, and insight from others to help identify areas in which EDINA could flourish and continue to make a significant difference. EDINA has a broad remit as a JISC National Data Centre, and several areas of strategic significance compete for attention.

The centrepiece of the afternoon event was a stimulating ‘balloon debate’, thoroughly enjoyed by the audience, with a number of expert speakers and on a range of topics. It was recorded and is available to download, along with the programme and copies of the presentations, on the EDINA website.

Looking back on a successful decade, Peter Burnhill, EDINA’s director, said: “On behalf of all who have ever worked at EDINA, we are delighted, honoured and somewhat surprised it has been ten years. A special thanks to all our site representatives, project partners and JISC for the continuing faith they have had in us. The next few years look even more exciting and we look forward to working more closely with our sister data centre, MIMAS.

“We see our main task as the delivery of high-quality services to enable academic staff and students, as well as institutional support staff, to excel in what they do. With ten years’ success, we have opportunity to review how we do this. For that, we need to use this year to listen to what our users want. So please tell us what you think. That invitation extends to all of the partner organisations with whom we work, including the growing number of projects in which we are involved – helping to build the UK digital library.”

Helen Chisholm (EDINA)

UK e-Science Institute wins continued funding

Research Councils UK has agreed to continue funding the e-Science Institute until 2011 through an Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council grant. The UK e-Science Programme commenced in 2001, since when over £2.7m has been awarded to the Institute at the University of Edinburgh, to continue its support for the UK e-Science community by providing a focus and meeting place for researchers.

E-Science enables new advances in science, engineering and medicine, by connecting together powerful computers, distributed information sources and collaborating researchers using high-speed networks. Akin to Moore’s law – that computing power doubles every eighteen months – there is a similar law that network capacity doubles every *nine* months. This growth has enabled the meteoric rise of the World Wide Web, and has provided the opportunity for researchers to work and collaborate in entirely new ways.

e-Science is a new way of doing research, and the only way of tackling complex systems such as colliding black holes. More than this, it allows researchers to navigate large datasets of different but related information, such as ground- and sky-based astronomical observations at different wavelengths, on different computers in different continents – so to discover new knowledge. e-Science is also about global collaboration to work on the ‘Grand Challenges’ of human knowledge.

In its next phase, the e-Science Institute will concentrate on developing a more thematic approach to its programme, enabling particular areas to be investigated in depth and over an extended period of time.

Alison McCall (NeSC)

Principal's e-learning Project Fund 2006–2007

Applications are invited for bids to the e-learning Project Fund, 2006–7.

Since the first call in 2003, a total of 122 bids have been submitted and 44 projects have received allocations ranging from £11k to £196k. Interest in e-learning in the University is highly innovative, and widespread across the Colleges and Support Groups. For 2006–2007, we hope we will see more development of cross-University projects building on the excellent work already underway.

As in previous years, it is anticipated that project bids will fall into two broad categories:

- Enhancement of an existing course.
- Creation of new courses. Given the relatively small amount of funding available for new projects in May 2006, it is unlikely that bids substantially above £100k will be funded in this round.

The criteria for the bidding process and application forms are available from <http://www.elearn.malts.ed.ac.uk/pelf/>

The closing date for this bidding round will be midday on 11th May. Any queries regarding the bidding process or the e-learning Project Fund should be directed to Sandra Templeman (email Sandra.Templeman@ed.ac.uk, tel 504097).

The LORE Project is conducting a short survey (with prize draw) to find out how staff manage digital materials for teaching. This will help us to design better University systems for storing and sharing such materials. We would be grateful if all staff (not only academic) who work in any way with digital teaching materials would complete the survey at <https://www.survey.ed.ac.uk/lore>

Jeff Haywood (Information Services)

SOFTWARE NEWS

SAS at Edinburgh

EUCS is reviewing the SAS site licence. Please contact Software Services if you are interested in getting SAS for yourself or your School (email eucs.software.services@ed.ac.uk). We need to have commitment by the beginning of April to get an idea of the sort of licences we can offer.

Sigmastat and Sigmaplot

Please let Software Services know if you require any copies of sigmaplot or sigmastat. We need to know by the end of March, when we renew the current licences, in case we have to give notice of cancellation.

Microsoft announcement

Microsoft has announced that, due to a court settlement, new installations of Office Pro 2003 or Office Access 2003 must be Service Pack 2 (Office 2003 SP2), and installations of Office XP Pro or Access 2002 must be Service Pack 3 (Office XP SP3). There is a patch for existing installations, though it is not a legal requirement. More details are at http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/tsd/software/Special/msoft_menu.shtml

Frances Provan (EUCS)

Automated Microsoft distribution

EUCS distributes updates to Windows XP on Supported Desktop PCs using an automatic mechanism. However, the current deployment tools provided by Microsoft do not allow easy distribution of Service Pack 2 (SP2) for Office 2003. To overcome this, the EUCS Desktop Services Team is investigating the new 'Windows Software Update Service', which should allow us to automate distribution of SP2 and other updates to MS Office and Windows XP itself. We will consult widely with stakeholders on the best way to implement this service.

Graham Newton (EUCS)

Starry starry night...



With nights still long, and coldly clear, this is a good time to look at stars. Stellarium is a free program, distributed under the GPL General Public Licence, which can help you find your way around the sky – helpfully marking out constellations if you want it to. You can get a copy at <http://www.stellarium.org/>

Nick Stroud (EUCS)



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Nick Stroud, Computing Services.

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