Happy Birthday Mr Darwin!

Charles Darwin was born on 12th February 1809, and for many years now his birthday has been recognised internationally as ‘Darwin Day’ ([http://www.darwinday.org/](http://www.darwinday.org/)).

A recent biography of Charles Darwin points out that biographers “regularly go back to Darwin’s Edinburgh years, convinced that the seeds of all his later thinking lie there – and to a large degree they are right.”

The University will be celebrating the Edinburgh connection from October until December with two major exhibitions in this twin anniversary year, which marks 200 years since Darwin’s birth and 150 years since the publication of Origin of Species.

Darwin’s Edinburgh and “An Entangled Bank” will run concurrently in the Talbot Rice Gallery, with Darwin’s Edinburgh in the site of the former College Museum – a space in which Darwin spent much of his time at Edinburgh. There are further details on page 4.

John Scally (IS)

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An Edinburgh thesis is the first in a new system

The British Library has launched its ‘Electronic Theses Online Service’ – EThOS – to digitise British doctoral theses and make them available through a central web portal.

Edinburgh University was one of the original project partners, helping to scope and build the prototype service. And quite by chance, the first thesis to be digitised and made available through EThOS happened to be from Edinburgh: English proficiency in the Saudi Air Academy: validating a new test battery, G.A.J. Al-Ghamdi, 1986.

EThOS is at [http://ethos.bl.uk/](http://ethos.bl.uk/)

Theo Andrew (IS)

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Europeana: open for testing

Europeana is Europe’s new digital library, museum and archive, intended to give access to digitised books, films, paintings, newspapers, sounds and archives from Europe’s greatest collections – including several hundred images from Edinburgh University.

The site opened last November, but collapsed as ten million people an hour tried to visit it. It has been redesigned and rebuilt, and is now cautiously open for testing. You can see the promotional video and sign up for further news at [http://dev.europeana.eu/](http://dev.europeana.eu/)

When the site is fully open again it will offer 3.5 million digital treasures – ten million next year – at [http://www.europeana.eu/](http://www.europeana.eu/)

Nick Stroud (IS)
LISA: one of the major IT gatherings

I am a Burundian national and a student in computing science at Napier University. In my third year, I am on a placement at the School of Divinity, working as the computer support officer, from where I was able to attend the LISA conference and gain significant experience.

LISA is ‘Large Installation System Administration’, an annual gathering of system and network administrators from around the world that has been going on for 20 years. System administrators of all levels and specialties exchange ideas, learn new techniques, improve skills, discuss issues, and network with like-minded colleagues.

At Napier University we have been learning about the theory of networking and programming, but prior to this placement there was no real opportunity to apply these skills in a real environment. In addition, as a student, you are more focused on completing study modules than on investigating new concepts or technologies. For example, before the beginning of my placement, I had never heard the word ‘virtualization’, a key concept in modern computing.

Delegates at LISA08 came from very different nationalities and backgrounds, including government, education and industry. This year the conference featured innovative tools and techniques essential for professional and technical development within the computing environment spectrum.

One of the main benefits of the conference is the series of training tutorials which provide in-depth schooling in the latest technologies on the market. The instructors were well known experts in each specific field, providing the benefit of their expertise on the most suitable tools for a specific company or organization, and the best strategies to make the tools work effectively.

I found it particularly interesting that senior system administrators were sharing the experience they gained in their respective fields of work. It was a setting that allowed experts to learn from end users, and for a novice like me to gain invaluable information and an insight into a system administrator’s life.

I liked the fact that I could easily speak to gurus in a relaxed environment such as coffee breaks instead of in the conference room. I felt less intimidated, and actually enjoyed and participated in the conversations. I met several other attendees who felt the same. And I was inspired by the fact that people were still keen to share and improve their knowledge, regardless of the stage of their careers. They had overcome many barriers posed by marketing and legal aspects with competing companies.

This experience has shown me that I must broaden my horizons and not limit my studies to specific subjects. This may make my life just a little bit complicated – but interesting too! It has proven to be a steep learning curve and it won’t get easy but that is “the price to pay for knowledge,” as they say in my home country.

The LISA conference offers a bursary to students on placement, as well as to students involved in system administration research. I was lucky enough to be awarded a bursary from LISA/USENIX that paid some of the costs of attending the conference. If you would like to discuss my experience in more detail, please email me at Patrick.Ntawuyamara@ed.ac.uk.

