

**Computing and IT-based Services Review**

Update October 2007

The Panel Report from Phase II of the review has been published, at <http://www.vp.is.ed.ac.uk/content/1/c4/11/90/Reportv2.o-GOLDENCOPY.pdf>

Many of the actions required are already under way. The panel was impressed by the level of momentum built up following Phase I, and was keen to ensure that this was reinforced by the recommendations from Phase II.

**Phase I**

Most of the primary recommendations from Phase I have been implemented. The Vice Principal KM has been redesignated *Vice Principal Knowledge Management, CIO and Librarian to the University*. MIS has been fully integrated into Information Services and a new Applications Division has been created. There are two new professional fora: the IT Professionals' Forum (ITPF), whose convenor sits on Knowledge Strategy Committee; and the e-learning Professionals and Practitioners' Forum (eLPPF), the convenor of which is a member of the e-learning Committee.

Following on from Phase I and the abolition of the IT Committee, further consideration is now being given to the committees that report to KSC. Initial work on the IT Strategy has been delayed by the other demands on IS, not least the merger with MIS. Within the last few weeks, and partly in response to Phase II recommendations, the Academic Liaison Directors have begun the process of gathering information from Schools on their IT Plans for 2008–2009 and beyond.

**Phase II**

The Panel felt that the Colleges had engaged particularly well with the Review and had clearly given thought to their own IT strategies. As in Phase I, the Panel made a number of recommendations. Work has already begun in several areas; in particular, the Academic Liaison Directors have been working with Schools on their IT Plans, identifying areas of vulnerability within School IT provision and arranging external reviews of School-based IT provision as requested. At the October meeting of KSC, it was noted that IS and Procurement had advanced the IT procurement recommendation from the report, and were currently putting together a project proposal covering the IS role in this area.

Other recommendations covered staff development and helpdesk services. It was recognised that in order to achieve coherence of IT provision and support there was a need for a University-wide partnership approach. It was recommended that HR should actively engage with ITPF and eLPPF to understand what role the fora might play in supporting the career development of their members. It was also noted that managers of IT staff in Schools and Colleges should ensure that their staff members are afforded training and development opportunities similar to those available to staff in central services. On the subject of helpdesk services, it was recommended that the CIO explore the feasibility of an extended central helpdesk service that would deal with all categories of users.

Further updates on the implementation of the recommendations will be posted on the IS website and reported in *BITs*.

Jo Hamill (IS-VPoffice)

**contents**

Computing and IT Services Review 1  
 Future of the Academic Library 2  
 Main Library and new demands 2  
 A greener way to have your say! 2  
 What is an IT Forum For? 3  
 What is ITIL for? 3  
 Netskills: a TONIC for HE 3  
 Website Development Project 3  
 Edinburgh graduate wins top software engineering award 4  
 Recommended laptop computers 4  
 Eddie races on (the ECDF) 4  
 IS Content and Hosting team 5  
 Contacting Software Services 5  
 e-Science: inspiration to reality 5  
 Distinguished Lecture: People, Computation, and Intelligence 5  
 Virtual Worlds – the next step for the Internet? 5  
 IT courses and tasters 6  
 Interactive teaching in CSE 6  
 IS facilities manager retires 7  
 GMRC manager retires 7  
 University Collections Calendar 8  
 Cultural nourishment in November 8  
 Then surely iPods couldn't possibly work? 8  
 e-Team United 8



Give the gift of travel this Christmas!  
 The Collections Calendar – page 8.

## The Future of the Academic Library

The Library organised a symposium in September for UK library directors and senior managers, attracting around 60 people, with well-known speakers on digital library issues.

The keynote address was given by **Richard Luce**, Director of University Libraries at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, and former Director of the ground-breaking Los Alamos National Laboratory Library whose arXiv open-access eprints service has been used by the world's physicists for over a decade.

