

HECToR sets up home in Edinburgh

Britain's new national super-computing service, HECToR, will be based on a large Cray system located at the University of Edinburgh's Advanced Computing Facility (ACF). EPCC will direct and operate the service.

Contracts for the six-year, £113 million project were signed in February. HECToR (High End Computing Terascale Resources) will be funded by the UK Research Councils, and will start work in October this year. Computational science and engineering support will be provided by NAG Ltd.

The service will be delivered in three phases. First phase hardware will include a total of 11,328 processors with over 33 Tb of main memory, giving a peak performance of 59 Tflops – equivalent to about 10,000 desktop PCs.

HECToR will be available for scientists at UK universities, and will support such areas of work as:

- Ocean currents, weather forecasting and climate change;
- Materials science;
- Chemistry, Biochemistry, and the development of new drugs;
- Computational physics;
- Modelling disasters;
- New sources of energy;
- Aircraft design.

As the problems which scientists address have become more complex, the importance of high-performance computing as a research technique has increased. The choice of Edinburgh demonstrates EPCC's and the University's leadership in the field.

There is full news at <http://www.hector.ac.uk/>

John Fisher (EPCC)

Computing Review Phase 2

The Computing and IT-based Services Review chaired by Richard Kenway completed phase 1 of its task last October. This concentrated on the central services, resulting in the merger of MIS and Information Services, and other recommendations currently being implemented.

Phase 2 of the Review – looking at Schools, Colleges and the other Support Groups, and their relationship to central services – is under way. It is being managed by the Knowledge Strategy Committee, and its remit and other documents are at http://www.is.ed.ac.uk/projects/Computing_Review_PhaseII

Each College is to do a self review. I am coordinating the Review, and by Easter expect to provide Colleges with data on what IT staff do (from Job Descriptions); what Schools are spending on IT (in conjunction with Procurement – see next article); any potential duplication of effort; and the results of a questionnaire sent to all Schools to fill in the gaps in information provided to Phase 1. A lighter touch review of Support Groups will also be undertaken.

If you have any comments on the Phase 2 remit, please send them to your Academic Liaison Director (see below) for consideration by the College, or direct to me (email s.currie@ed.ac.uk) – in which case please say if you wish anonymity.

A discussion forum is being set up on the IT Professionals' Forum site at <http://129.215.82.82/cof/forum/>

The Academic Liaison Directors are **Marshall.Dozier@ed.ac.uk** (MVM), **Chris.Adie@ed.ac.uk** (SCE) and **Abdul.Majothi@ed.ac.uk** (HSS). **Liam.McDowell@ed.ac.uk** provides liaison with the Support Groups.

Scott Currie (IS)

contents

HECToR sets up home	1
Computing Review Phase 2	1
Procurement and Phase 2	2
Bye-bye WAMS	2
MyEd Upgrade: Final Steps	2
Pilot wiki service for University	2
Student mail speeded up	2
Spam-blocking	2
Website Development Project	2
Library soundbites	3
Edinburgh Science Festival	3
Sidney Michaelson Lecture	3
IT training: ready for booking	3
Gmap Pedometer	3
David Ferro retires	4
Margaret Kinsella hangs up	4
Virtual Research and Collaborative Work	4
A clutch of holidays	4

IT PROFESSIONALS' FORUM

New Convenor, and second technical meeting: see <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/ucsinfo/ctees/itforum/>

Procurement helping IT Review Phase 2

The Procurement Office is identifying how best to support the University's IS and IT buyers, looking for opportunities to achieve better value for money and improve processes. Procurement begins at identification of need and continues until final disposal and replacement planning. Considering procurement earlier and together can save time, effort, risk and money.

Scottish Ministers expect publicly-funded bodies to procure IT collaboratively: for news of recent changes see <http://www.pps.ed.ac.uk/news/newsitem.cfm?MyID=213>

In general, keep an eye on <http://www.pps.ed.ac.uk/>

If you are interested in contributing to the evolving thinking on IS and IT procurement and the best procurement strategy, please email Karen.Bowman@ed.ac.uk.

Karen Bowman (Procurement)

Bye-bye WAMS

The Integration of Information Services and MIS continues. WAMS – the Web, Application and Media Services Section of IT User Services – has now been assimilated, together with most of MIS, into the new IS Applications Division. The WebCT service and the web, database and media hosting services previously provided by WAMS will be operated by the Production Management section of the Applications Division, with support provided jointly by the Service Management and Production Management sections. The majority of WAMS staff have moved to Old College; support addresses remain unchanged for now.

Ed Dee (IS)

MyEd Upgrade: Final Steps

We are making final preparations for the release of the new version of MyEd on 26th April. Highlights include:

- A new, more personalised, default set of tabs and channels for all users, giving access to a wider range of content, to help avoid the need for customisation.
 - An enhanced Channel Catalogue, with quick search.
 - A new News Reader, combining your news feeds into a single channel and allowing you to add your favourites.
 - Improved categorisation of portal content, to help you find channels more easily.
 - Seamless integration with the new University Website.
- There will obviously be some impact on users, including:
- Your existing layout will be replaced. We will provide a tool to view and print a 'blueprint' of your old layout.
 - Personal information (e.g. Bookmarks) is unaffected.
 - You will still always be able to customise MyEd, but we hope to provide more of what you want 'out of the box'.

