

Kenway Review of computing services

The panel assembled by Richard Kenway to look into computing provision in the University has completed its work, and its report is to be considered by the Principal's Strategy Group on 26th September.

The report will then be made available for a brief period of open consultation, before final recommendations are made to the key University committees in time to catch the annual University planning round. If full approval is given, it is intended to start implementing the recommendations before the end of this calendar year.

The recommendations mainly relate to central services, because it is believed that the proposed changes are a prerequisite for Colleges and Schools to realign their own IT services with the central provision.

The report will be available for the first week in October only, on the Review website, at http://www.is.ed.ac.uk/projects/computing_review

Please send any comments to R.Kenway@ed.ac.uk by 6th October.

Vice-Principal Professor Richard Kenway



eSkills sessions for staff and postgraduates

- Keen to improve your computing skills?
- Don't have time to attend a full day course?
- Prefer to work on your own terms, at your own speed?

Come along to 19 Buccleuch Place for our new drop-in sessions...
No appointment or bookings are required – just come in and learn!

- Friendly staff will help you find your ideal resources
- Self-paced online and electronic materials
- ECDL (European Computer Driving Licence)
- Microsoft Office
- Web technologies
- Networking and operating systems
- Programming languages
- Databases

What days? Every Wednesday from 11th October
What time? Drop in any time between 1pm and 5pm
Where? EUCS Training, 19 Buccleuch Place
Any questions? Email eucs.training@ed.ac.uk or tel 506850

Jenni Reeves (Information Services)

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50,000,000 words-worth of pictures just for you: see Education Image Gallery on page 8!

Major news inside:

Launch of Identity Management Service – page 2

Progress with the new University Website – page 3

Details of November's Web 2.0 conference – page 4

The Identity Management Service – IDMS

In modern academic work an increasing number of electronic services are being provided to aid day-to-day life. In the past this might have required everyone to have and remember a unique username and password for each individual service. A simpler method is to have a single sign-on environment – exemplified by Edinburgh's EASE service – which allows us to use one username and password to access all the services we require.

In order for this approach to be successful there needs to be a method of managing each new account (or 'Identity') which will access these services and determine the eligibility of the Identity for the services provided.

On 9th October Information Services launches just such a trustworthy system – the Identity Management and Service Eligibility Service, or IDMS. The IDMS receives direct data feeds from the 'Gold Master' sources of identity data, determines the service eligibility of each identity, then feeds that information out to the various registered services.

The Identity data is received from several sources: Registry for students and alumni, HR for staff, the Visitor Registration Service (VRS) for 'visitors' (the many categories of people who work at, for and visit the University without being staff). These data files are the 'Gold Masters'. The respective sources are the authority on their data, and are the only ones who can provide or alter the data relating to their users.

The services currently registered with the IDMS to receive eligibility data include central EUCS services such as Staff and Student mail, EASE and Unix systems, network services such as wireless, LapLAN, dialup and VPN, Windows services, central 'projects' such as the Call Management System, WebCT, MIS hosts such as MyEd, and the Visitor Registration Service.

The Personal Touch

The IDMS provides a robust and dependable service eligibility system at the heart of the University's IT environment, and through its web interface it provides a convenient mechanism for users and Computing Officers to manage access to services.

If you want to start using the **holyrood** or **waverley** Unix services, or get wireless or dialup access to the University network, you can log on to the IDMS portal, see what's available to you, and tick the boxes for what you need.

Extra facilities are provided for School and College Computing Officers, who are able to create Identities for non human (*i.e.* service) accounts and grant access to services which individuals cannot select themselves. This is backed up by an extensive and flexible reporting facility.

The new IDMS is launched on 9th October, at <http://www.idms.ucs.ed.ac.uk/>

David Lowrie (Information Services)

Automatic updates reporting service

The great advantages of the Supported XP Desktop include its reliability and the ability to update computers automatically with any patches that are made available. However, on rare occasions, these updates can fail to apply to a machine. To offset this problem, Desktop Services has developed and is now providing a new service to the Supported XP Desktop which gives a weekly update that alerts Computing Officers to any issues.

