i s **information**SERVICES

edinburgh bits

Principal takes up key role at JISC

Professor Sir Timothy O'Shea is to lead the body that encourages innovative use of information technologies in universities. He will succeed Sir Ron Cooke as chair of the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) on 1st January.

JISC supports a range of technologies that support learning, teaching and research in the UK. It is best known for providing JANET – the high-speed computer network for the academic community – as well as offering a portfolio of high-quality resources, such as the EDINA national academic centre based here at the University of Edinburgh.

John Selby, Director of Education and Participation at HEFCE, welcomed Professor O'Shea's appointment and the significant contribution his wide experience in educational technology will bring to the JISC Board in coming years.

Simon Jennings (Policy & Planning)

Professor O'Shea. "It's wonderful to be involved at the heart of a national treasure like JISC, and working to bring its benefits to as wide a group as possible will be an ongoing concern of mine. The University has enjoyed a long and productive involvement with JISC. This has been a highly beneficial relationship, with our local IT and eLearning services benefiting from JISC work and vice-versa."

First Minister opens Informatics Forum

Alex Salmond is to open the University's superb new centre for computer science on 3rd September.

This spectacular building is set to become a landmark home for innovation and interaction, located at the heart of the University's main campus alongside new teaching, conference and technology transfer facilities in Appleton Tower.

As befits one of the world's leading centres for IT research and teaching, you can take a video tour of the Informatics Forum online, with Head of Informatics Michael Fourman, at **http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eKU1d6XxUFo**

There is also an opportunity for real-life tours, as the Informatics Forum is one of the participants in this year's Doors Open Day, between 10am and 4pm on Saturday 27th September; there are further details at **http://www.cockburnassociation.org.uk/doorsopenday/**

Nick Stroud (Information Services)

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"The Repository is dead, Long live the repository!"

Dorothea Salo's (University of Wisconsin) keynote speech kick-started the inaugural Repository Fringe in Edinburgh by lambasting evangelists, policy makers and developers in a cutting diatribe that exposed the very foundations of the open-access movement. Speaking from bitter experience, she highlighted issues with fundamental concepts; institutional procedures; deposit processes; and even the software developers.

The idea for this meeting arose in April at 'Open Repositories 2008' in Southampton, when Les Carr (one of the leading lights of the Repositories movement) and I agreed that something should be done to coordinate the lots of disparate "little stuff" being done by isolated "little groups". These people are working on the fringes of the repository world, Edinburgh is synonymous with fringe, and the Repository Fringe event was born.

The idea was turned into reality by Theo Andrew, Philip Hunter, Claire Knowles, Stuart Macdonald, Robin Rice, Robin Taylor and Clare Whittaker. It took place in the magnificence of the PlayFair Library, and was styled along Edinburgh Fringe lines with 'Soapbox' sessions, 'Group Improv' sessions (hour-long meetings aimed at audience participation), and 'An Audience with…' talks presenting a specific idea or piece of research.

A lot of very interesting information came out of the conference. Some highlights were:

- Andrew Girdwood echoing the 'Build and they shall come' failure of the dot-com era from Dorothea's 'Build and they shall come' failure of the Open Access movement.
- Steven Hitchcock's analogy to banks and libraries.
- Neamh Brennan's hilarious soliloquy to a laptop in a shroud, echoing the death of the repository, followed by a superb example of how a well thought out, well designed, and well executed Current Research Information System can be a positive enhancement to researchers, and incidentally provide an Institutional Repository.

The closing Plenary by David De Roure (Southampton) looked at the GRID system, and highlighted how its successes and failures can be mapped to the Open Access/Repositories systems – and how the new world of Web 2.0 can, and should, influence our decisions.

The event became more significant than might be expected from its rapid creation, which perhaps reflects the importance of Edinburgh and EDINA in this field. Everyone I spoke to seemed energised, and confident that – despite the recognised failings in our systems – we are looking forward to a better and brighter world: different, but through evolution, not revolution.

