

The pleasure of your company is requested...

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University Services Day

Thursday 20th November 10am – 4pm

Playfair Library, Old College

This is an 'Open Day' for internal services to promote their service(s) and University staff – to help make staff aware of the wide range of services available through the University.

ITfutures Conference 2008: Research, wRiting and Reputation

Friday 21st November 2008 in the Informatics Forum
<http://www.itfutures.ed.ac.uk/Conference2008.shtml>

Research 'publications' come in many different forms – from computer software and databases to dance and music. And traditional journals are not the only way to publish – e-journals, software repositories and blogs are all valuable resources.

- How do you find relevant research? and how do you know if it is any good?
- How do you publish your own work? and how do you make it count?

LEaD: Learner Experiences across the Disciplines

Wednesday 26th November 2 – 4pm

Room G.11 William Robertson Building, George Square
 (Tea and Coffee provided)

<http://www2.epcc.ed.ac.uk/~lead/>

LEaD is exploring the expectations and use of learning technologies by first-year undergraduates, and helping students to make the best use of technology to support their learning. The project is nearing completion, and this event will be an opportunity to hear about the work and the project findings.

(There are full details of the meeting on page 2 of this month's *BITS*.)

Please book via MyEd.

Michael Begg, eLPP convener

Data Library celebrates 25th birthday

Pollock Halls, 5th December, 10.00–15.00
 5th December, 15.30–17.30

IT Professionals Forum
LCFG: Large Scale Unix Configuration System:
today and beyond
 Friday 28th November 10am – 4:30pm
 Room G.07, Informatics Forum, Crichton Street
<https://wiki.lcfg.org/bin/view/LCFG/MeetingNov2008>

(There are full details of the meeting on page 8 of this month's *BITS*.)

LCFG is a system for automatically installing and managing the configuration numbers of Unix systems. It is particularly suitable for sites with changing configurations. This event showcases expertise in the configuration parts of the University and provides an opportunity for staff to share their community spirit.



New image search tutorial

Internet for Image Searching is a new, free online tutorial to help staff and students in universities and colleges to find digital images for their learning and teaching. The tutorial is at <http://www.vts.intute.ac.uk/tutorial/image searching/>

The emphasis is on getting quick, hassle-free access to a vast range of copyright-cleared, free online photographs and other visual resources.

The tutorial was created by TASI and Intute, as part of the Virtual Training Suite.

Denny Colledge (Information Services)

Help with copyright

The Eduserv Foundation – which supports the effective application of information and communication technology in education – has launched *The Copyright Toolkit*. This new online resource helps lecturers, librarians and media technicians negotiate the use of third-party copyright resources in websites and Virtual Learning Environments.

The Copyright Toolkit is at <http://copyrighttoolkit.com/>

Nora Moge (Information Services)

The Tree of Academe

I am a Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford, where I recently finished my Ph.D. on the philosophy of perception. I have just launched a website to display academics around the world in a 'tree' format, by university and department, and to help researchers keep track of the latest developments in their field – people, papers and talks. I hope the site will eventually list every academic in the world.

The site has already attracted Richard Dawkins, Stephen Hawking and Noam Chomsky. Please add yourself to the tree! It is at <http://www.academia.edu/>

Richard Price (All Souls, Oxford)



Edinburgh Festival of Libraries 2008

This year's Festival has a week-long programme of events across the city, opening with the Edinburgh Libraries Fair on Saturday 8th November, and closing with a Grand Finale panel discussion of 'The Future of the Book' on Friday 14th November.

Over 50 library and information services are participating, covering surveying, painting, family history, modern politics, health, wealth and many other themes – and most of it is free. Events include workshops, talks, exhibitions, performances, tours to little known places, and Edinburgh's Makar – our own Poet Laureate.

Full details are provided at <http://sites.google.com/site/festivaloflibraries/>

Highlights of this year's Festival include behind-the-scenes tours of the University Library's new Centre for Research Collections on the 11th and 13th; for details email Joseph.Marshall@ed.ac.uk.