This Reporting Service emails Computing Officers in the Supported XP Desktop with the name, severity rating and Knowledge Base number of any updates. Using this information, Computing Officers can take the necessary steps to remedy the issue, thus increasing the reliability of the Supported XP Desktop in their area, and potentially catching bigger problems before they develop.

For further information, please contact the Desktop Services team (email Desktop.Team@ed.ac.uk).

Kaye Brewster, Mark Sammons (Information Services)

Do you rely on DVDs?

There are many standards, formats and technologies for recordable DVDs, and compatibility can be a problem. Very few devices can successfully read and write all the available kinds of DVD. The complications are even worse if you want to record on one device and replay or read data on another.

Around 900 models of DVD writer, 850 models of recorder and 7,000 models of player, and more than 2,000 varieties of DVD media, are listed at <http://www.videohelp.com/> (follow the LISTS links on the left-hand side of the screen). This is also a good site for general information and advice on DVD issues.

It can be hard to know who manufactured even a premium brand disk; if you have compatibility problems, you may need to identify what kind of DVD you have. There is a useful free software tool (for Windows) at <http://dvd.identifier.cdfreaks.com/>

This can also tell you something about the capabilities of your drive.

Please note that we cannot guarantee that these tools are bug-free or untainted by malware, though we have had no trouble with them. If you download, install and use them it has to be at your own risk. Alternatively, you can use these tools in the Graphics and Multimedia Resource Centre:

<http://graphics.ed.ac.uk/gmrc/>

John Wexler (Information Services)

Website Development Project update

The Website Development Project is working on the delivery of a new, content-managed web presence for the University. The initial phase focuses on provision for key external audiences and is expected to launch in late Spring.

The initial phase of research is now over. Analysis and planning activities are now ongoing as the scope for first phase delivery begins to take shape. Meanwhile, technical development work is also happening as our developers customise the content management system to meet our requirements.

Research and analysis

The initial round of user testing with key external audiences took place throughout the Summer. Around 90 individual tests generated a wealth of data which is still being processed. Further research focusing on prospective students' reactions to website 'look and feel' will continue during Autumn.

We also conducted an audit of the existing website in June and July, identifying almost one million pages and allocating content to over 700 owners. More information is still to come and we should have a full audit by the end of the year. This will allow us to establish a thorough plan for build and content migration for the whole of the University site.

Planning

The Advisory Board continues to grow as the Project gains momentum. More names are being added now that we have confirmed that our first major task is to address student recruitment. The Advisory Board is helping us assemble representative groups of University stakeholders to provide guidance as the first phase of the website delivery begins to take shape.

The true cost of delivery of the Project can only now be determined. The required technical infrastructure and associated costs are being finalised. A robust project budget will be proposed at the next Steering Group meeting in October, along with various scope scenarios depending on funds allocated.

Development

While the research and planning were under way, a team of Java developers began work on the content management system (CMS) which will be used to publish the new site. Led by Charlotte Moon, the Project's CMS Development Manager and EUCS representative, they are in the process of customising the system to meet the needs of the University's community of web publishers.

Another development – closely tied in to the delivery of the new website – is the University Directory Project. Rose Dewar, the Project's Application Development Manager and MIS representative, is leading this initiative. This single, comprehensive search facility will include all staff and make finding contact details easier. The system will empower everyone who has contact details stored in the Directory, as staff will be able to update personal information themselves and select information to be displayed to internal and external audiences.

This is an exciting time in the Project's development, with the pace of progress set to increase throughout the coming semester.

For more information and the latest news on the Project, see <http://www.ed.ac.uk/websiteproject/>

If you'd like to discuss any issues regarding the development of the University website, or contribute your views, please contact Dawn Ellis (tel 506379, email dawn.ellis@ed.ac.uk).

Dawn Ellis (CAM)

MIS Seminar: Digital Curation and Preservation

Do we have a looming crisis with the large amount of digital information that is currently not archived here at the University of Edinburgh?

Do you know what MIS and other areas of the University are doing or need to do about preserving or archiving digital information?

MIS is running a seminar on **2nd October**, in conjunction with the Digital Curation Centre and the Records Management Section, primarily for staff in CSG and SASG who have a responsibility for managing digital information, records and systems, but the seminar should also be of interest to any staff who are concerned for the longer term preservation of information held in a digital form, from corporate transactional databases to email and web content.

