

Storage consolidation

The Storage Consolidation Project has now completed, with the introduction into service of the University Storage Area Network (SAN) in February 2006. Details of the last stages of the project are in the final report on the Project website at <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/projects/storage/>

The SAN we have installed has two types of storage array, to give greater flexibility for the installation and expansion of both fibre-channel disk-based storage and the cheaper SATA disk storage.

Anyone interested in purchasing space on the SAN can contact their EUCS Support Team, or contact Keith Farvis (email Keith.Farvis@ed.ac.uk). As a planning aid, Computing Services has created a web-based calculator to help determine the cost of buying storage or backup capability on the SAN. This is at <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/projects/storage/SANcalc.html>

Keith Farvis (EUCS)

University's review of computing services looking for input

The review of computing support in the University – highlighted in December's *BITS* – is currently in the middle of its consultation phase. The information received will be studied by the Review Panel, which will include senior colleagues from other UK HEIs and industry, and a report will be published in late Summer. Full details are on the Review's website at http://www.is.ed.ac.uk/projects/computing_review

Richard Kenway (Vice-Principal for computational science)

New online MSc in e-Learning

The Moray House School of Education has launched its new MSc in e-Learning, with courses starting in September. This innovative, part-time programme will take place entirely online, offering professionals in post-school teaching and training the chance to undertake advanced study of the ways in which digital technologies are changing how we teach and learn.

Courses will cover practical skills such as how to design good web-based courses and online assessments, and will consider critical issues such as how the 'Google generation' approaches libraries and literacies, and how the 'digital revolution' is changing our teaching approaches and learning spaces. Students will work together in a variety of digital learning environments, including wikis, weblogs and avatar worlds.

The new MSc will explore some of the most critical and conceptually most interesting aspects of e-Learning, at the same time making sure that participants get the chance to equip themselves with the practical skills they need for learning and teaching online.

For more information, including details of how to apply, visit the course website at <http://www.education.ed.ac.uk/e-learning/>

Sian Bayne (MALTS)

The LORE survey

This survey of the use and management of digital materials is open until 24th March, with a prize draw for respondents. See <http://www.lore.ed.ac.uk/survey/>

Sarah McConnell (EDINA)

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Looking for winners!

(see page 4)

Using Outlook Express? Change to Thunderbird!

Many Windows users in the University still use Outlook Express for their email. Unfortunately, Outlook Express puts a particularly severe load on the Staffmail service, because of the way it uses IMAP. Although Staffmail is soon to be upgraded, it would help enormously if use of Outlook Express diminished.

Outlook Express is actually a fairly old email client. The new (*free!*) Thunderbird email client from Mozilla is a much more up-to-date product, which is actively being developed and has a wide range of optional enhancements.

Another reason to change is that Outlook Express stores email on your local hard disk (drive C:), so backup is a problem. Thunderbird, on the other hand, can store email on your fileserver. Finally, Thunderbird supports security mechanisms which we hope to introduce on Staffmail soon.

Outlook Express users are strongly encouraged to change to Thunderbird. Please contact your local computing support team, who will help you install Thunderbird (very straightforward for Supported Desktop users) and migrate any locally-stored email to a safer place.

By the way, don't confuse *Outlook Express* with *Microsoft Outlook*. The latter is part of the MS Office suite, and is not free (although, if your School subscribes to the Microsoft Campus Agreement, it is "free at point of use"). If you use Microsoft Outlook, there is no need to change. In fact, if you plan to use the eDiary system, it may make sense to change from Outlook Express to Microsoft Outlook rather than to Thunderbird: your computing support team can advise.

Chris Adie (EUCS)

Working Party on Malware Background

An awareness of computer viruses and the use of anti-virus software to protect against them is well established in the University. However, new threats to the computing infrastructure have been emerging rapidly, commonly referred to as 'adware' or 'spyware'. This targets individuals rather than machines, and can compromise the confidentiality and security of your data, your system and your productivity.

Although these unwanted programs can be classed alongside viruses as 'malware' – a generic term for malicious computer code – they pose new challenges for prevention, detection and removal. Unlike anti-virus products, the software to protect against adware and spyware is still in its infancy, and creates new difficulties for deployment and support.