The LISA08 website is at http://www.usenix.org/events/lisa08/

Patrick Ntawuyamara (Divinity and Napier University)

LISA 2009 beckons

This year’s LISA conference is in Baltimore, in November. Paul Anderson, of Informatics, is on the Programme Committee, and would be happy to talk to anyone who might be interested in attending the conference or submitting a paper to it. You can contact him by sending an email message to dcspaul@ed.ac.uk.

The 2009 conference website is at http://www.usenix.org/events/lisa09/

Paul Anderson (Informatics)
**RIN Disciplinary Case Studies: understanding the information needs of life science researchers**

The Research Information Network (RIN) is funding a set of case-studies to identify and describe how researchers in the life sciences locate, evaluate, organise, manage, transform and communicate information as part of their research process. The studies will identify how information-related policy, strategy and practice might be improved to meet the needs of researchers in UK tertiary education.

Research teams from six areas of the life sciences at the University of Edinburgh are participating as case studies. The first round of data gathering involves the completion of ‘Information Diaries’ by researchers from the respective research teams. Interviews and focus groups will follow for each case study.

The eight-month project is being carried out by a team of social scientists and information service specialists from the Institute for the Study of Science, Technology and Innovation – ISSTI – and from Information Services and the Digital Curation Centre – DCC. The Principal Investigators are Professor Robin Williams (ISSTI) and Graham Pryor (DCC). The work builds on shared interests and activities in the area including a recent workshop, jointly organised by BBSRC and ISSTI/the ESRC Innogen Centre, on Data Sharing in the Biosciences: a sociological perspective.

If you’d like to find out more, please visit [http://dcc.ac.uk/case-studies-in-life-sciences/](http://dcc.ac.uk/case-studies-in-life-sciences/)

Alternatively you can email stuart.macdonald@ed.ac.uk or w.marsden@ed.ac.uk.

*Stuart Macdonald (IS)*

*Wendy Marsden (ISSTI)*

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**News from JISC**

**Thoughts of the Chairman**

The Principal has now taken up his appointment as Chair of JISC, the Joint Information Systems Committee that funds IT facilities for UK Higher Education such as the JANET network and the EDINA Datacentre.

In a short interview which is available as a JISC podcast, Professor Sir Tim O’Shea urges universities to work together to maintain the UK’s position of global leadership in technology.

Exploring some of the challenges the sector currently faces, he suggests that JISC should promote such collaboration, and details a number of areas in which JISC brings leadership and delivers economies of scale to the sector – such as the development of new platforms and standards, the development of packages for managing research, and support for eLearning. These are all things which, because of their scale, even a very big university can’t expect to do well on its own, but that British universities together can.

You can find the podcast via [http://scottish-rscs.org.uk/newsfeed/?p=3519](http://scottish-rscs.org.uk/newsfeed/?p=3519)

Sarah Porter is JISC’s Head of Innovation, and in another JISC podcast interview, given at JISC’s Innovation Forum last Summer, she talks about the importance of innovation and why investment in innovation is crucial to the future of Higher Education. You can listen to the podcast via [http://scottish-rscs.org.uk/newsfeed/?p=3504](http://scottish-rscs.org.uk/newsfeed/?p=3504)

**What is ‘Creative Commons’?**

There is a new online guide which explains the ‘sharing’ system that is becoming increasingly important in education. Darren Draper explains this system for making resources available for public use, and shares sources for Creative Commons licensed audio, images and videos. You can find out more via [http://scottish-rscs.org.uk/newsfeed/?p=3501](http://scottish-rscs.org.uk/newsfeed/?p=3501)

**Subscribe to JISC Newsfeed for yourself!**

If you’d like to see all the news from the Scottish JISC Regional Support Centres, rather than just the items that are rather arbitrarily selected for BITs, you can subscribe to NewsFeed by clicking on the link on the right-hand side, at the bottom of the ‘News’ section, at [http://www.rsc-ne-scotland.ac.uk/](http://www.rsc-ne-scotland.ac.uk/)

Hugh Daily, Caroline Porteous (JISC Regional Support Centres)

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**Wimba pilot**

Information Services is organising a pilot of the online collaborative learning applications offered by Wimba. These include Wimba Classroom (which handles audio, video, application sharing and content display), Wimba Voice (which incorporates the use of threaded voice boards, voice-enabled email, embedded voice within course pages) and Wimba Pronto (the only instant messenger designed for educators).