**Dave Nicholas**, Professor of Information Science at University College London, discussed user behaviour on the web, **Michael Jubb**, Director of the UK's Research Information Network, spoke about research information as a public good, and **Sheila Cannell**, Edinburgh's Director of Library Services, gave a provocative talk on the need to reskill the library profession for the digital order.

**John Houghton**, Professor of Economics at Victoria University Melbourne, made a strong case for government support of open access. **Peter Buneman** of Informatics, Research Director of the Digital Curation Centre, gave a stimulating assessment of the new forms of digital curation required to support data-based research. **David Prosser**, European Director of the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition, followed with an overview of progress with open access.

The Symposium ended with an energetic debate on the changing needs of researchers, with presentations from four Edinburgh professors – **Hector MacQueen** (Law), **Andy Lawrence** (Astronomy), **Jon Usher** (Italian) and **Lesley Yellowlees** (Chemistry). A summary by **Martin Lewis**, University Librarian at Sheffield, gave delegates a number of challenges to take back to their own institutions.

The Symposium's presentations are at <http://www.lib.ed.ac.uk/news/sdlc.html>

*John MacColl (IS-L&C)*

## Main Library meeting the new demands

The *Times Higher Education Supplement* carried a report last month on the use of academic libraries, based on statistics obtained from universities and colleges across the UK. This cited a drop of 20% in numbers of visits to libraries over the last decade, and of 3% between 2005 and 2006.

Edinburgh bucks this trend, showing an increase over the last decade of approximately 7%, and a marginal increase of 0.6% between 2005 and 2006.

The article points out that "Libraries are still hugely important to students, but they are not the same places as ten years ago".

The Society of College, National and University Libraries – SCONUL – is calling for more funding for radical redesigns of libraries to reflect the shift in the way students use the facilities, in response to the increase in digital access, and new methods of teaching and learning.

Here in Edinburgh we are in the midst of a programme to reconfigure our library spaces, with work under way in the Main Library and planned at The King's Buildings and Easter Bush, and ongoing review and changes in other libraries.

The major focus at present is of course on the Main Library Building, currently covered in scaffolding while its external stonework is brought into good order. Details of this project, including a daily alert indicating where the worst disruption will be, are on the project's website at <http://www.is.ed.ac.uk/mlrp/>

*Sheila Cannell (IS-L&C)*

*Back to the Future: the Dean Gallery celebrates the centenary of the birth of Basil Spence – architect of the Main Library – until 10th February 2008.*

## MyEd – a greener way to have your say!

MyEd's online voting service goes from strength to strength, with another successful election accomplished.

This has grown into a mature and stable service, having provided for the recent EUSA by-election 2007, many previous EUSA elections, the high-profile televised Rector election in 2006, and the election of a convenor for the IT Professionals' Forum.

Online elections reduce the need for physical polling stations and paper ballot forms, and enable a count that takes just minutes. Voter turnout is usually better than in conventional elections, too. Election providers and candidates can rest easy knowing that votes are cast in a secure, reliable and accessible environment, where voters can conveniently post and update their votes.

If you are interested in holding an election via MyEd online voting then IS Applications staff will get you started with your flavour of voting, help with a communications plan, and support you through counting your votes to the declaration of the result.

Interested in using the service? Let us know at [is-apps-delivery@lists.ed.ac.uk](mailto:is-apps-delivery@lists.ed.ac.uk).

*Stephen Smith (IS-Apps)*



## What is an IT Forum For?

The IT Professionals' Forum has organised a meeting to help it to find out exactly why it exists. The meeting will be chaired by Paul Anderson of the School of Informatics, and will be built around a panel of experts including:

- Richard Kenway, whose review of computing services led to Edinburgh's IT Forum being set up;
- Tony Brett, of Oxford University, where an IT Forum has been operating for a decade;
- Trevor Sharp, of Exeter University;
- Richard Mee, of Cambridge University;
- James Jarvis, Edinburgh's ITPF Convenor.