We are delighted that we put on an event in less than two months, attracted over 80 participants, and kept it so interesting that the Director of EDINA attended throughout both days *even though he was less than 20 minutes from his office!*

Video streams of several of the presentations are on the Repository Fringe website at
http://www.repositoryfringe.org/
There are pictures at
http://www.flickr.com/photos/tags/repofringe08

Ian Stuart (Information Services)

Vue – the Virtual University of Edinburgh

The Vue group is a virtual educational and research institute bringing together all those interested in the use of virtual worlds for teaching, research and outreach related to the University of Edinburgh.

A number of virtual-world platforms are in use, including Second Life and the open source Opensim. The Vue Planning Group spans many of the University's Colleges, Schools and central units, and provides and maintains a number of shared facilities for Vue uses. Experimental space is available in the Vue regions in Second Life for all members of the University – staff, students and, through their hosts, visitors.

If you are not already involved, and would like to try out virtual world technologies, please contact Austin Tate (email **A.Tate@ed.ac.uk**) to join the low-volume Vue mailing list. The Vue website and wiki support the community and act as portals to the *Second Life*, *Opensim* and *Lively by Google* areas which the group currently uses. These provide introductory material, a video tour of the facilities and other news.

Vue is at **http://vue.ed.ac.uk/**

Austin Tate (Vue)

MyEd does RSS!

A News Reader has been added to MyEd, on your 'myStuff' tab. You can use this to subscribe quickly and easily to internal and external news and other RSS 'feeds', including podcasts; save news clippings for reference later on; and suggest news feeds or podcasts to share with the wider community.

University news providers can also take advantage, knowing that users can easily subscribe to their news using a search facility or by browsing subject categories.

The News Reader is also available to students. For key features and guidance see the information for the 'News Reader' channel on MyEd's 'Help' tab.

Stephen Smith (Information Services)

MyEd: new look-and-feel on the way

The new University Website has adopted a new visual style for web content. This in turn requires an updated look-and-feel for the MyEd portal and the EASE registration screens. Related work is being carried out in EUCLID.

Information Services has spent the Summer testing redesigns with users to achieve an integrated finish. The first result of this is the new EASE. The next step will be the release during this Semester of a new look-and-feel for the MyEd portal to fit in with the University's new website design.

We hope this will improve the experience of the various University systems for all users, but it should be especially helpful for new applicants and potential students.

Liza Zamboglou (Information Services)

Accessible documents

The following are some important points to consider when creating word-processed documents, in order to ensure they are as accessible as possible to disabled people. In addition you should offer to provide the information in alternative formats (large print, Braille, *etc*) on request. Always provide an address, phone number and email address of a person (wherever possible) to contact regarding obtaining the information in alternative formats.

Font size

It is best practice to use a font size of 14pt, and certainly no smaller than 12pt, to assist readers with visual impairments. There isn't a single font size that will suit everyone, but it should be easy to provide the document in an alternative font size if requested.

Font type

It is best to avoid serif fonts such as Times New Roman *etc*. The recommended fonts are Arial, Verdana, Universe or Helvetica. The more ornate the font, the harder it is to read. 'Word Art' is not compatible with some screen readers.

Capitals/bold/italics

Avoid the use of *italics* wherever possible. Continuous text should not be in CAPITALS, although a couple of words in capitals is acceptable. Wherever possible use **bold** to emphasise items or in headings, as this is the most accessible type of formatting.

Contrast and text colour

It is always best to use dark ink against a pale background. Backgrounds should always be plain to maximise contrast. Black ink on white paper is the brightest contrast; black print on yellow paper is also good. Some individuals with dyslexia and other specific learning difficulties may find it helpful to have documents printed on different coloured paper.

Alignment

Use left alignment, but not justified text as this makes the spaces between words uneven which can make it difficult for some individuals to read. By aligning to the left you ensure that the spaces between words are equal.

Line spacing

A line spacing of 1.5 or 2 can make a document more accessible. At least one blank line should always be left between paragraphs. If you are creating a form, the larger you make the response areas the better as this will make the document more accessible to individuals with physical dexterity impairments.

Paper type

Avoid glossy paper or laminated documents as these produce glare which can make them inaccessible. Uncoated paper is best. In addition make sure the paper is thick enough that print from one side of the paper does not show through to the other side. The Royal National Institute for the Blind recommends paper over 90gsm. If you are folding a document, for example to put it in an envelope, make sure the fold lines do not cross over text as this can make it unreadable to scanners or screen magnifiers.