Karen Bonthron (Information Services)

New backup service for Mac OS X servers

The IS Unix Section has for a long time provided a backup service for servers running unix (mainly Sun Solaris) and flavours of Linux.

This backup service is now extended to Mac OS X servers (not personal workstations). The supported versions are 10.3.3+, 10.4.x and 10.5.x.

Please contact the Unix Section through your School Computing Officer(s) or IS Support Team with any requests for backup.
Gordon Chung (Information Services)

eLPP: Learner Experiences across the Disciplines

The next meeting of the eLearning Professionals and Practitioners Forum will find out about LEaD – Learner Experiences across the Disciplines, a JISC-funded project to explore the use of learning technologies by first-year undergraduates.

The project's aims have been to:

- survey students' expectations around the availability and use of e-Learning at university.
- observe how students adapt their approaches to e-Learning during their first year.
- investigate how much students use non-institutional e-Learning technologies in their learning.
- identify factors that influence how students choose and utilise e-Learning strategies.

Of equal importance, it is hoped that the work will help students themselves to make the best use of technology to support their learning.

Student volunteers from Divinity, Physics & Astronomy, and Veterinary Medicine took part by keeping reflective diaries charting their use of both institutional and personal learning technologies through their first year at University.

The project is now nearing completion, and this event will be an early opportunity to hear about its findings. The presentation will be led by Judy Hardy, with project colleagues Denise Haywood and Jessie Paterson, and hopefully some of the students who took part.

The meeting is on 26th November, at 2 – 4pm, in room G.11, William Robertson Building, George Square. Tea and Coffee will be provided. Please book through MyEd.

There is more information about the LEaD project at <http://www2.epcc.ed.ac.uk/~lead/>
Michael Begg (eLPP convener)

25th birthday celebrations for the Data Library

The Data Library is celebrating its 25th anniversary of supporting staff and students in the discovery, access, use and management of research datasets. On 5th December 2008, University members are invited to join us in either of a two-part day event.

Symposium on Institutional Data Services Pollock Halls, 5th December, 10.00–15.00

- How do data libraries adapt to users' evolving needs as technology, research topics and methods advance?
- How do institutional data services fit best in the national and international network of data services?
- What models besides data libraries are there for providing data-related services including data curation?
- What national initiatives around data services and data sharing are worthy of attention in the UK?

Three speakers – Sheila Anderson (Kings College London), Chuck Humphrey (University of Alberta) and Peter Burnhill (EDINA and Data Library) – and an international panel of data service providers will enlighten us with their thoughts and engage with the audience for a lively discussion. Lunch will be included.

Anniversary Celebration Reception

5th December, 15:30–17:30

Join EDINA and Data Library staff at their offices on Causewayside to celebrate a long and rich history of service at the University. Friends, users, colleagues are all welcome to join us for birthday cake, nibbles and beverages. Partners from the Data Library's DataShare project will be present, as will some of the participants in the Digital Curation Centre's annual conference being held earlier in the week.

For information about the programme, directions to the venues and speaker biographies please check our web page, <http://datalib.ed.ac.uk/25anniversary/>

RSVP to datalib@ed.ac.uk indicating which event you would like to attend, or both, by 14th November.



Robin Rice (Information Services)

ITfutures Conference: Research, wRiting, Reputation Informatics Forum, Friday 21st November 2008

<http://www.itfutures.ed.ac.uk/Conference2008.shtml>

Research “publications” now come in many different forms – from computer software and databases, to dance performances and music. And traditional journals are no longer the only way of publishing – e-journals, software repositories and blogs are all possibilities.

- How do you find research that is relevant to you? and how do you know if it is any good?
- How do you make your own “publications” available? and how do you make them count?

This year's ‘stargazing conference’ provides an opportunity to hear University staff and guest speakers talk about some current issues and future trends. There will be plenty of time for discussion, so this promises to be an essential day for everyone involved in research.

For many the timing – in the main teaching period – is not ideal, so extensive wireless facilities will be available; and although we would like you to attend the whole event, there is extra capacity to enable people to pop in to either the morning or afternoon sessions. In addition, the event will be streamed live (details on the website given above), and recordings made available after the event.