The meeting takes place from 10am to 12 noon on Thursday **8th November**, as a webcast available at [http://webhelp.ucs.ed.ac.uk/services/media/asxfiles/webcasts/itpf\\_wmgvbcast.wvx](http://webhelp.ucs.ed.ac.uk/services/media/asxfiles/webcasts/itpf_wmgvbcast.wvx)

There are further details on the ITPF website at <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/ucsinfo/cttees/itforum/>  
*James Jarvis (ITPF Convenor)*

## What is ITIL for?

The Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL) appeared on the UK scene nearly 20 years ago as a best practice framework for managing IT services. It has since gained worldwide acceptance as a generic framework for all sorts of service management, capable of being adopted and adapted by any organisation irrespective of scale. Information Services is exploring the ITIL framework as part of its quality-enhancement programme.

A presentation to the IT Professionals' Forum will give an overview of ITIL and the service challenges it is designed to tackle. The meeting, at 3pm on **7th November** in Appleton Tower LT1, is open to any member of University staff who would like to have a high-level overview of ITIL: please register through MyEd.

There are further details on the ITPF website at <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/ucsinfo/cttees/itforum/>  
*Bryan MacGregor (IS-ITUS)*

## Netskills: a TONIC for HE for ten years

TONIC is a free web-based introduction to the Internet, which has helped 30,000 students and staff in Higher and Further Education get to grips with the online world.

Topics covered include how the Internet works, finding and evaluating information on the Web, using online services and technologies, and creating a website. Each section includes practical tasks, links to relevant sites and a quiz to check understanding. TONIC is at <http://www.netskills.ac.uk/content/products/online/tonic.html>

*Jamie Stogden (Netskills)*

## Website Development Project update

### Phase 1 progress

The Project has achieved some significant successes over the past few months – notably the graphic design (see last month's *BITS*), content coordination, and rollout coordinator induction. However, lengthy absences due to serious illness and technical development issues over the Summer have hindered progress.

We have therefore been unable to begin populating the website, and our launch date has been delayed. As we now draw closer to the release of the new content management software, the Project team can think about dates for the completion of the 'proof of concept' and subsequent launch of Phase 1 publishing.

The 'proof of concept' should be complete by mid-December, with completion of the initial Polopoly development and integration of the new graphic design. It will culminate in publication on the test server of a small sub-section of the new site, 'The city of Edinburgh'. We will launch this when all acceptance criteria are met.

From early January the Phase 1 partners should be able to begin populating the new site, with a launch date set for mid-March. The current timescale for Phase 1 delivery is shown at [http://www.projects.ed.ac.uk/WDP/restricted\\_docs/timescale/0710\\_Proof\\_of\\_concept\\_Phase\\_1\\_timescales.pdf](http://www.projects.ed.ac.uk/WDP/restricted_docs/timescale/0710_Proof_of_concept_Phase_1_timescales.pdf)

### Rollout Coordinators get to work

Rollout coordinators – one for each College and Support Group – began working with the Project in August.

Their role is to provide proactive and effective liaison between their College or Support Unit and the Website Development Project team, helping to shape the future of the website in accordance with the University's strategic vision, and ensuring that their College or Support Group is effectively and accurately represented.

This team has begun to look at website structure planning, demonstrating enormous commitment to the task. Currently, your Rollout Coordinator is working with key web representatives to update content audits, investigate information architectures and establish priorities. There is more about the Rollout Coordinators at <http://www.ed.ac.uk/websiteproject/aboutproject/rollout-coordinators.html>

Current activities and timescales are shown at <http://www.ed.ac.uk/websiteproject/latestnews/0710oct/071009rollout.html>

### More information

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

*Neil Allison (CAM)*

## Edinburgh graduate (and IS employee!) wins top software engineering award

Hui (Michael) Sun, a 2007 Informatics graduate and software developer in IS Applications, has won the prestigious ISScotland Young Software Engineer of the Year Award for 2007.