General

To ease accessibility and usability, ensure that all pages are numbered in a consistent manner. Longer documents can be easier to navigate if they have contents and summaries. Avoid the use of abbreviations which have not been given in full at some point in the document. Avoid the use of particularly long sentences, and use words and phrases that best suit your audience.

References and useful links

Jisc TechDis:
http://www.techdis.ac.uk/resources/sites/accessibilityessentials2/
RNIB: http://www.rnib.org.uk/xpedio/groups/public/documents/PublicWebsite/public_printchecklist1.pdf
Scottish Disability Equality Forum:
http://www.sdef.org.uk/Information/Guidelines%20for%20producing%20material%20in%20Accessible%20formats.pdf

If you have any questions about this advice, or require the information in an alternative format, please contact me (tel 506645, email **vgalt@ed.ac.uk**).

Viki Galt (Information Services)

IS skills development: dates for Autumn/Winter

Our new schedule of IT training courses starting in September is now available for booking online.

We offer courses in around 50 different subjects lasting from 90 minutes to a full day, and cater for people with knowledge levels from beginner to expert. Most staff and postgraduates can attend for free.

Courses are suitable for staff needing to improve their knowledge of applications used in the workplace, postgraduates wanting to use IT more effectively in their studies, and anyone wishing to develop their IT skills for personal use.

We continue to develop and update our courses, making them increasingly modularised and task-based. Our SPSS courses are the most recent to undergo this change, and will run as six separate, linked half-day modules from October.

Our catalogue reflects the current interest in wikis in the University, and in addition to our existing *Introduction to wikis* course we now offer *Making the most of your wiki* and *Wikis: What can I do as an administrator?*

Another introduction is *Working with Adobe PDFs and Acrobat Professional*, an application that enables users to view, create, manipulate and manage files in Adobe's 'Portable Document Format' (PDF). There will be two courses on offer from November, covering a wide range of the software's features at introductory and intermediate levels.

Course details, course bookings and information on our one-hour 'taster' sessions and online resources are available at **http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/usd/cts/courses/**

Jenni Reeves (Information Services)

Date	Course	Venue*
Sept 1	Introduction to Access Database Management	BP
2	Excel Introduction: Creating Basic Spreadsheets and Charts (1)	BP
4	WebCT Vista Fundamentals	BP
9	Excel Introduction: Creating Basic Spreadsheets and Charts (2)	BP
10	PowerPoint: Basic Skills for Creating a Presentation	BP
10	Creating and Editing Web Pages using FrontPage 2003	BP
10	Getting Started with InSite for IS Staff	BP
16	WebCT Vista Fundamentals	BP
22	Managing Bibliographies with EndNote	BP
23	Creating Web Pages with HTML	BP
23	Formatting Web Pages with Cascading Style Sheets	BP
23	Writing for the Web	DHT
24	Introduction to Wikis	BP
25	Word Introduction: Creating and Formatting Documents	BP
25	Excel Advanced: Manipulating and Managing Data (Part 1)	BP
25	PowerPoint Intermediate: Adding Images	BP
25	PowerPoint Intermediate: Adding Animation Schemes	BP
30	Basic Image Manipulation Techniques using PhotoShop	BP
30	Introduction to Access Database Management (Part 1)	BP
Oct 1	Introduction to Unix	JCMB
1	Making the Most of Your Wiki	BP
2	Excel Advanced: Manipulating and Managing Data (Part 2)	BP
2	Creating and Editing Web Pages with Dreamweaver 8	BP
2	Creating Templates and Managing Websites with Dreamweaver 8	BP
6	Creating and Editing Web Pages using FrontPage 2003	BP
7	Introduction to Access Database Management (Part 2)	BP
7	SPSS 1: Getting Started with SPSS	BP
9	Excel Introduction: Creating Basic Spreadsheets and Charts	BP
9	Editing Web Pages with Contribute	BP
13	PowerPoint: Basic Skills for Creating a Presentation	BP
13	Wikis: What can I do as an Administrator?	BP
14	Producing a Thesis using Word	BP
14	SPSS 2: Using SPSS Output	BP
15	Intermediate Unix	JCMB
15	Email and Diary Management using Outlook 2003	BP
15	Getting Started with InSite for IS Staff	BP
15	Using bookmarks and cross-references in Word (T)	DHT
17	Smart charts: creating stylish charts in Excel (T)	DHT
20	Word Masterclass – Reviewing and Tracking Changes	DHT
22	Introduction to Programming in Fortran 95	JCMB
22	Using EDINA Digimap	BP
22	Introduction to Visualising Data in ArcGIS 9	BP
22	PowerPoint Intermediate: Adding Tables, Graphs and Diagrams	BP
22	PowerPoint Intermediate: Adding Movie and Audio Clips	BP
23	Programming in Perl	BP
23	Excel Advanced: Manipulating and Managing Data	BP
24	Getting to grips with filters and pivot tables in Excel (T)	DHT
24	Writing for the Web	BP
27	Electronic marking of essays (T)	DHT
28	Introduction to Wikis	BP
28	PowerPoint Intermediate: Adding Images	BP
28	PowerPoint Intermediate: Adding Animation Schemes	BP
29	Unix Shell Programming	JCMB
29	Basic Image Manipulation Techniques using PhotoShop	BP
29	Managing Bibliographies with EndNote	BP
29	SPSS 3: Changing Data in SPSS	BP
30	Introduction to Access Database Management (Part 1)	BP
30	Creating Web Pages with HTML	BP