Please bring along any relevant posters. If you have any research outputs that can not be presented in traditional poster format please get in touch with Jean Ritchie and we will try and accommodate them.

We look forward to seeing you! Please book now via MyEd.

Jessie Paterson (Divinity)

What will life be like in 2008?

The November 1968 issue of *Modern Mechanix* took a guess at what life would be like 40 years in the future – in November 2008. It predicted 250mph cars controlled by computers with no accidents, self-maintaining homes built in a day, housewives serving microwaved prepackaged meals on disposable plates, four hours work a day, but two hours a day to keep up with technology, schooling through wall-sized TVs, holidays in hotel satellites, automated farms, heart disease eliminated, ‘intelligence pills’ to combat failing memory – and “the world's information ... available to you almost instantaneously”. So it was nearly right.

The article concludes: “Despite the fact that the year 2008 is only 40 years away – as far ahead as 1928 is in the past – it will be a world as strange to us as our time (1968) would be to the pilgrims.” (Someone should read up the 2008 IT Futures conference in November 2048!)

You can relive the vision at <http://blog.modernmechanix.com/2008/03/24/what-will-life-be-like-in-the-year-2008/>

Nick Stroud (Information Services)

HECToR Vector System online



HECToR, operated by EPCC as a national resource and already one of the most powerful computers in the UK, was upgraded with a Vector X2 component in July. The resulting 'XT5h' hybrid supercomputer is the first X2/XT4 integration on this scale.

The X2 vector system – known as 'Black Widow' – consists of 28 vector compute nodes each having four Cray vector processors and 32Gb of memory. These 112 processors are each capable of 25.6 Gflops, giving a theoretical peak performance of 2.87 Tflops. The internal data network operates at up to 254 Gb/s. Unlike the XT4 which is air cooled, the X2 uses chilled water for cooling.

A number of projects are now running on the new system, chosen to represent a broad range of sciences from across EPSRC, BBSRC and NERC funded research. You can find out more about the HECToR service, including how to apply and the cost of access for both the XT4 and X2 systems, at <http://www.hector.ac.uk/>

Liz Sim (EPCC)

HECToR looks into Blue Phases

The HECToR supercomputer service, based at the Bush Estate, provides UK scientists with the opportunity to look at extremely large and time-consuming computational problems. As one such example, the Soft Matter Physics Group and EPCC have been using the service to investigate the properties of a number of different types of system, including so-called liquid crystal blue phases.

Liquid crystals are technologically important substances sharing some of the properties of both liquids and crystals. In particular, the 'crystal' ordering of the rod-like molecules in liquid crystals is on a length scale which gives them interesting optical properties in the visible part of the spectrum, hence their use in display devices. At high temperature, a liquid crystal is in the isotropic phase, with molecules pointing all over the place. On cooling the molecules orient themselves, and their average direction (the 'director field') rotates in a helical fashion about a well-defined axis – this is the so-called cholesteric or twisted nematic phase.

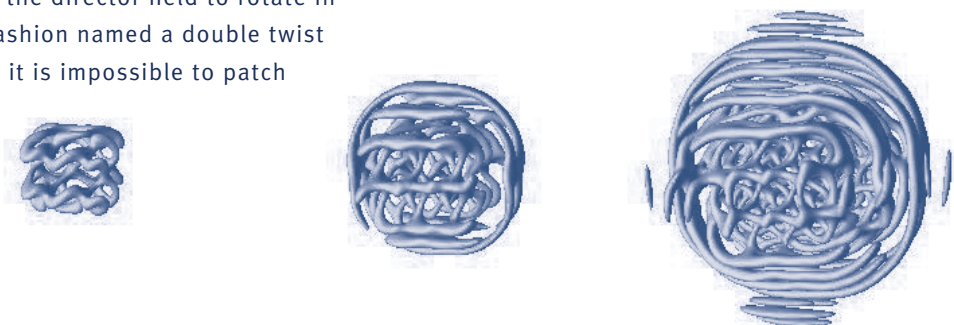
Very close to the transition between these two phases, a simple helical order is frustrated and it is more advantageous for the director field to rotate in a complicated helical fashion named a double twist cylinder. Topologically, it is impossible to patch

together different double twist cylinders without creating defects in between, and this gives rise to the defect or disclination network observed in blue phases (see pictures), and is responsible for many of their useful physical properties.