For details, and instructions on how to book online via the MyEd Training and Development channel, see <http://www.mis.ed.ac.uk/services/seminars/MIS-DCC-Oct2006-agenda.shtml>

Liam McDowell (MIS)

Second International Digital Curation Conference

Registration is now open for the 2nd International Digital Curation Conference, which takes place on 21–22 November at the Glasgow Hilton. A comprehensive programme of papers, posters and demonstrations will explore the topic of Digital Data Curation in Practice, with a conference banquet at Glasgow City Chambers. Keynote speakers are Hans F. Hoffmann (CERN) and Clifford Lynch (Coalition for Networked Information). Further information can be found at <http://www.dcc.ac.uk/events/dcc-2006/>

Natasha Bishop (UKOLN)

Social and Collaborative Technologies: Changing the University

The 2006 'StarGazing Conference' at Pollock Halls on 24th November

The provisional programme for this event is as follows:

9:30	coffee/demonstrations/registration
10:00	Welcome
10:10	"Pioneers": <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is Web 2.0? Paul Anderson (Informatics) 2. Podcasts, Wikis in learning and teaching. Sian Bayne (School of Education) 3. Game-informed learning. Michael Begg (LTS, MVM) 4. Student use of social technologies (EUSA representative)
11:15	coffee/tea
11:45	Panel of Senior members of the University, including the Principal, Richard Kenway, Mike Fourman, Helen Hayes. Short presentations followed by questions.
12:45	Demonstrations: Blogs, Wikis, De.li.cious, Connotea, Folksonomies, podcasts, desktop to videoconferencing, MP3 players, Semantic web, XML.
14:00	
13:15	Lunch
14:00	"Let's do it now": mainstream use of collaborative technologies. Brian Kelly (JISC Web Focus, UKOLN): Why do we need Information Services? Robert Muetzelfeldt (Honorary Fellow): New ways of sharing XML-represented information such as environmental models "Behind the Scenes": Helen Hayes, Chris Adie, Charlotte Waelde
15:15	tea/coffee
15:45	"Looking to the future": Sharing of wishes and ideas for a five-year vision. Wiki contents, MLE futures, panel comment. Predictions will be recorded, published, and reviewed in a year's time. An electronic voting system will be available.
16:30	Close

The StarGazing Website

There is more information about this important meeting, and a link for booking through the MyEd Event Bookings Channel, in the new 'stargazing' website at:

<http://www.itfutures.ed.ac.uk/>

This site will be used to collect any news of relevance to the University's future use of Information Technology, in both near and far futures, and we will be delighted to receive your thoughts and input through this site.

A taster session

The November conference will launch a monthly programme of meetings and workshops to examine particular aspects of new technologies in some detail. To give a flavour of what might be in store, there will be a videoseminar as part of the run-up to the conference:

Title: Wikis and blogs at the University of Edinburgh

Theme: The stargazing Wiki, blog and other social tools to be used at the November conference will be discussed

Participants: Chris Adie, Paul Anderson, Sian Bayne, Michael Begg, Brian Kelly, Bob Muetzelfeldt

Date: Wednesday 25th October

Time: 1pm

Place: on the Web – full details are provided on the StarGazing Website.

Helen Hayes (Information Services)

Learning to socialise: Social Software

Blogs, wikis, podcasts, videocasts, e-portfolios, MySpace – a new raft of software for the Internet is bringing new ways of interacting with computers and people to create more social and yet personal spaces. The following present some of the latest ‘Web 2.0’ tools, with advice on how to get the most out of them.

JISC infoNet: Social Software Overview

Names vary for the new wave of online social activity – Social Software, Social Media, Social Computing – but all share the key word ‘Social’. JISC infoNet has created a brief overview of this area, including a number of links to examples of the genre, at <http://www.jiscinfonet.ac.uk/infokits/social-software>

Social Software in Academia
Still new on campus, social software tools can support students and staff beyond the classroom, reaching around the world for learning and communication. There is another useful overview and pointers to key Web 2.0 tools at <http://www.educause.edu/apps/eq/eqmo6/eqmo627.asp>

Web 2.0: a new wave for teaching & learning?