(T): lunchtime 'taster' session (bring your sandwiches!)

* Venues: BP – 19 Buccleuch Place
JCMB – room 2009a, King's Buildings
DHT – Ground Floor Conference Room, David Hume Tower

EUCLID *elements*

EUCLID launched its own monthly newsletter *elements* in June. This is circulated to all University staff, to bring news and information on EUCLID to a wider audience.

Firstly, what is EUCLID? It is both a change programme supported by improved business processes, and an IT system. EUCLID has been developed to support the University's overall objective to develop a streamlined, modern approach to interacting with enquirers, applicants and students which reflects our international standing and the calibre of our teaching and research.

EUCLID was established in 2004 as a change programme which would include the implementation of a new student record system, as well as fundamentally reviewing the way processes were carried out to identify shared solutions to meet this objective.

Some of the benefits of EUCLID will be:
- To make the University more competitive.
- To meet the expectations of our 'internet-user' generation of students.
- To have accurate and accessible management information.
- To release staff from unnecessary tasks.
- To increase the speed of our operations.
- To enhance our flexibility.
- To move towards an integrated IT environment.

EUCLID has been working closely with many parts of the University to deliver projects such as the new Postgraduate Admissions system which will go live on 6th October this year. With such a diversity of roles and staff across the University, however, we wanted to make sure that information about what's happening in EUCLID is as widely available as possible – hence the birth of *elements*.

The *elements* Editorial Board meets monthly to look at the uptake from the previous month and to identify articles for future issues. One interesting trend that has emerged from the statistical analysis of who looks at what is the popularity of items focused on explaining what the project is and how it works.

You can learn more about EUCLID by viewing the current issue of *elements* and its archives at http://www.euclid.ed.ac.uk/elements/

You may be surprised at the variety of EUCLID projects, and the impact they will have on the way the University will work in the future. It may well affect you!

The editorial board welcomes ideas for articles; if you have a question or an idea, please contact the Editor Bridget Hanna (tel 514075, email **elements@ed.ac.uk**).

Bridget Hanna (EUCLID)

Michael Begg continues as eLPP Convenor

Michael Begg was elected as the first Convenor of the eLearning Professionals and Practitioners Committee in July 2007, for a period of one year. That year has passed already – and been marked by a number of successful eLPP events, and input into important University reviews.

The eLPP Committee is continuing to settle into this foundation work for the Forum, and has decided that a change in Convenorship at this point would be unhelpful, so it has invited Michael to continue for another year. Elections for a new Convenor will be held in June 2009.