In May this year Samsung presented the first ever blue phase based liquid crystal display prototype at the SID 2008 International Symposium. This new display is able to operate at an unprecedented frame frequency of 240 Hertz, does not require alignment treatment for the liquid crystal, and may make existing twisted nematic displays obsolete.

The HECToR calculations have shown that they have the potential to improve remarkably our understanding of blue phases. The current work in Edinburgh focuses on understanding the growth of blue phase droplets in cholesteric or isotropic backgrounds, which has been observed in experiments. Work is also planned on the behaviour of blue phases in electric fields, with the goal of understanding the experimental phase diagrams and thus future device design.

Davide Marenduzzo (Physics), Kevin Stratford (EPCC)



Three snapshots of the evolution of a liquid crystal blue phase droplet growing in a cholesteric background, from a simulation on the HECToR system. The picture shows the complex topological defect structure which plays an important role in its useful properties.

From our local JISC Regional Support Centre

AccessApps – a Powerhouse in your Pocket!

AccessApps is a new initiative from JISC's Regional Support Centre for Scotland North & East and JISC TechDis, to help computer users with a range of additional support needs find helpful software.

The 'open source' software movement has been growing steadily over the last few years, operating outside the business world's normal model. Across the globe, enthusiasts have worked together to develop sophisticated software applications which can be downloaded at no charge. Some of these replicate the functionality of common programs like Microsoft Office, while others provide assistance for people who need a bit of extra support.

It was this latter aspect of the open source movement which attracted the attention of Craig Mill, Accessibility Officer at the Regional Support Centre. How do you bring this huge range of software to the attention of those who need it? How do you make it easy to locate, access and store? How do you close the 'digital divide'?



In *AccessApps* the RSC has brought together over 50 of the most popular and useful open source applications, making them available via a single portal on the RSC website. Users can download all the applications, or can pick and choose those which are most useful to them.

There's another enormous benefit of the *AccessApps* system. If the programs are downloaded to a USB memory stick, they can be run from that stick – so there's no need to load them on to a computer's hard disk. Wherever you happen to be, your *AccessApps* stick lets you use whatever open source tools you have downloaded to it.

AccessApps includes Open Office which replicates familiar (and expensive) tools like Word and PowerPoint. There are software tools to support reading and writing, visual support software to make reading screens easier, accessible browsers, alternative input tools, multimedia and presentation tools and other utilities. And for light relief, there are some games as well.

All the applications are open source or freeware. The developers have made their products freely available, and the RSC has obtained their permission to add them to the *AccessApps* list, which means they're completely free for you to download and use.

For further information and to download your choice of applications go to <http://www.scottish-rscs.org.uk/access/>

Once there, click the 'AccessApps' tab at the top of the page to get a full list of the applications available, instructions on how to download them and step-by-step tutorials to get you up and running. There's an introductory video clip explaining the rationale behind the initiative, created by Craig Mill and Kenji Lamb from the RSC, who along with Martin Hawksey developed the package and the delivery mechanism.