If you would like to be involved with piloting any of these products, please contact Stephen Vickers (email [stephen.vickers@ed.ac.uk](mailto:stephen.vickers@ed.ac.uk)).

A demonstration of these tools will be announced shortly. In the meantime you can get a flavour of the ways in which Wimba seeks to facilitate online collaboration through plenty of online resources to be found on its website at [http://www.wimba.com/](http://www.wimba.com/)

*Stephen Vickers (IS)*
The University of Edinburgh’s Darwin exhibitions

From October to December 2009 University Collections, the Talbot Rice Gallery and VARIE (Visual Arts Research Institute, Edinburgh) will host two exhibitions to mark ‘Darwin200’, the twin anniversary year which celebrates 200 years since Darwin’s birth and 150 years since the publication of Origin of Species. The Talbot Rice Gallery will host these unique exhibitions, and show how Darwin’s time as a student at the University (1825–1827) had a lasting and deeply significant impact on him.

Darwin’s Edinburgh will be an historic exhibition, consisting primarily of objects and artefacts from the University’s Collections, and will show how important the University and the city were in the development of Darwin’s thinking. It will comprise four major themes – Darwin’s experiences as a medical student at the University; Darwin’s first encounters with natural history; the role of the College Museum and ‘learned societies’ in Darwin’s thinking; and Darwin’s legacy in Edinburgh.

“An Entangled Bank” will be an exhibition displaying contemporary artistic responses to Darwin’s ideas, and will be influenced by engagement with some of the University’s current scientific academics. Six internationally renowned artists have been selected: Ilana Halperin, Kenny Hunter, Ben Rivers, Julie Roberts, Brian Hewitt and Christine Borland. The artists work in complex and various media including film, photography, digital projection, sculpture, installation and film – and this will undoubtedly present a rich visual spectacle where research and methodologies will be displayed alongside finished work.

The exhibitions – part of the UK’s ‘Darwin200’ celebrations – will run concurrently in the Talbot Rice Gallery. Darwin’s Edinburgh will be in the Georgian Gallery, site of the former College Museum in which Darwin spent much of his time as a student in Edinburgh. The exhibitions will be accompanied by a catalogue, a website and a series of educational events and activities, many of which will be run by Edinburgh University scientists.

John Scally (IS)

The quote on page 1 about Edinburgh’s importance to Darwin’s biographers is taken from Darwin’s Origin of the Species: a Biography, by Janet Browne, London: Atlantic, 2006, pp. 11–12.

‘Darwin200’ is a national programme of events celebrating Charles Darwin’s scientific ideas and their impact around his 200th birthday on 12th February 2009; see http://www.darwin200.org/

All Darwin’s publications, 20,000 private papers, the largest Darwin bibliography, manuscript catalogue and hundreds of supplementary works – specimens, biographies, obituaries, reviews, reference works etc – are available online at http://darwin-online.org.uk/
**BCS meeting: people as asset and threat**

Nigel A. Jones is director of the Cyber Threat Knowledge Transfer Network (KTN), and in the context of the steady stream of stories about the loss of computer data, he will be speaking on "People, your greatest asset, your greatest vulnerability?". The meeting is at 6:30pm on Wednesday 11th February, in Room G.07 of the Informatics Forum (10 Crichton Street, Edinburgh EH8 9AB).

The talk is free of charge and all are welcome; refreshments will be available from 6pm. There are further details at [http://www.edinburgh.bcs.org/events/](http://www.edinburgh.bcs.org/events/).

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**‘Learning on Screen’ Awards**

The British Universities Film & Video Council – BUFVC – is looking for entries for its ‘Learning on Screen’ Awards 2009. The awards will be presented at the Learning on Screen Conference in London on 7th April; see [http://www.bufvc.ac.uk/learningonscreen/](http://www.bufvc.ac.uk/learningonscreen/)

Categories this year include General Audience Education, Curriculum-Related Content, Student Production, and Disability & Access Awards, as well as Premier and Special Jury Awards.