Wilma Alexander (for eLPP Committee)

Podcasts, Echoes and Tags

The eLearning Forum event in August achieved a very full house, some great presentations, and a raft of discussion issues – all that could be wished. The presenters' slides have been uploaded to the eLPP website; look for 'podcasts, echoes and tags' under 'Events' at http://elearningforum.ed.ac.uk/

There is a new section 'Do you need help?' in the navigation menu. We hope people will use this to add general queries, calls for help, or requests for useful pointers or contact names. The eLPP membership has a broad range of knowledge, and we hope that having this single place to ask questions and state needs will uncover useful local help and support, make the answers available to a lot of people, and collate valuable information about where support is most needed.

Michael Begg (eLPP Convenor)

University joins eLearning Alliance

The eLearning Alliance was launched in 2002 to represent Scotland's eLearning community, making business connections for its members, coordinating access to consultancy and research, organising local and national events, and fostering an active network of members.

The Alliance hosts local seminars and workshops which University staff can now attend free of charge (some for a small fee). Full details, with a list of members, are on the website at http://www.elearningalliance.org/

This year's annual conference is in Edinburgh on 30th October, and will ask – among other things – if we are really at a tipping point in history, or a cliff edge… Full details are at http://www.elearningalliance.org/content.asp?ArticleCode=3510

If you have any queries about the eLearning Alliance please contact Fiona Littleton (email **fiona.littleton@education.ed.ac.uk**).

Fiona Littleton (Education)

Stephen Vickers wins!

Stephen Vickers of IS-Applications has won a Blackboard Innovators Award, one of the first people in the world to do so, in recognition of his energetic and imaginative use of PowerLinks to enhance WebCT, and his significant contributions to global user discussion forums. His work has greatly enhanced the quality of the University's Virtual Learning Environment, and his wiki integrations are popular in institutions around the world.

Stephen collected his award in Las Vegas in July.

Simon Marsden (Information Services)

Next Generation VLE project

The project is due to report at the end of September with a summary of the University's future needs for VLE services, and a mechanism for evaluating alternatives.

To enable and encourage feedback in the limited time available, the report will be drafted on the project wiki, and your comments would be most welcome. It is anticipated that a decision about the procurement phase will be made in October. Please find the project wiki at **https://www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/display/VLEprojectwiki/**

Stephen Vickers (Information Services)

BCS visit to Bletchley Park

The British Computer Society's Edinburgh Branch is visiting Bletchley Park Code Centre – birthplace of mechanised calculation – on 4th October. Full details are at **http://www.edinburgh.bcs.org/events/081004.htm**

Even if you don't want to visit this icon of British achievement, you might like to sign the petition to save it, at **http://petitions.number10.gov.uk/BletchleyPark/**

David Muxworthy (BCS)

The new University Website

Since the launch of the beginnings of the new University Website in April, the Project has been busy rounding off Phase 1 and laying the groundwork to deliver the first School- and Support Group-based areas of the website.

Phase 1 saw the rollout of the content management system and web publishing framework. We continue to work with our first web publishers to establish effective processes and relationships to ensure that the site continues to grow and be refined to meet user needs.

Planning and research continue as we work on our priority list for next steps. Work is at an advanced stage with Accommodation Services, to support the development of content and to review website structure. We have trained an editorial team to support the rollout; these editors, working with content owners under our guidance, are refining content according to best practice guidelines set out in the *Writing for the Web* course.

Neil Allison (Information Services)

Firefox 3 has arrived

Mozilla has released the next version of its browser, Firefox 3, which now needs to be tested by everyone who operates Web-based services in the University, to permit this to become a supported browser.

If you look after a University website, please check it with Firefox 3 and report any issues to **desktop.team@ed.ac.uk**. There is a list of current issues at **https://www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/display/DSwiki/Firefox+3+Issues**

You can download the latest version of Firefox from **http://www.mozilla.com/en-US/firefox/all.html**

If you have a Supported Desktop, please contact your IT Support Team to have the browser installed.

At present, Firefox 3 should only be used for testing; a decision on its status will be made in early October.

Mark Sammons (Information Services)

INSPEC Archive back to 1898

Access to the INSPEC Archive is now available, giving access to information from 1898 to the present.

INSPEC, from the Institution of Electrical Engineers, is a major database for literature on computer science, physics, engineering and related areas. It contains abstracts for articles in over 6,000 journals and conference proceedings as well as books, reports and dissertations. It is updated weekly, and can send email alerts.