The awards are given for the best undergraduate software projects by any students studying computer science and software engineering in Scotland.

Michael's award was for a superb piece of software which restricts the use of a mobile phone to its owner and his/her friends and family, using image recognition and the phone's internal camera. This substantial piece of work has already attracted commercial interest.

Michael's achievement is an indication of the high calibre of student attracted to one of the world's leading centres for computing and informatics.

Michael joined IS Applications in June, following a student placement when he worked as part of the team delivering the latest upgrade to the MyEd University Portal. He is now working on an RSS News Reader for MyEd, and has already completed assignments on the RAE and eVisitor projects.

There is news of these awards on the ScotlandIS website, at <http://scotlandis.com/index.cfm/page/55/news/443/>

*Mark Ritchie (IS-Apps)*



## Recommended laptop computers

The University's procurement exercise to draw up a list of recommended 'laptops' is complete: three configurations are recommended, from two suppliers:

- Full size: **Dell Latitude D630**
- Highly portable: **Dell Latitude D430**
- Ultraportable: **Toshiba Portege R500**, supplied by Getech

The evaluation group decided that the Toshiba R500 and Dell D430 didn't fit quite the same requirements, so it was worth recommending both. The D430 would be the default lightweight choice, but for those who need ultimate portability the R500 should remain a supported option (although there are some concerns about its durability if it is not well cared for).

It is University policy that purchases should be made from the recommended list/suppliers unless there is some particularly good justification for purchasing something else. Purchases outwith the National Notebook Agreement (NNA) should not be made unless a very clear case can be made to show that no equipment covered by the NNA is capable of fulfilling the requirements. Macintosh computers are of course not covered by the NNA or the 'Select Notebook' agreement.

Full details and information about ordering are available on the Procurement website at [http://www.pps.ed.ac.uk/for/staff/computer\\_ordering/ordering.htm](http://www.pps.ed.ac.uk/for/staff/computer_ordering/ordering.htm)

*Justin MacNeil (GeoSciences)*

## Eddie races on

The ECDF compute cluster – Eddie – has passed its extended acceptance tests with flying colours.

Eddie is available to all researchers in the University and associated institutions, and can shorten the time taken for complex calculations by orders of magnitude. For example, one research group recently analysed a dataset in four hours that would have taken 75 days to complete on a single-processor machine. The compute cluster is complemented by a large scale storage service offering hundreds of terabytes of disk space.

The service has been fully operational since August, with 80 users across 15 Schools and institutions having used over 50 years of CPU time so far. Planning is now under way for phase two, which is expected to arrive in January – when a move to a quad-core CPU architecture will approximately triple Eddie's computing power.

Case studies from Eddie's users, including ground-breaking work done by the University's Psychology department, are being added to <http://www.is.ed.ac.uk/ecdf/case-studies.shtml>

If you would like the ECDF team to visit you to assess your project and see how you could make best use of the ECDF, or just to have a chat about the facility, please get in touch via Science Support at [science.support@ed.ac.uk](mailto:science.support@ed.ac.uk).

You can apply for an Eddie account using the registration form at <http://www.is.ed.ac.uk/ecdf/>

*Orlando Richards (IS-ITI)*

## IS Content and Hosting media team

The IS Media team in IS-Applications provides a high-quality multimedia production service. With its professional-standard studio, location video production unit and advanced digital editing facilities, the team can author to DVD, CD-ROM, Flash or for web-based delivery.

The team is experienced in producing media in support of research and teaching, to demonstrate best practice, highlight University events, promote courses and research projects, and enhance distance learning.

The team also offers consultancy for media work, and runs training courses for staff and researchers to develop crucial presentation skills in front of the camera.

Our facilities include:

- video production studio;
- blue screen recording – Chromakey;
- voice-over recording to dub on to video and podcasts;
- Mac-based editing suites with Final Cut Pro for legacy video formats through to High-Definition (HDTV);
- live-streaming;
- British Universities Film and Video Council (BUFVC) representation for access to programmes from BBC1, BBC2, BBC3, BBC4, ITV1, Channel 4 and Channel 5.