The BUFVC awards will celebrate and reward excellence in the use of moving image, sound and related media in learning, teaching and research. For further category details and information on how to enter see the Awards 2009 website at [http://www.bufvc.ac.uk/learningonscreen/awards/awards.html](http://www.bufvc.ac.uk/learningonscreen/awards/awards.html).

The closing date for entries (for which there is a fee) is 6th February.

For further information please email learningonscreen@bufvc.ac.uk.

David Muxworthy (BCS)

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**Online assessment**

There are many online methods by which you can test students, or allow them to assess their own learning – including assessment tools in virtual learning environments, computer-aided assessment software and electronic voting systems.

The common perception of multiple-choice questions (MCQs) – the most commonly used form of assessment – is that they can only be used to test basic knowledge and simple recall of facts. Is this entirely justified?

You can find out about this issue at a lunchtime ‘taster session’ on 12th February. This will aim to tackle the misconception, and provide some examples of more challenging MCQs to test higher levels of understanding and how they might be delivered electronically.

Places at the session are limited, and can be booked using the Event Booking channel in MyEd. Please email any queries to Wesley.Kerr@ed.ac.uk. Wesley Kerr (IS)

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**eLPP event: Copyright and eLearning**

Electronic learning environments, like the internet itself, are awash with an ever increasing number of images, audio files, text and video-based resources. Digital recording media – cameras, audio and video recorders – are increasingly widespread, as are the means for uploading and sharing on networks and the Web.

One consequence of this flood of information is the complex issue of copyright. Consequently, it can often seem bewildering and daunting to begin to consider what can and should be used in a teaching and learning context.

This event will focus on highlighting the options that are available when developing course materials. Various resource types will be looked at in depth and experience will be shared by our guest speakers on finding high-quality electronic publications, images and media items for use in teaching.

Speakers will include Simon Bains (University Library), Stuart Scarles (University Library), Margaret Forrest (School of History, Classics and Archaeology), Abbe Brown (School of Law), and John Glendinning (Language and Humanities Centre).

This event, organised by the eLearning Professionals and Practitioners Forum (eLPP), starts at 2pm on 25th February in Faculty Room North, David Hume Tower, George Square. Please book your place through the MyEd Events Booking Channel.

There is further news of and from the eLPP at [https://www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/display/elpp/](https://www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/display/elpp/).

Karen Howie (eLPP)

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**TLA Centre HE research seminars**

Dr Vicky Gunn, of Glasgow University’s Learning and Teaching Centre, will lead a conversation about the idea of the university, research-teaching linkages, equality and diversity imperatives, and generally about where academic developers should be going. The seminar is at 1pm on 17th February, in room 1.19, Paterson’s Land, Moray House. A sandwich lunch will be provided. There is no need to register: just turn up.

The full details are at [http://www.tla.ed.ac.uk/events/TLA_HE_Seminars/TLAHESEminars.htm](http://www.tla.ed.ac.uk/events/TLA_HE_Seminars/TLAHESEminars.htm).

Wilma Alexander (IS)
IT course dates for Spring/Summer 2009

Our new schedule of IT training events running from March to August is now available for booking. Courses are free to most staff and postgraduates at Edinburgh University. Details of sessions and online bookings are at

http://www.uocs.ed.ac.uk/uds/cts/courses/

Nice pictures, but does your website work?
The usability of the University website – how easy it is to use – should be the basis of all our web publishing activity. Our new introductory session Testing the Usability of your Website, delivered by the University Website Development Project team, provides the basic skills needed to begin finding out how your audiences interact with your website. The course consists of presentations and demonstrations, and you will have the opportunity to test your own site using the technique of ‘accompaniesurfing’. Please book using the MyEd event booking channel.

WebCT Vista Advanced Courses
We are offering two new half-day courses for staff with basic experience of WebCT. Communication Tools takes a closer look at the Announcements, Discussion and Mail tools, while Assignments and Assessment Tools examines the Assignment Dropbox and Quizzes as well as the GradeBook. Each session covers how to set up these tools and explores how they can be integrated into your teaching and learning activities.

And so much more ...
Apart from these new developments, we continue to offer a wide range of face-to-face courses across a range of technologies. Subscriptions for online learning are also available.

For full details please see our web pages or email ss.skills@ed.ac.uk.