Web 1.0 demonstrated immense powers for connecting learners, teachers and materials. How much more broadly will this connective matrix grow under the impact of the openness, ease of entry, and social nature of Web 2.0? There are clues at <http://www.educause.edu/LibraryDetailPage/666?ID=ERM0621>

Social software: eLearning beyond Learning Management Systems

There is an excellent article encouraging the radical view that online education should look beyond VLEs (virtual learning environments) and LMS (learning management systems) “and engage students in an active use of the web as a resource for their self-governed, problem-based and collaborative activities”; see http://www.eurodl.org/materials/contrib/2006/Christian_Dalsgaard.htm

How to set up an Educational Blog

A blog, short for ‘web log’, is an online journal consisting of articles or posts which appear in chronological order on a webpage. Setting up a basic blog is simple. You open an account with a blogging service like Blogger or Word Press and fill in a few templates. From there just follow the instructions. If you can send an email you can create a blog! Find all you need to know at <http://www.tes.co.uk/blogs/blog.aspx?path=/ICT/>

Caroline Porteous (JISC Regional Support Centres)

Research into Web 2.0 for learning and teaching

The Department of Higher and Community Education has received funding from the Higher Education Academy to conduct research into the way ‘Web 2.0’ is being used by learners and teachers. The project, called ‘Putting Web 2.0 to work: new pedagogies for new learning spaces’ is a partnership with the University of Strathclyde.

Web 2.0 technologies provide Higher Education with some potentially radical new authoring, networking and community-building capabilities, but the implications of these for learning and teaching are little explored. Some of the issues needing further investigation relate to the literacies, teaching approaches and assessment practices we need to adopt in these new digital spaces, and the significant challenges these might pose to both students and their teachers. The project will gather evidence of the potential benefits and constraints of Web 2.0 technologies and will investigate the student experience of working within specific Web 2.0 environments.

For more information, contact Dr Sian Bayne in the School of Education (email sian.bayne@ed.ac.uk).

Sian Bayne (Education)

Introduction to videoconferencing

Videoconferencing is a great way to have a face-to-face meeting without having to travel further than your local videoconferencing studio (Edinburgh has three, in the Appleton Tower, at Moray House and in the James Clerk Maxwell Building at The King’s Buildings).

A new UKERNA Training Course ‘Introduction to Video Conferencing’ is being trialled in Edinburgh on 11th October. *Free* places are available to staff from JANET sites, first-come first-served. Online booking is at <http://www.ja.net/services/training/courses/vc-intro.html>

Caroline Porteous (JISC Regional Support Centres)

BCS meeting: Web Development

The local branch of the British Computer Society holds two meetings in October on aspects of web development.

On 4th October at 6:30pm Andrew MacDonald of BT Global Services will talk on ‘The Agile Web Engineering (AWE) Process’. On 25th October at 6:30pm Gary Short of Computa Service Ltd will talk on ‘An Introduction to AJAX’ (an approach to developing web-based applications).

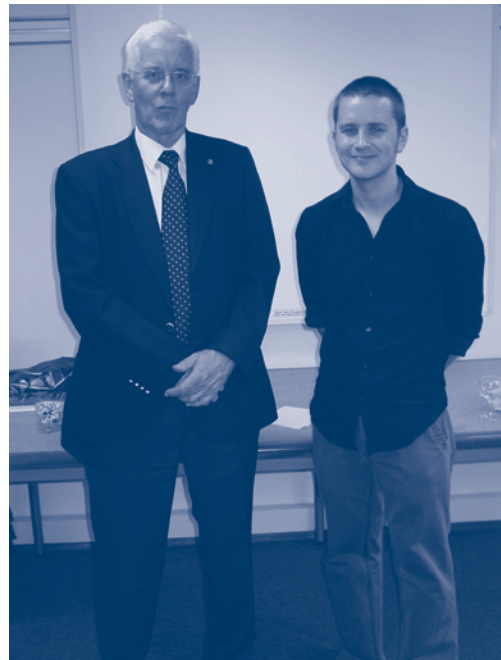
The meetings will be held at The Royal Scots Club Hepburn Suite, 30 Abercromby Place, Edinburgh EH3 6QE – a different venue from the past few years. Non-members are most welcome.