Examples of our work include the Moot Court (Law), Virtual field trip (Geology), Surgery (Medics), Visiting Lectures (Gifford, Montague Burton, Enlightenment), British Sign Language visual glossary (SSC), GP Appraisal (NHS Scotland), Erasmus Student viewpoints (International Office), Innovative use of Mobile Technology for Learning (JISC), Tobacco Cessation (BMA), and a promotional DVD (Informatics). The team's recent short video bulletin showcasing the 'James Tait Black Memorial Prizes' at this year's Book Festival is online at <http://www.ed.ac.uk/explore/people/jamestaitblack/>

If you could use multimedia to enhance your events, we would be happy to discuss your requirements. Please contact us via [media.services@ed.ac.uk](mailto:media.services@ed.ac.uk) or call Sonia Virdi, Team Manager of Content and Hosting, on 502122.

*Colin Morris (IS-Apps)*

## Contacting the Software Services Team

The Software Services team in Information Services has created two new email addresses for specific enquiries.

You can now email [is.software.codes@ed.ac.uk](mailto:is.software.codes@ed.ac.uk) to ask about codes for software such as SPSS, Mathematica, Maple and Minitab; and [is.software.wishes@ed.ac.uk](mailto:is.software.wishes@ed.ac.uk) to ask about deals for new software.

A full list of currently-available software can be found at <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/tsd/software/>

*Susan Douglas (IS-ITUS)*

## e-Science: from inspiration to reality

The vision of e-Science creating a pervasive, empowering infrastructure has always looked forward to a moment of metamorphosis, when e-Science breaks out of the chrysalis of computing research to emerge as a set of technologies underpinning vital activity in art, science and commerce.

This year's UK e-Science All Hands Meeting, held in Nottingham in September, may mark that moment. Malcolm Atkinson (Director of the e-Science Institute in Edinburgh), in his keynote speech, pointed to the great diversity of projects now using e-Science that were represented at the meeting as exemplifying the momentum that has built up in the use of distributed computing to provide novel solutions in research and industry.

Prof Atkinson's conclusion was that e-Science now has to develop and change to meet new challenges: it has moved out into uncharted territory, and its practitioners have to be adventurous navigators.

The full story, plus other news from the world of e-Science, is in the latest newsletter from the National e-Science Centre, at <http://www.nesc.ac.uk/news/newsletter/October07.pdf>

*Iain Coleman (e-Science Institute)*

## Distinguished Lecture: People, Computation, and Intelligence

Eric Horvitz, Principal Researcher and Research Area Manager at Microsoft Research, will tackle this subject at 4pm on **7th November**, in Appleton Tower LT2.

The lecture will cover several illustrative research efforts that highlight challenges and directions with the streaming of machine intelligence into the daily lives of people, and focus thematically on opportunities for harnessing machine learning and reasoning to understand and support people better.

*Diana Sisu (Informatics)*

## Virtual Worlds – the next step for the Internet?

Austin Tate of the University's Artificial Intelligence Applications Institute will give a presentation entitled 'Virtual Worlds – Next Step for the Internet' to the local branch of the British Computer Society at 6:30pm on 21st November. The venue is the Royal Scots Club, 29/30 Abercromby Place, Edinburgh EH3 6QE.