The joy of information

People were complaining about information overload in the sixteenth century, as book publishing took off. Today, some businesses find that people spend as much as 25% of their working day dealing with interruptions, which reduces both the quantity and quality of 'real work' they do. There is a load of information about controlling this pressure in the recent issue of *Ariadne*, UKOLN's web magazine for information professionals, accessible through <http://scottish-rscs.org.uk/newsfeed/?p=2183>

Choice e-Learning Resources online

Learning technologist Paul Andrews has made a classy, simple, public website with links to online services that Paul thinks are relevant or useful – and they're free. The site has an RSS feed so you can stay up to date. The collection is at <http://sites.google.com/site/technologyenhancedlearning/>

Similarly, *Curriculumbits* holds a wide variety of resources from across the curriculum including languages, English, the sciences, and art and design. Some are animated, some have audio – all are available at no cost at <http://www.curriculumbits.com/>

ClassTools is a useful website which provides templates to create a range of flash-based educational games. Here you can create anything from a random name picker to timelines, targets and shoot-em-up games, all designed to engage the student. ClassTools is at <http://www.classtools.net/>

How Web searching works

Tips: enclose phrases in double-quotes, and exclude irrelevant sites by putting a minus sign in front of a suitable keyword. This becomes clearer in the short video at <http://scottish-rscs.org.uk/newsfeed/?p=2163>

*Hugh Dailly, Caroline Porteous
(JISC Regional Support Centres)*

IT skills development

The IS eLearning and IS Skills Development team runs free IT courses and short sessions for Edinburgh University staff and postgraduates. We're based at 19 Buccleuch Place in the central area and also run courses at The King's Buildings. See our web pages for further details and bookings, at <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/usd/cts/courses/>

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

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

Jenni Reeves (Information Services)

Second Life skills development

The University has a substantial presence in the Second Life world, as the Virtual University of Edinburgh – Vue.

The Vue Avatar Training & Recreation programme (VATAR) is back after its Summer break, with monthly informal meet-ups in-world where members can meet and chat about what's going on in Second Life.

You can find out all about Vue, see a map, take a balloon trip, join in, and find out about the VATAR sessions, at

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

Naomi Nunn (Informatics)

Digital curation conference

The 4th International Digital Curation Conference – IDCC 2008, on "Radical Sharing: Transforming Science?" – takes place on 1–3 December 2008 at the Hilton Edinburgh Grosvenor Hotel, in the West End. The full details are at <http://www.dcc.ac.uk/events/dcc-2008/>

Graeme Pow (Information Services)

Date	Course	Venue*
Nov	3 Excel Introduction: Creating Basic Spreadsheets and Charts (Part 1)	BP
	4 Creating a Database with FileMaker Pro	BP
	5 Word Intermediate: Document Layout and Customisation	BP
	5 SPSS 4: Matching, Merging and Reformatting Data in SPSS	BP
	6 Managing Bibliographies with Reference Manager	BP
	6 Introduction to Access Database Management (Part 2)	BP
	6 Making the Most of Your Wiki	BP
	10 Producing a Thesis using Word	BP
	10 Writing for the Web	DHT
	10 Introduction to Sun Grid Engine	JCMB
	10 Introduction to Basic Shell Scripting	JCMB
	11 Intermediate Access Database Management (Part 1)	BP
	11 Creating Leaflets and Posters with InDesign	BP
	11 Learning to use the Plagiarism Prevention System: <i>TurnItIn</i>	BP
	11 Creating a table of contents in Word (T)	DHT
	12 Producing a Thesis using Word	BP
	12 Mail Merge with Word	BP
	12 Introduction to Mac Operating Systems: Mac OS X	BP
	13 Testing the Usability of your Website	BP
	13 Creating and Editing Web Pages using FrontPage 2003	BP
	13 Wikis: What can I do as an Administrator?	BP
	18 Intermediate Access Database Management (Part 2)	BP
	18 WebCT Vista Fundamentals	BP
	18 PowerPoint: Basic Skills for Creating a Presentation	BP
	19 Creating Web Pages with HTML	BP
	19 Formatting Web Pages with Cascading Style Sheets	BP
	19 SPSS 5: Getting Started with SPSS Syntax	BP
	19 SPSS 6: SPSS Syntax for Data Files	BP
20 Introduction to Unix	BP	
21 Using movies and action buttons in PowerPoint (T)	DHT	
24 WebCT Vista Fundamentals	BP	
25 Word Introduction: Creating and Formatting Documents	BP	
25 PowerPoint Intermediate: Adding Animation Schemes	BP	
25 PowerPoint Intermediate: Adding Movie and Audio Clips	BP	
26 Introduction to Adobe PDFs and Acrobat Professional	BP	
26 Intermediate Adobe Acrobat Professional	BP	
27 Excel Advanced: Manipulating and Managing Data (Part 1)	BP	
27 Writing for the Web	BP	
28 Testing the Usability of your Website	BP	
Dec	2 Creating and Editing Web Pages with Dreamweaver 8	BP
	2 Creating Templates and Managing Websites with Dreamweaver 8	BP
	2 PowerPoint Intermediate: Adding Images	BP
	2 PowerPoint Intermediate: Adding Tables, Graphs and Diagrams	BP
	3 Producing a Thesis using Word	BP
	3 Managing Bibliographies with EndNote	BP
	3 Introduction to Access Database Management (Part 1)	BP
	3 Introduction to Wikis	BP
	4 Excel Advanced: Manipulating and Managing Data (Part 2)	BP
	8 Editing Web Pages with Contribute	BP
	9 Basic Image Manipulation Techniques using PhotoShop	BP
9 Making the Most of Your Wiki	BP	
9 Wikis: What can I do as an Administrator?	BP	
10 Introduction to Access Database Management (Part 2)	BP	
11 Excel Introduction: Creating Basic Spreadsheets and Charts	BP	