David Muxworthy (BCS)

Mowat Bursaries bring librarians from Croatia and Latvia to Edinburgh



Lea Puliselic, Sheila Cannell and Antra Indriksone



Richard Field and Simon Mowat, who along with Sheila Cannell are trustees of the Ian Mowat Bursary Fund

It is already four years since University Librarian Ian Mowat died in a tragic accident in Glencoe. A fund was set up in his name, and has been used ever since to further his work in building links with Eastern Europe. This has been the third occasion in which librarians have been invited to spend some weeks working in different parts of the Library, finding out what we do and sharing their own knowledge and experience with us. Past visitors have joined us from Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Serbia & Montenegro and Bulgaria. This year's visits have been no exception in their great success.

Lea Puliselic is a medical librarian in the University of Zagreb with particular interests in digital resources and institutional repositories. Antra Indriksone works in the National Library of Latvia, and is particularly concerned with managing journals, and with international standards for cataloguing and indexing.

Sheila Cannell (Information Services)

eJournals access EASEd

From September 2006 access to eJournals through the eJournals portal and the catalogue is EASE-authenticated, both on and off campus. This change simplifies the authentication process, and means there should be a single prompt to log in to the service at the start of a search session.

Please send feedback, or report any problems, via http://www.lib.ed.ac.uk/resources/databases/eisquery_cms.shtml

The eJournals portal is at <http://www.lib.ed.ac.uk/ejournals/>

Liz Stevenson (Information Services)

NHS eLibrary

The NHS eLibrary has recently re-launched with an enhanced interface. This offers an even better facility for personal customisation.

Among the new resources added in recent months has been the 123doc.com, which offers a range of online resources – lecture courses, e-study, video lectures, revision material – geared towards Royal College exams. In addition, it now has a facility for locating material across the range of eLibrary resources, including Medline. Staff engaged in clinical teaching and students in the Medical Schools can apply for access to this resource.

The NHS eLibrary is at <http://www.elib.scot.nhs.uk/portal/elib/pages/index.aspx>

Irene McGowan (Information Services)

MSc in eLearning launches

The School of Education's online MSc in eLearning has launched this semester, with a full cohort of students from across the UK and as far afield as Switzerland and Sri Lanka. The MSc is one of the University's few fully online, distance programmes.

Focusing on how the new digital environments are forging change in the ways we teach and learn, it uses WebCT as its main teaching platform and Facebook for social networking, and will explore how other new technological environments – del.icio.us, wikis, blogs – can be used to deliver high-quality education in digital space. The MSc also uses the 3D virtual world Second Life, where students will gather on a digital beach to discuss how such environments can change the way we work, socialise and learn.

Courses on offer include 'An introduction to digital environments for learning', followed by a series of options including 'Online assessment', 'Understanding learning in the online environment', 'E-learning strategy and policy' and 'Language, culture and communication in online learning'.

More information about the MSc in E-learning is at <http://www.education.ed.ac.uk/e-learning/>

Sian Bayne (Education)

eLearning case studies wanted

Educational Games

Do you or your colleagues use educational games innovatively with your students? If so, please tell Sara de Freitas (email s.defreitas@bbk.ac.uk) your experiences, for her research for the JISC eLearning Programme (<http://www.elearning.ac.uk/>). Her report on innovative uses of learning with games will be published in a JISC report later this year.

eAssessment

The next eLearning Programme Effective Practice guide – 'Effective Practice with eAssessment' – should be available towards the end of the year. JISC is looking for examples of practice where institutions have been making significant use of eAssessment (diagnostic assessment, formative or summative), or have invested in an eAssessment centre. Ros Smith is currently searching for case studies of effective practice in eAssessment and the impact of large scale eAssessment on institutional procedures and on teaching and learning practice. Please send examples to ros.smith@gpisolutions.co.uk.

Caroline Porteous (JISC Regional Support Centres)

ICWL 2007

The 6th International Conference on Web-based Learning – ICWL 2007 – takes place in the University of Edinburgh next August.