The meeting is open to anyone who is interested, and there are fuller details at <http://www.edinburgh.bcs.org/events/071121.htm>

*David Muxworthy (BCS)*

## IT training in November and December

Information Services runs free IT courses for University staff and postgraduates. Most are held at the IS Skills Centre at 19 Buccleuch Place; some run at The King's Buildings. Course synopses, later dates and online booking forms are available at <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/usd/cts/courses/>

Date	Course	Venue*
<b>Nov</b> Thu 1	Excel Introduction: Basic Spreadsheets and Charts (Part 2)	GS
Tue 6	Introduction to Unix	GS
Wed 7	Email with Thunderbird	GS
Thu 8	Preparing a Presentation with PowerPoint	GS
Thu 8	Creating Web Pages with HTML	GS
Thu 8	Formatting Web Pages with Cascading Style Sheets	GS
Tue 13	Intermediate Unix	JCMB
Tue 13	Producing a Thesis using Word	GS
Wed 14	Basic Drawing Techniques using CorelDraw8	JCMB
Wed 14	Introduction to Access Database Management (Part 1)	GS
Wed 14	Introduction to Wikis	GS
Thu 15	Word Intermediate: Document Layout and Customisation	GS
Tue 20	Mail Merge with Word	GS
Tue 20	Using SPSS Commands	GS
Wed 21	Introduction to Access Database Management (Part 2)	GS
Tue 27	Managing Bibliographies with Reference Manager	GS
Tue 27	Intermediate Access Database Management	GS
Wed 28	Basic Image Manipulation Techniques using PhotoShop	GS
Thu 29	Unix Shell Programming	JCMB
Thu 29	WebCT Vista Fundamentals	GS
<b>Dec</b> Mon 3	Email and Diary Management using Outlook 2003	GS
Mon 3	WebCT Vista Fundamentals	GS
Tue 4	Advanced Access Database Management	GS
Tue 4	Excel Advanced: Manipulating and Managing Data (Part 1)	GS
Tue 4	Editing Web Pages with Contribute	GS
Wed 5	Managing Bibliographies with EndNote	GS
Wed 5	Creating Web Pages with HTML	GS
Wed 5	Formatting Web Pages with Cascading Style Sheets	GS
Wed 5	Learning to use Plagiarism Prevention System <i>TurnItIn</i>	GS
Thu 6	Excel Introduction: Basic Spreadsheets and Charts	GS
Fri 7	WebCT Vista Fundamentals	GS
Tue 11	Excel Advanced: Manipulating and Managing Data (Part 2)	GS
Tue 11	Creating and Editing Web Pages with Dreamweaver 8	GS
Tue 11	Templates and Websites with Dreamweaver 8	GS

\* Venues: GS – George Square area, JCMB – The King's Buildings

### Featured Course – WebCT Vista Fundamentals

This half-day workshop is suitable for course organisers, teaching staff or course administrators who wish to provide learning and teaching material and activities through WebCT, the University's virtual learning environment. It introduces staff to the basic structure of the virtual learning environment and shows how it can be used to create and manage online components of a course. The next WebCT course runs on 29th November.

### Taster Sessions

Further dates of our popular one-hour 'taster' sessions for staff and postgraduates are now available for booking on MyEd. Sessions take place from 1pm to 2pm in the Wolfson Teaching Room in the Main Library, George Square as follows:

- 8 Nov: Excellent formatting: making your Excel spreadsheets look good
- 14 Nov: Introducing wikis: Confluence
- 30 Nov: Look good with Word's styles
- 7 Dec: Make a table of contents in Word
- 12 Dec: How to animate your slides in PowerPoint

For more information about the taster sessions, and the content covered by each, see <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/usd/cts/courses/coursesanddates.html>

*Jenni Reeves, Shona Matchett (IS-LUSD)*

### Interactive learning and teaching in CSE

The College Office in Science and Engineering has organised a series of Learning and Teaching events for semester one that are open to all teaching staff in the College. These hands-on sessions are designed to give staff the opportunity to develop skills in WebCT and to experience clickers – the portable handsets that add interactivity to lectures. The events schedule is:

- 24 Oct: 2–5pm. Teaching and Learning with WebCT Vista: 1
- 26 Oct: 2–5pm. Teaching and Learning with WebCT Vista: 2
- 21 Nov: 2–5pm. Teaching and Learning with WebCT Vista 1
- 23 Nov: 2–5pm. Teaching and Learning with WebCT Vista 2
- 5 Dec: 2–5pm. Teaching and Learning with WebCT Vista: 1
- 7 Dec: 2–5pm. Teaching and Learning with WebCT Vista: 2
- 4 Dec: 2–3.30pm. Clickers in CSE
- 11 Dec: 2–3.30pm. Clickers in CSE

For full details see [http://www.scieng.ed.ac.uk/LTStrategy/news\\_events/](http://www.scieng.ed.ac.uk/LTStrategy/news_events/)

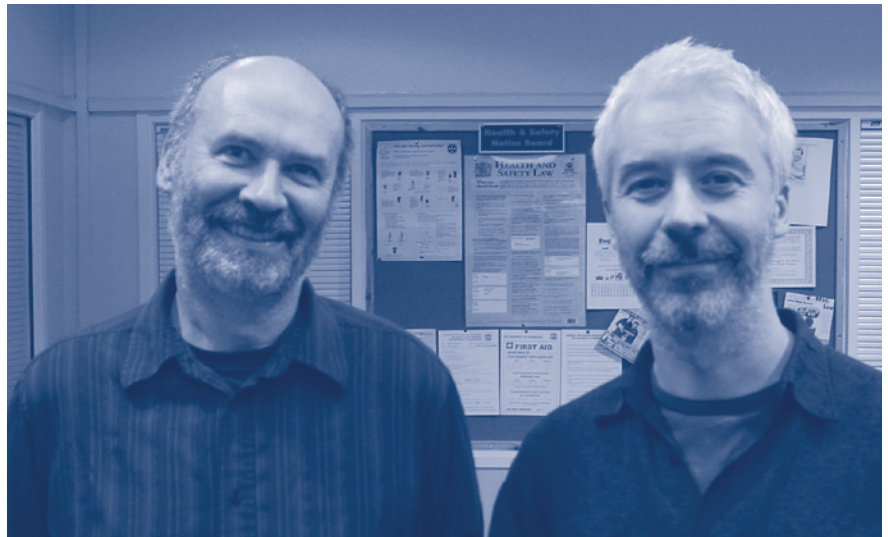
*Sarah McConnell (CSE)*

## IS facilities manager retires

Keith Farvis first worked for the Edinburgh Regional Computing Centre as a Summer Student in 1970; last month he retired as manager of the immensely successful Facilities Management Team in Computing Services – now Information Services.

Keith's first 'real' job with ERCC was as head (but sole) systems programmer on the DEC10, a well-loved national research facility. By 1979 Keith was effectively in charge of the DEC10 service, but bigger challenges were calling, and in 1982 he became the ERCC's first Unix support officer. His support and development role gradually expanded, and in 1988 he became Unix section manager in charge of a Unix system good enough to take over from the old, home-grown EMAS service.

Since then Keith has managed the team and overseen a huge expansion of the use of unix systems and unix-based services in the University, now covering the Library, EDINA and corporate services as well as the standard multi-user service **holyrood** and various research facilities. Throughout this time Keith has shown total commitment both to the quality of the Unix service



Keith Farvis (left), with Tony Weir who takes over from him

and to his staff.

Keith made an entirely separate but equally vital, and equally appreciated, contribution to the smooth running of Computing Services. When a consultant told EUCS managers they needed to communicate better with staff, Keith was given this difficult job, which he did fantastically well right up until the restructuring of Information Services last year.

We thank Keith for all he has done for the University, and wish him the best for the future.

*Brian Gilmore (IS-ITI)*

## GMRC manager retires

John Wexler joined the Edinburgh Regional Computing Centre on 1st February 1967, and was thus the longest-serving member of Information Services when he retired last month. And he only intended to stay for a year or two!