Professional training for service management

Following a tender process organised by Information Services and Procurement, the University has selected a training partner for certified ITIL Service Management training and consultancy.

The successful supplier is Remarc, with whom IS has established a 'learning bank', so all certified ITIL training should now be directed to them. This tender has resulted in a 30% saving compared to last year's ITIL training, and an onsite course will now be less than half the price of a scheduled course with other providers.

Selected IS staff will attend these courses, and other University staff may attend an onsite Foundation Certificate in IT Service Management for £400 (inc. VAT and exam). The next course is on 2–4 December.

The in-house Service Improvement course will continue to be run and remains free for all staff. Booking for this is via the MyEd Event Booking Channel.

Remarc provides other training and consultancy services, but these were not part of the tender process.

As with all training and development opportunities your line manager will be able to offer advice and should be the first port of call; further enquiries may be directed to Robert.Gormley@ed.ac.uk.

Robert Gormley (Information Services)

BCS to use Informatics Forum

The local branch of the British Computer Society is to start holding its meetings in the University's new Informatics Forum at 10 Crichton Street.

The first meeting there will be at 6.30pm on Wednesday 12th November, when Chris Rourke of UserVision and Neil Eades of Ciboodle will talk on "Exchange of Ideas: Agile/XP and User Experience".

This is a public meeting, and all are welcome. A synopsis and further details are available at <http://www.edinburgh.bcs.org/events/o81112.htm>

David Muxworthy (BCS)

Blackboard conference

The Ninth Annual Durham Blackboard Users Conference takes place on 8–9 January 2009. This year's theme is 'e-Learning: A Reality Check' and the conference will consider whether e-Learning has lived up to its early promise. The programme will be a mix of keynote speakers and parallel strands. If you would like to submit a paper (deadline 25th November) or just find out more, click the 'CONFERENCE' tab at <https://duo.dur.ac.uk/>

Malcolm Murray (Durham)

Next Generation VLE Project outcomes

At the time of writing, the report of the review phase of the Project – which has been undertaken over the past year – is being commented by the Project Board. It will then be made available on the Project wiki for wider comment before it is finalised.

As explained in the news item posted to the wiki on 13th October, it has been concluded that the time is not right to proceed to a procurement phase to acquire a central VLE to replace or confirm the current system. The large effort involved in such a procurement from outside IS as well as within, and the likelihood that funding for implementation of the chosen solution could not be raised in the current financial climate, lead us to the conclusion that putting the procurement on hold for a period is the realistic option.

We will also therefore not proceed to procure an e-portfolio for University-wide use, but will offer a limited on-request service with an externally-hosted solution (PebblePad).

The decision will be reviewed again next Summer.