INSPEC can be accessed via **http://tinyurl.com/6893xk**

For more information contact your Liaison Librarian (**http://www.lib.ed.ac.uk/resbysub/scicontacts.shtml**).

Angela Nicholson (Information Services)

C&IT news from Information Services

Trial for lecture capture

Information Services is working with a number of Schools to trial lecture capture technologies.

This will help us to understand how useful such a service might be in helping to supplement teaching, and to evaluate whether it improves students' learning experience at the University of Edinburgh.

The pilot service will run throughout Semester 1 in Appleton Tower lecture theatres 1–5 and Lecture Theatre A at JCMB, King's Buildings.

The basic process will be that the event is scheduled centrally, and the media outputs (including podcast, vodcast and full screen/video replay) are selected in advance.

Shortly after the event, lecturers will be emailed the packaged capture with a URL for editing and/or embedding in websites or VLEs, or otherwise distributed.

There are some examples of what the pilot product looks like at http://www.echo360.com/showcase/

Further information about this project and pilot product is available at http://www.projects.ed.ac.uk/areas/servicemgt/media/APS019/Other_documents/

Mark Wetton (Information Services)

Printing Services Online

You can now access Printing Services Online – PSO – via MyEd.

This means that you can place your print orders online. Simply find the 'Printing' section on MyEd's 'Services' tab, click on the button 'Log into eIT / PSO', create an eIT, choose 'Printing Services' as the supplier, then select 'PSO' as the subunit.

Four services are categorised and available with PSO:
- Create your own printed UoE stationery (with online proofing).
- Upload File Ready work, for instant PDF creation and online proofing.
- 'Design Required': upload native file formats and pre-created PDFs.
- 'Archive': reprint from Archived work.

This gives you access to our wide range of services:
- Digital and Litho printing
- Digital copying
- Personalisation
- Fulfilment
- Finishing and Binding
- Large-format poster and exhibition printing

Stuart McLean
(Printing & Procurement)

Main Library opening hours

The Main Library will operate its extended opening hours from Freshers' Week, beginning on Monday 15th September, through to the end of semester 1 on Friday 19th December:
- Monday–Thursday 8.30am–12 midnight
  (IS Helpdesk service hours 9am–7.50pm)
- Friday 8.30am–12 midnight
  (IS Helpdesk service hours 9am–6.50pm)
- Saturday 8.30am–12 midnight
  (IS Helpdesk service hours 12 noon–4.50pm)
- Sunday 12 noon–12 midnight
  (IS Helpdesk service hours 12 noon–6.50pm)

For further information about Main Library and Site Library opening hours please see http://www.lib.ed.ac.uk/about/opening/

Barry Croucher (Information Services)
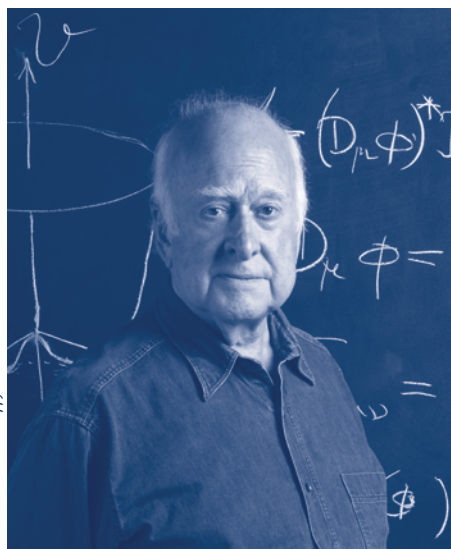
Fingers crossed for Professor Higgs!!

Photo: Peter Tuffy

The Large Hadron Collider at CERN will be switched on on **10th September,** and will start searching for the 'Higgs particle' – a theoretical component of the Standard Model in Physics which gives mass to everything in the Universe. The LHC at CERN is the world's largest and most powerful particle accelerator, a 27 km ring of superconducting magnets each up to 15 metres long and kept at -271ºC. Its task is akin to firing needles from 10 km apart so that they hit each other.

The story will unfold at
http://www.cern.ch/
Nick Stroud (Information Services)