ICWL is an annual international conference on web-based learning. The first ICWL was held in Hong Kong in 2002, and it has since been held in Australia, China, Hong Kong and Malaysia.

Areas of interest will include but not be limited to:

- eLearning platforms and tools
- learning resource deployment, organization and management
- practice and experience sharing
- pedagogical issues
- web-based learning for oriental languages

Authors are invited to submit original papers reporting on research results or novel applications in web-based learning. More detailed and updated information about the conference can be found at

<http://www.hkws.org/events/icwl2007/>

Bette Johnston (Information Services)

OU putting learning material on the Web

The Open University has announced a £5.65m project to make a selection of its learning materials available free of charge to educators and learners around the world. Supported by a grant of around £2.5m from The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the University will launch a new website this month.

The provision on the Internet of 'Open Educational Resources', free at point of use and available to everyone, reflects The Open University's mission of promoting fair access for all. During the initial phase of the initiative, the University will select and make available educational resources from all study levels from access to postgraduate, and from a full range of subject themes: arts and history, business and management, health and lifestyle, languages, science and nature, society and technology. Learners will also be able to benefit from a range of study skills development materials.

The University is already working with partners in Africa to make educational resources freely available for Primary and Higher Education throughout the continent.

The full story is at <http://www3.open.ac.uk/media/fullstory.aspx?id=8573>

Caroline Porteous (JISC Regional Support Centres)



**National
e-Science
Centre:**

**Announcement
of Theme 3**



Education Image Gallery

The Data Library has subscribed to the Education Image Gallery on behalf of Edinburgh University students and staff. Specifically designed for educational purposes at FE and HE institutions, the Gallery provides instant access to a unique and exciting collection of 50,000 images drawn from the resources of the Hulton Archive, Photodisc and the Getty Images® News Service (current events and sport).

Images cover key events and multiple subject areas including history, entertainment, sport, science, fashion, politics, music, conflict, film, art, leisure and women's studies. With the curriculum-related images selected by leading academics you can illustrate key times, places, people and events.

For further information visit
<http://edina.ac.uk/eig/>

Stuart Macdonald (EDINA)

Adoption of e-Research technologies: From prototype to commodity

www.nesc.ac.uk/esi/themes/theme_03/index.htm

The e-Science Institute is pleased to announce the third theme in its series of thematic programmes. This theme, a collaboration with the National Centre for e-Social Science (www.ncess.ac.uk), will study the factors that may inhibit or enable the wider diffusion and adoption of e-Research technologies and tools, and seek to devise strategies for furthering the use of e-Infrastructures based on the knowledge gained.

The theme is being led by Alex Voss, Rob Procter (NCeSS) and Tom Rodden (University of Nottingham). Co-funding from NCeSS will enable Alex Voss to conduct research on the topic as well as acting as theme leader.

Background: The success of the UK e-Science programme has encouraged other disciplines – notably in social sciences, arts and humanities – to explore the benefits of e-Research. The e-Science vision is that e-Infrastructure should be available regardless of discipline, location or organisational context, to become the “seen but unnoticed” fabric that underpins any research, be it high-energy physics in large international collaborations like CERN or the study of environmental changes conducted in schools and at home. However, before this vision of “democratic e-Research” can be realised, there are significant obstacles to overcome – such as the shaping of national infrastructures and organisational context, and developments within research traditions. This theme will study the factors involved, and specifically:

- Commodification of Grid Technologies
- Designing for Diverse User Communities
- Research Methodologies and Analytic Approaches
- Resourcing e-Research

Call for Visitors

A central part of any theme at eSI is played by the people who visit eSI to contribute to its activities. If you are a researcher with an interest in the issues around the wider adoption of e-Research and would like to visit eSI during the course of the theme, please have a look at the eSI Visitors Programme and get in touch with Alex Voss (email avoss@inf.ed.ac.uk) to discuss a possible visit.

Further information on eSI themes is available at
<http://www.nesc.ac.uk/esi/themes/index.htm>

To propose a theme, or if you have any questions, please contact Anna Kenway (email anna@nesc.ac.uk, tel 509818).

Anna Kenway (NeSC)

EDINBURGH BITS

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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 November *BITS*:

Wednesday 18th October