In the meantime, IS will be looking to see how the released effort might be used to overcome some of the limitations with our existing VLE services, identified during the VLE Review consultations. Further communication about this will be available soon; in the mean time please feel free to use the 'additional requirements' page of the wiki to identify any areas you think warrant attention.

The Next Generation VLE Project wiki can be found at <https://www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/display/VLEprojectwiki>

Stephen Vickers (Information Services)

NeSC news

The latest issue of the National e-Science Centre's newsletter is out, and includes Iain Coleman's entertaining accounts of September's All Hands Meeting. You might wonder why a professor of security engineering at Cambridge University thinks that 'security is for losers'. You might also be grateful to know that if you read a book a day, in alphabetical order from your local library, you would probably die somewhere between 'Campanology' and 'Cowbells'. The only way to benefit from the wisdom contained in a million books is to have the books talk to each other to pool their knowledge, then hold conversations with their readers – and people are working to make this happen...

The Newsletter is at http://www.nesc.ac.uk/news/newsletter/September_October08.pdf

Gillian Law (NeSC)

IT Professionals' Forum

After an extended Summer break, the ITPF is getting back into gear, with plans for presentations, seminars and other events.

Unix meeting

The programme restarts on 28th November with an LCFG Users Meeting in the Informatics Forum.

LCFG – Large Scale Unix Configuration System – is a system for automatically installing and managing the configuration of large numbers of Unix systems. It is particularly suitable for sites with very diverse and rapidly changing configurations. Its website, which includes details of Paul Anderson's new book about LCFG, is at <http://www.lcfg.org/>

The all-day ITPF event showcases examples of using LCFG in different parts of the University and provides an opportunity for existing and future users to foster a community spirit. Full details of the meeting are provided at <https://wiki.lcfg.org/bin/view/LCFG/MeetingNov2008>
The ITPF is recruiting!

The Forum's Committee would like to find two people to help with its work.

We would like to find someone who can help with communication, to develop the technologies the Forum uses to engage the University's IT community. The second post is for a representative from the College of Science and Engineering, to act as a conduit for information to and from the Committee and the College.

If you're interested, please email itforum-cttee@lists.ed.ac.uk.

The IT Forum is for all IT staff throughout the University. If you know of new colleagues who are not on the mailing list, do encourage them to sign up – as detailed on the ITPF Wiki pages at <https://www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/display/itpfwiki/Home>

Neil Brown (ITPF Convener)

IS makes plans for next year

Information Services will be meeting with each of the Colleges and Support Groups in November to refine its planning priorities for 2009–2010. The University is not immune from the world's financial problems, which are forcing the whole University to review how to maintain progress towards its objectives – so it is more important than ever to make sure that we in IS focus on the services which are needed most urgently by our users. The final plan will be published next May, after a full round of negotiation and evaluation.

A couple of new initiatives will show up in the next few weeks.

The University wants a mechanism to help it collect feedback from students, and IS staff are creating a new online Discussion Forum – along with a wiki and MyEd changes – for 'The Student Experience'. The Discussion Forum is based on the open-source PHPBB 3.0.2, and in due course this will be offered as a service to all members of the University – who will be able to request an online forum much as they can now request a wiki.

And we have initiated a Wimba pilot to explore the possibility of enhancing WebCT for distance learning with a live desktop video classroom which can be archived.

Jeff Haywood (Vice Principal, IS)

Extra Library opening in Winter Vacation

The Main Library will be open for two days between Christmas and New Year, on Monday 29th and Tuesday 30th December, from 10:30am to 5:30pm. Further details will be announced in the December edition of *BITS*.

Barry Croucher (Information Services)

Charlotte Kemp retires



Charlotte Kemp with Vice Principal Jeff Haywood. Charlotte retired last month after working for the University for 16 years, in Pharmacology, in the Science & Engineering College Office and for the past six years in IS planning.

Jo Hamill (Information Services)

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; 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*, or if you need information from it in a different format, please email BITS@ed.ac.uk.

Contributions to *BITS* are welcomed.

Copy deadline for December *BITS*:

Friday 14th November