Jenni Reeves (IS)

Date    Course title                                Venue*
Feb
  2  Introduction to Mac Operating Systems: Mac OS X    BP
  2  SPSS 2: Using SPSS Output                       BP
  2  Introduction to Sun Grid Engine                BP
  2  Introduction to Basic Shell Scripting          JCMB
  3  Managing Bibliographies with Reference Manager BP
  3  Using EDINA Digimap                            BP
  3  Introduction to Visualising Data in ArcGIS 9   BP
  4  Creating and Editing Web Pages using FrontPage 2003 BP
  5  Intermediate Unix                              JCMB
  5  Word Intermediate: Document Layout and Customisation BP
  5  Creating and Editing Web Pages with Dreamweaver 8 BP
  5  Creating Templates and Managing Websites with Dreamweaver 8 BP
  9  Excel Introduction: Creating Basic Spreadsheets and Charts (Part 1) DHT
  9  SPSS 3: Changing Data in SPSS                   BP
  9  SPSS 4: Changing SPSS Data Files                BP
  9  Excellent formatting: making your Excel spreadsheets look good (T) DHT
 10  Introduction to Programming in Fortran 95       JB
 10  Producing a Thesis using Word                   BP
 10  Creating a Database with FileMaker Pro         BP
 11  Programming in Perl                             BP
 11  Learning to use the Plagiarism Prevention System: TurnItIn BP
 12  Excel Advanced: Manipulating and Managing Data BP
 12  Using multiple-choice questions to assess learning electronically (T) DHT
 16  Excel Introduction: Creating Basic Spreadsheets and Charts (Part 2) BP
 16  Writing for the Web                             DHT
 17  Introduction to Access Database Management      BP
 17  Mail Merge with Word                            BP
 17  Introduction to Wikis                           BP
 17  Managing Bibliographies with EndNote            BP
 18  Creating Leaflets and Posters with InDesign    BP
 19  Unix Shell Programming                          JCMB
 19  PowerPoint: Basic Skills for Creating a Presentation BP
 19  Using tables for organisation and display in Word (T) DHT
 23  Thinking about using TurnItIn UK? (T)           DHT
 24  Intermediate Access Database Management         BP
 24  SPSS 5: Getting Started with SPSS Syntax       BP
 24  SPSS 6: SPSS Syntax for Data Files              BP
 25  Making the Most of Your Wiki                   BP
 25  Wikis: What can I do as an Administrator?      BP
 26  Creating Web Pages with HTML                    BP
 26  Formatting Web Pages with Cascading Style Sheets BP
 26  PowerPoint Intermediate: Adding Tables, Graphs and Diagrams BP
 26  PowerPoint Intermediate: Adding Movie and Audio Clips BP
 26  Testing the Usability of your Website           AT
 27  Introduction to Acrobat PDFs and Acrobat Professional BP
 27  Intermediate Adobe Acrobat Professional         BP
 27  Introduction to Computing                       BP
 27  Managing Bibliographies with EndNote            BP
 28  Producing a Thesis using Word                   BP
 28  Basic Image Manipulation Techniques using PhotoShop BP
 31  Excel Introduction: Creating Basic Spreadsheets and Charts (Part 1) BP
 31  Introduction to Sun Grid Engine                 BP
 31  Introduction to Basic Shell Scripting           BP
 31  Testing the Usability of your Website           AT
 31  Excel Introduction: Creating Basic Spreadsheets and Charts (Part 2) BP
 31  Introduction to Access Database Management      BP
 31  PowerPoint: Basic Skills for Creating a Presentation BP
 31  Introduction to Unix                            BP
 31  Managing Bibliographies with Reference Manager BP
 31  Introduction to Wikis                           BP
 31  Creating and Editing Web Pages using FrontPage 2003 BP
 31  PowerPoint Intermediate: Adding Images          BP
 31  PowerPoint Intermediate: Adding Animation Schemes BP
 31  Excel Advanced: Manipulating and Managing Data BP
 31  Managing Bibliographies with EndNote            BP
 31  Editing Web Pages with Contribute               BP
 31  Producing a Thesis using Word                   BP

(T): lunchtime ‘taster’ session (bring your sandwiches!)