After graduating from Oxford and working for the National Physical Laboratory for a spell, John came to Edinburgh



John with wife Susan (who works for the Information Services Medicine and Veterinary Medicine Support Team)

to help run the Algol service, moving in due course to the EMAS team to help with the development of that multi-user system on a succession of hardware architectures. He then spent several years seconded to Computer Science and the nascent Edinburgh Parallel Computing Centre, latterly writing his book *Concurrent Programming in Occam 2*.

John first showed his interest in graphics back in 1971, when he led a small team providing multi-user interactive graphics. He returned to this theme in 1994 when he was appointed to the Computing Services graphics team as a multimedia support person. Roy Middleton set up the Graphics and Multimedia Resource Centre (GMRC) shortly afterwards, and in due course John took over as GMRC manager, where he has been ever since, dispensing excellent and friendly advice to a wide range of appreciative users.

We wish John health and happiness in his well-earned retirement.

*Chris Adie (IS-ITI)*

## The 2008 University Collections Calendar

The University Library has published its Collections Calendar, and for 2008 the theme is Travel.

The University has always been global in its outlook, and our staff and students have travelled the world studying and documenting its natural wonders. From rope bridges in the Himalayas to rafts in Ecuador, the 2008 Calendar contains a small sample of images from an extensive collection which reflects both the generosity of benefactors and academic endeavour throughout the centuries.

The images are drawn mainly from the magnificent collection of hand-coloured plate books in Special Collections, with all the high-quality photography performed by our own Digital Imaging Unit. Proceeds from the sale will support conservation and care of our wonderful collections.

The calendar costs £8, and is available from:

- Main Library (IS Helpdesk and Special Collections);
- other site libraries around the University;
- University Giftshop, Nicolson Street;
- Blackwell Bookshop, South Bridge;

and by mail order from <http://www.giftshop.ed.ac.uk/>

*Andy Grout (IS-L&C)*



## Cultural nourishment in November



In this month's glimpse of the University's cultural treasures, Peter Tuffy – Graphics Manager in the School of Physics

– will look at a hundred years of scientific photography. 'From Silver to Silicon' is at 1:10pm on Thursday 29th November, in the Daniel Rutherford Lecture Theatre at The King's Buildings. The talk is open to everyone and will last about half an hour; you are welcome to bring your lunch. There is news of this nourishing series at <http://tweed.lib.ed.ac.uk/audit/Web/lunchtimelectures.html>

*Emily Peppers (IS-L&C)*

## Then surely iPods couldn't possibly work?

European scientists Albert Fert and Peter Grunberg were last month awarded a Nobel prize for their work on Giant Magnetoresistance (GMR), which led to the development of extraordinarily small, high-capacity disk drives.

Surrey Professor Ben Murdin comments "A computer hard-disk reader that uses a GMR sensor is equivalent to a jet flying at a speed of 30,000 kmph, at a height of just one metre above the ground, and yet being able to see and catalogue every single blade of grass it passes over." (30,000kmph is over 20 times the speed of sound.)

This item is at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/7035247.stm>

*Nick Stroud (IS-VPoffice)*

IS-ITUS: IT User Services: Acting Director Bryan MacGregor  
 IS-LUSD: Library User Services: Acting Director Richard Battersby  
 IS-L&C: Library and Collections: Director Sheila Cannell  
 IS-Apps: Applications: Director Simon Marsden  
 IS-ITI: IT Infrastructure: Director Brian Gilmore  
 IS-EDINA: EDINA and the Data Library: Director Peter Burnhill  
 IS-DCC: the Digital Curation Centre: Director Chris Rusbridge

## e-Team United

The eLearning and IS Skills Development Team is now united at 19 Buccleuch Place, EH8 9LN. Contact phone numbers are unchanged.

*Wilma Alexander (IS-LUSD)*

### EDINBURGH BITS

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Email: [C.Zaccardelli@ed.ac.uk](mailto:C.Zaccardelli@ed.ac.uk)  
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#### 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](mailto:BITS@ed.ac.uk).

Contributions to *BITS* are welcomed.

Copy deadline for December *BITS*:

**Friday 16th November**