For details of the features, enhancements and impact of the upgrade, see <http://www.eportal.mis.ed.ac.uk/>

Anne-Marie Scott, Liza Zamboglou (IS)

Pilot wiki service for University

IS has identified **Confluence** as the preferred wiki, after wide consultation and research, as explained at <http://www.is.ed.ac.uk/pub/jsp/polopoly.jsp?d=290&a=1171>

We aim to provide a service that is easy to use, with clear yet flexible set-up and maintenance processes. The next stages to delivering the central service are:

1. To extend the current Confluence pilot to involve a varied range of wiki usage types, whilst meeting the most urgent needs for a collaborative environment.
2. To deliver an integrated Confluence-based central wiki service in time for the start of the academic year.

This offers a practical way to meet the pressing need for a central wiki service that best fits this University. We welcome feedback on this proposal, either by email (to mark.wetton@ed.ac.uk) or in the IT Professionals' Forum at http://129.215.82.82/cof/forum/forum.asp?FORUM_ID=13

Mark Wetton (IS)

Performance improvement for student mail

The IS central facilities team has changed the way in which the Student Mail Service's web front end handles logins to the IMAP server, leading to a fairly major improvement in performance. The biggest load on the service is generally around 11am, when it's quite usual to see about 700 simultaneous logins in a five-minute period – and with this upgrade there is now only a slight degradation in performance under such a load.

Graeme Wood (IS)

Spam-blocking

The proposal to reject messages from outwith the University network that accumulate high spam scores, previously announced to the service-consult mailing list, takes effect on Monday 2nd April. Details of what this involves and the expected benefits are available at <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/fmd/unix/docs/mail/junk/high-scoring-spam.html>

Scott Larnach (IS)

Website Development Project

The task of organising and managing the content needed for our initial launch has begun in earnest. Around 30 web publishers are working to deliver Phase 1 – a coherent core site focused on the information requirements of prospective students, with single source, authoritative content published in multiple locations.

Many thanks to everyone who took part in the staff emotional response test: over 300 people contributed a full set of data. Similar tests were run with prospective students and other external audiences, and the results will feed into the graphic design of the new site.

Dawn Ellis (CAM)

Library soundbites

These snapshots of the Library's role at the core of University life emerged during the preparation of the 2005–2006 Annual Report:

- In every hour the Library is open, 450 users enter the Library, 322 books are loaned, and 47 users are helped at a helpdesk.
- *Library Online* is hit every 12 seconds, 24 hours a day.
- Every hour of every day, 217 e-resources are used.
- 69% of the materials grant is spent on *digital* resources.
- The use of e-resources is up by a third on last year.
- Even with so many digital resources, each FTE student visited the Library almost 100 times in the year.
- Two-thirds of all book loans were by self-service.
- Laptop loans to students totalled 2,108 (738 last year).
- 3,623 hours of information skills sessions were given.
- 8,000 students on 44 courses used 1,040 e-reserve items.
- There were 9,408 external users of the Library and 27,014 visitors to the Talbot Rice Gallery.

The full report – which shows all the ways in which Libraries Museums and Galleries supports the goals of the University – is available (as a PDF document) at <http://www.lib.ed.ac.uk/about/annreporto6.pdf>

Sheila Cannell (IS)

Edinburgh International Science Festival

As usual there are several interesting talks with an IT flavour in this year's Science Festival, including:

- 4 April: Telecare and Teleability – IT for the elderly
- 5 April: Future Places: Real and Virtual Worlds
- 7 April: Social Interaction within Virtual Environments
- 11 April: BCS Sidney Michaelson Memorial Lecture (see following item)
- 13 April: Speckled Computing (computers the size of match-heads)
- 15 April: The Internet – Where did it come from, where is it going, and how did it get so darn scary?
- 15 April: Genesis Machines: Engineering Life (Biocomputing)

Full details are provided on the Science Festival website at <http://www.sciencefestival.co.uk/>

Nick Stroud (IS)

Sidney Michaelson Memorial Lecture

This year's Sidney Michaelson memorial lecture is entitled "TiVo – Creating a Revolution in Home Entertainment," and will be given by Michael Ramsay, co-inventor of the digital video recorder. The lecture will take place in the National Museum lecture theatre at 6pm on Wednesday 11th April. Further details are at <http://www.edinburgh.bcs.org/events/070411.htm>

David Muxworthy (BCS)

IT training: ready for booking

The following IT courses are free to most staff and postgraduates at Edinburgh University. Course synopses and later dates are on our website, where you can also book online: <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/usd/cts/courses/>