Remit

The Working Party on Malware will:

1. investigate and report on the risks to the University from 'malware' and on the general maturity level of products which combat it;
2. investigate the effectiveness of the current detection capabilities of McAfee VScan version 8;
3. draft best practice guidelines for what users can do today to protect themselves against potentially unwanted software;
4. make recommendations to raise awareness of the threat of malware to the business continuity of the University;
5. recommend a University-wide strategy to prevent and detect malware, for further discussion by relevant committees.

Garry Scobie (EUCS)

MIS seminars on key projects

MIS is running a series of regular lunchtime seminars to keep users, business partners and other interested parties informed about key activities on projects and services.

Presentations and demonstrations cover both operational and strategic topics. The seminars normally start with an informal buffet lunch, followed by two or three formal presentations. As well as MIS presenters, there are plans for users and business partners to share their experiences of working with MIS.

These seminars will take place approximately every two months in the Raeburn Room, Old College, with every second event being repeated at The King's Buildings. The first seminar was held on 6th March; further events are planned for:

- 5th May 2006 (repeated at KB on 10th May)
- 5th July 2006
- 7th September 2006 (repeated at KB on 11th September)
- 2nd November 2006
- 12th January 2007 (repeated at KB shortly afterwards)

Places at these seminars can be booked through the MyEd Training and Development Course Booking Channel. Further information about the seminars, including links to previous presentations, can be found on the MIS website at <http://www.mis.ed.ac.uk/services/seminars/>

As well as publicising these seminars through MyEd and on the MIS website, there is a majordomo mailing list for informing staff of future seminars and similar events. If you would like to be on this list, please send the message

subscribe MIS-LTS
to majordomo@lists.ed.ac.uk.

Liam McDowell (MIS)

e-Learning — energetic developments all over the UK —

Online e-Learning conference

Innovating e-Learning 2006 is an **online conference** running from 27th to 31st March. It will be of interest to anyone developing pedagogical uses of learning technologies. It is based around the themes of: Designing for learning; Learners' experiences of e-Learning; and Innovating e-Learning Practice. Details are at http://www.jisc.ac.uk/elp_conference06.html

New Report: use of VLEs in UK HE

This report compares the use of Virtual Learning Environments in March 2001, March 2003 and March 2005, recording the results from a national survey of the acquisition, use and support of VLEs in Higher Education. Full details are at http://www.ucisa.ac.uk/groups/tlig/vle/Using_images_in_VLEs

TASI – the Technical Advisory Service for Images – has published six documents on the use of images in VLEs – Blackboard, Moodle, WebCT and Bodington, plus other web-based tools Hot Potatoes and Quandary. The documents give advice on locating and preparing images for online use, and on Copyright for images. They are available as PDFs from <http://www.tasi.ac.uk/advice/using/using.html>

Meetings

JISC Legal is delivering a drop-in, drop-out webcast on **22nd March** as a Copyright and e-Learning induction for UK FE and HE staff. For details see <http://www.jisclegal.ac.uk/events/webcastevent.htm>

The Combined Universities in Cornwall are holding a “groundbreaking convention” in Penryn on **6th April** on virtual learning environments and the impact of blended learning on pedagogy and professional identity. For details see <http://www.cuc.ac.uk/blendedlearning/>

JISC Legal held a two-day workshop last year on the Legal Aspects of Online Learning Environments. A one-day event at the University of Warwick on **12th April** distils the best of that workshop, looking at copyright issues, data protection, liability, accessibility obligations and e-commerce. The details are at http://www.jisclegal.ac.uk/events/OLE_o6/OLE_o6_program.htm

Bidding and Winning: An ALT workshop in Manchester on **26th April** will give tips on creating winning project bids. The booking deadline is 12th April; further information is at http://www.alt.ac.uk/workshop_detail.php?e=217

Eublogs are the subject of a meeting on **4th May** at King's College, London, covering the history of blogs, their relation to Web 2.0 technologies, their formats and functionalities, the pedagogical implications of using blogs, and blogging and RSS (Really Simple Syndication). For further information see http://www.alt.ac.uk/workshop_detail.php?e=216

This year's JISC Legal Conference – at the University of Warwick from **31st May to 1st June** – will deal with legal aspects of building digital collections, whether as institutional repositories, depositories, library e-collections or online course material collections. Full information is at http://www.jisclegal.ac.uk/events/eRep_o6/Programme.htm

The First Annual Blended Learning Conference takes place at the University of Hertfordshire on **15th June**. The keynote speaker will be Gilly Salmon, Professor of e-Learning and Learning Technologies at the University of Leicester. For further details see <http://perseus.herts.ac.uk/uinfo/index.cfm?05673EF2-oFDD-FA74-4431-A66349CD23F5>