* Locations: AT – Appleton Tower
BP = 19 Buccleuch Place
DHT – Conference Room, David Hume Tower
JCMB – room 2009a, The King’s Buildings
ITIL service management: foundation course

Information Services has organised an ITIL Foundation course at The King’s Buildings on 10–12 February, and a few places are still available.

This is the ISEB certified course based on the ITIL service management framework which culminates in a multiple-choice examination.

There are further details at [http://www.bcs.org/server.php?show=nav.6940](http://www.bcs.org/server.php?show=nav.6940)

A robust tendering process reduced the cost of this course for non-IS staff to £400; the usual scheduled cost would be around £1,000.

If you are interested in this course, or would like to be kept in touch with future dates and events, please email Robert.Gormley@ed.ac.uk.

Robert Gormley (IS)

Edikt2009: Using computing in your research

This meeting is a follow-on to the successful edikt2008 symposium, and is intended to bring together Scottish researchers who make heavy use of computer simulations, models or analysis to do research. This will allow them to swap ideas and see how other scientists use the resources to maximum benefit. There is no similar activity in Scotland.

The day will be arranged into four sessions covering a wide range of computational research, including cell biology, computational chemistry, brain imaging and bioinformatics.

A poster session will be held in the coffee and lunch breaks.

The symposium – which is free of charge, with lunch provided – takes place on 29th April, from 9:30am to 5pm, in the WestPark Conference Centre, Dundee. Please register your interest by emailing j.hill@epcc.ed.ac.uk.

For more information on the edikt2 project or the symposium, please see [http://www.epcc.ed.ac.uk/research/activities/edikt](http://www.epcc.ed.ac.uk/research/activities/edikt)

Jon Hill (EPCC)

Main Library Redevelopment

With the area in front of the Main Library looking more than ever like a building site, now is a good time to focus on what the Library entrance will look like when the Ground Floor redevelopment is finished. Current plans are that the new cafe (behind the ‘Library’ sign in this picture) will be handed over to the University in April and open for business a couple of weeks later. It is hoped that the entire floor will be reopened a few weeks after that, with work starting on the First Floor in June. One of the ‘finishing touches’ currently being planned is a garden outside the cafe which contains plants from five continents – symbol of the University’s international significance.

Fiona Boyd (IS)
‘Desire Lines’: Art on Campus

The Talbot Rice Gallery is temporarily closed for refurbishment, so is branching out from its traditional role. We have invited a selection of artists to create artworks across the University campus, on view from 16th February to 19th June, Monday to Friday, from 10am to 5pm.

The participating artists have chosen a public site on campus to explore their own practice and engage with students, staff and public. Some works will be discreet and surprising, some will have a direct dialogue with the location and the people who see them every day. The gallery will produce a guide to orientate visitors around the campus and discover works as diverse as wall painting, sculpture and photography. An information hub, with a guide to each location, will be located in the foyer of the Talbot Rice Gallery in Old College, where visitors can pick up an orientation guide and discover more about the artists participating in the project.

There are also details on the Gallery’s website, at [http://www.trg.ed.ac.uk](http://www.trg.ed.ac.uk).

**i³ 2009: Information: Interactions and Impact**


i³ looks beyond the issues of use and accessibility of technology to questions about the way people interact with the information and knowledge content of today’s systems and services, and how this might ultimately affect the impact of that information on individuals, organisations and communities.

We invite the submission of high-quality papers that report original research or critically discuss underlying methodological issues associated with the main themes of the conference. We would particularly welcome papers which address two or more of the following conference themes:

- the quality and effectiveness of user/information interactions (e.g. information literacy);
- patterns of information behaviour in different contexts;
- impact of information or information services on people, organisations, communities and society (e.g. social, learning, cultural and economic outcomes of engagement with information);
- more effective decision making.

Submissions are invited for full papers, short papers, posters and round table discussions. The deadline for receipt of abstracts is 6th February 2009. Full details of the requirements and instructions for submission can be found at [http://www.i3conference2009.org.uk/call09.htm](http://www.i3conference2009.org.uk/call09.htm).

For any further information please see [http://www.i3conference2009.org.uk](http://www.i3conference2009.org.uk/).

Dorothy Williams
(i³ Conference Director)

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Miranda Blennerhassett, painted installation 2008

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Contributions to BITs are welcome.

Copy deadline for March BITs:

Friday 13th February