Date	Course	Venue*
April Mon 2	Dreamweaver	GS
Wed 4	Intermediate SPSS	GS
Tue 10	Excel Advanced	GS
Wed 11	Database Design	GS
Wed 11	Editing Web Pages with Contribute	GS
Wed 18	SQL	GS
Wed 18	Word Introduction	GS
Thu 19	Unix 1: Introduction	KB
Thu 19	Access Application Development 1	GS
Thu 19	Introduction to InDesign	GS
Mon 23	Reference Manager	GS
Mon 23	HTML and Web Authoring	GS
Tue 24	Introduction to Computing	GS
Tue 24	Introduction to Mac OS X Part 1	GS
Wed 25	Unix 2	KB
Wed 25	Excel Introduction	GS
Wed 25	Thunderbird	GS
Thu 26	Video Editing	GS
Mon 30	Access Introduction (1)	GS
May: Tue 1	Producing a Thesis	GS
Tue 1	Dreamweaver	GS
Tue 1	Introduction to Mac OS X Part 2	GS
Wed 2	Unix 3: Shell Programming	KB
Wed 2	SPSS Commands	GS
Mon 7	EndNote	GS
Mon 7	Access Introduction (2)	GS
Tue 8	PhotoShop	GS
Tue 8	Using EDINA Digimap	GS
Tue 8	Intro to Visualising Data in ArcGIS 9	GS
Tue 8	Creating Accessible Websites	GS
Wed 9	Unix 1: Introduction	KB
Wed 9	Word Intermediate	GS
Wed 9	Scanning Tutorial	KB
Thu 10	PowerPoint	KB
Thu 10	FileMaker	GS

* Venues: GS, George Square area; KB, King's Buildings

Jenni Reeves (IS)

Gmap Pedometer

Do you run, walk or ride a bike? Or have any reason at all to want to work out distances on a map easily? This amazingly clever application of Google Maps plots your route (marked out by double-clicks) and works out the journey distance: <http://www.gmap-pedometer.com/>

Caroline Porteous (JISC RSCs)

David Ferro joins David Easton *ex libris*



David Ferro retires at Easter, and at a joint celebration in March of their contributions it was noted that he and David Easton had both worked for the University for almost 10% of its existence. Both were here when the Main Library opened in 1967.

David Ferro has been a cataloguer, Map Librarian, Science Librarian, Sub-Librarian in charge of public services and bibliographic services, and most recently Deputy Director of the new Library and User Services Division in Information Services. 'Outside', he contributed to the British Cartographic Society and the Royal Scottish Geographical Society

Both Davids are practical people, and like nothing better than solving a challenging problem to make our service better. David E was regularly fixing things that were wrong in the Main Library (and did so on three occasions in the Christmas vacation – after he had retired).

David F has always been ready to repair processes and procedures to ensure that opening hours and services were always working. Both cared deeply about the staff working for the Library, and worked to help staff provide an outstanding service.

Sheila Cannell (IS)

Margaret Kinsella hangs up the 'phone



Margaret Kinsella joined the University in 1980, running its switchboard for most of the time since then, and seeing the telephone service develop from wires and plugs and sockets to computerised automation. It is a mark of her skill and commitment that we have been able to take our telephones so much for granted during such changes.

Margaret also made a significant contribution to University life through her work for Unison, most recently with pay modernisation.

Margaret is retiring to Chicago, and we hope she will greatly enjoy her new life there.

Brian Gilmore (IS)

Virtual Research and Collaborative Work

A workshop on Virtual Research Environments and Collaborative Work Environments will be held at the e-Science Institute on 23–24 May. The two approaches aim to provide consistent and dependable environments for particular kinds of work organisation, emphasising the dynamic establishment of collaborative work contexts between independent partners. For details please see <http://www.nesc.ac.uk/esi/events/768>

Wilma Alexander (IS)

A clutch of holidays

Three days could be public holidays this month: Good Friday on the 6th, Easter Monday on the 9th and the Spring Holiday on the 16th.

IS support teams will be closed on the 6th, and offering a telephone and email service on the 9th (except in Science & Engineering, CSG and SASG) and 16th.

Computing labs in library buildings will be available and supervised during the library opening times on all three days. The 24 hour labs in the Hugh Robson Building, High School Yards and the KB Centre will be available by swipe card.

Of library sites, the Main Library only will be open on Good Friday, with self-services. There will be normal services on the 9th. On the 16th, the Main Library and Law & Europa Libraries only will be open for usual semester hours; the Main Library will have self-services only.

Jeff Haywood (IS)

EDINBURGH BITS

Editor:

Nick Stroud, Information Services.

Published by:

Information Services
The University of Edinburgh

Contributions:

Email: BITS@ed.ac.uk
Telephone: 0131 650 3345

Distribution queries:

BITS is distributed through School offices; secretaries please notify changes in requirements to Carla Zaccardelli:
Email: C.Zaccardelli@ed.ac.uk
Telephone: 0131 650 4999

Printed by:

University of Edinburgh Printing Services
<http://www.pps.ed.ac.uk/about/printing/>

BITS on the Web:

<http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/bits/>

BITS RSS feed:

<http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/bits/bits.rss>

Some acronyms explained:

<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 May *BITS*:

Wednesday 18th April