A collaborative eLearning symposium at the University of Cambridge on **22–23 June** will look at staff development and student learning issues, sustainability, blended learning, and quality assurance. Further information is at <http://www.ucel.ac.uk/symposium/>

Learning Lab seminars

The Learning Lab and the Centre of Excellence in Learning and Teaching, University of Wolverhampton, offer seminars on a range of VLE-related topics. Each seminar is limited to 25 people, costs £70 (inclusive of lunch and refreshments) and takes place in Telford, Shropshire:

- 3D gaming in Education (26th April)
 - VLEs and beyond – what does personalised learning really mean? (3rd May)
 - e-Assessment (24th May)
 - * Proprietary versus Open Source Learning Environments (14th June)
- Additional information is provided at <http://www.learninglab.org.uk/>

e-Learning virtual conference

The IADIS e-Learning 2006 conference is part of the IADIS Virtual Multi Conference on Computer Science and Information Systems (MCCSIS 2006), taking place on 15–19 May. It will address the always-evolving reality of e-Learning and distance education systems. It will be a scientific conference, hosted virtually: that is, it will have the standards of a scientific conference (with peer-reviewed submissions and publication), but participants can take part from their office or home, at any time during its five days, and choosing which sessions to attend. Early Registration closes on 17th April. Details are at <http://www.iadis.org/multi2006/el2006.asp>

Wilma Alexander (MALTS)

Software news

Mathematica

We have to place our annual Mathematica order by the end of April. Please let us know if you would like to join our site licence. We will be contacting current licence holders to check on your renewal: if you haven't heard from us, please let us know by the end of March if you want to renew your licence.

Graphpad Instat

We have been asked to get a site licence for Graphpad Instat, a statistics program "designed by a scientist for scientists." If you would be interested in joining in with this, please let us know (email euics.software.services@ed.ac.uk). You can find out about the software and download demos at <http://www.graphpad.com/instat/>

Frances Provan (EUCS)



Real-time computer model of the Playfair Library projected on a screen in a series of tests by PhD student Aghlab Al-Attili to investigate how people relate virtual environments to physical environments.

Digital Curation Conference

The second International Digital Curation Conference – "Digital Data Curation in Practice" – takes place in Glasgow on 21–22 November 2006.

The organisers are now calling for papers, from anyone engaged in the creation, use, re-use and long-term management of digital data, from researchers and curators through to policy makers and funders.

Authors are invited to submit one page abstracts to dcc-xxx@ukoln.ac.uk, where 'xxx' is 'papers', 'workshops', 'demos' or 'posters'. The deadline for all submissions is 3rd April 2006. For further information contact Natasha Bishop (email n.bishop@ukoln.ac.uk) or see the Conference website at <http://www.dcc.ac.uk/events/dcc-2006/>

Joy Davidson (DCC)

Prizes looking for homes

BCS IT awards

Nominations are being sought for the BCS IT Professional Awards, the leading hallmark of success amongst practitioners in the IT industry today. They mark the key contribution made by the IT profession to economic prosperity, business efficiency and our public services. For details see <http://www.bcs.org/awards/professional/>

Mike Hurst (BCS)

Student environment prize

Do you know of any students who are working for the environment? If so, you might like to tell them about the Ede and Ravenscroft Prize, of £1,500. The closing date for applications is 3rd April. Details are at <http://www.scholarships.ed.ac.uk/presentstudents/edeandravenscroft.htm>

David Somervell (Estates & Buildings)

JISC news

Open Source Software briefing

Open Source is a vital part of modern software creation. It is supported by the European Commission, the UK government and JISC, and most HE institutions use it. The briefing paper – which describes what the term means, what the impact is on education, and where to get more information – is at http://www.jisc.ac.uk/index.cfm?name=pub_ossbp

Preservation of Digital Assets

A 'state of the nation' report launched in February at the House of Commons revealed that less than 20% of UK organisations surveyed had a strategy to deal with the risk of loss of their digital resources. 'Mind the gap: assessing digital preservation needs in the UK' is at http://www.jisc.ac.uk/index.cfm?name=dpc_report

Caroline Porteous (JISC Support Centre)

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Contributions to *BITS* are welcomed.

Copy deadline for April *BITS*:

Friday 17th March