

New Help services launched

IS User Services Division comes into being on 1st August

The new Information Services Division has been created by combining two former IS divisions – IT User Services (ITUS) and Library User Services (LUS).

The arrangements for day-to-day help with any of the services IS provides – library, IT, learning services – are being revised. The first priority has been to concentrate on the new arrangements for students, to ensure that they get off to a good start next semester.

New IS contact points for students

- Self help: The new IS website at <http://www.ed.ac.uk/is/> (in September)
- Help Line: Email IS.Helpline@ed.ac.uk
Telephone (6) 515151 (if email not possible)
- Help Desk: IS Helpdesk, Main Library, George Square
IS Helpdesk, Darwin Library, The King's Buildings

IT help for staff

College staff and research postgraduates who were formerly supported by IT User Services should continue using the old channels of communication for a few weeks longer; contact details are at <http://www.is.ed.ac.uk/itus/>



The new User Services Division

The new IS division has six sections, each with its own head:

- Help Services: **Barry Croucher**
- Operational Services: **Bryan MacGregor**
- CSE Consultancy Services: **Richard Battersby**
- CMVM Consultancy Services: **Irene McGowan**
- CHSS Consultancy Services: **Abdul Majothi**
- Learning Services: **Nora Moge**

When fully established, the Help Services Section will sustain an integrated Helpdesk and Helpline to provide front-line support for staff, students, visitors and applicants in Library, eLearning and IT services. IS Helpdesks at the Main Library, the Darwin Library and the Site Libraries will continue to be available to offer face-to-face help.

Barry Croucher, Head of Help Services (IS)

Bryan MacGregor, Head of Operational Services (IS)

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Gallery
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Festival:
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SPRINT: EPCC speeds up gene analysis

Gene analysis is becoming increasingly complex and can be greatly enhanced by exploiting the power of high-performance computing (HPC), but the software can be difficult for researchers to use.

EPCC and the Division of Pathway Medicine at the University of Edinburgh have developed a prototype framework called SPRINT, which gives biostatisticians easier access to the power of HPC systems. The Wellcome Trust has now funded the SPRINT project for a further two years, to expand its community of users.

SPRINT (Simple Parallel R INTERface) is an easy-to-use parallel version of R, a statistical language that processes the data gleaned from microarray analysis, a technique which allows the simultaneous measurement of thousands to millions of genes or sequences across tens to thousands of different samples.

There are further details at <http://www.epcc.ed.ac.uk/news/sprint-parallel-statistics-using-r>

Tracy Peet (EPCC)

ECDF Subversion service now available

The Edinburgh Compute and Data Facility – ECDF – has launched a managed ‘Subversion’ version control service as part of the Data side of its offerings.

Subversion allows you to manage, track and coordinate changes to files in a structured and controlled manner. This can be done on an individual level by keeping personal revisions of changes to a program or document you’re working on, or at a group/team level by managing and reviewing changes to files made by several people.

Common uses for Subversion include managing and tracking changes to computer program source files, scientific papers and websites.

The ECDF Subversion service is open to all University staff and researchers, and allows the provisioning of personal repositories as well as group repositories for wider project collaboration both with other researchers in the University and with colleagues from other establishments.

The ECDF Subversion service is a fully managed and resilient service, with data integrity and availability having the utmost priority.

More details on what the service offers and how to apply to use it are provided at <https://www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/display/ecdfwiki/Version+Control+Service>

For more general information about what Subversion is and why it may be of benefit to you, please visit <http://subversion.tigris.org/>

Kevin Tomlinson (IS)

IS Procurement Review

I am the IT Professionals’ Forum representative on the IS Procurement Review. As someone from outwith IS, my role is to provide a sanity check, and offer a non-IS view. I have attended four meetings, and a brief report back is appropriate. That it’s light on facts is indicative of the early stages the Review has reached.

The Review is clearly looking at procurement by the Information Services Group, rather than University-wide procurement in the IT/IS arena. There is the hope, though, that its outcomes and recommendations may be of use across the whole University.

One of the principal aims for IS is to collect and collate information, and enable transparent dissemination mechanisms both within IS and further afield. Another principal aim is to ensure that best practice is followed – difficult always to achieve with devolved purchasing/procurement, the current University model. My instinct is that practice is good (but not perfect).

I’m happy to answer questions (by email to Paul.Caban@ed.ac.uk) on the work of the Review as best I can, or take questions to it. The next meeting is on 3rd September. The workings of the Review Group can be followed at <https://www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/display/itprocurement/Home>

Paul Caban (Business School)

Do you use social media?

The use of ‘social media’ in UK Higher Education is growing rapidly. To get a snapshot of this emerging trend, the University & Colleges Information Systems Association (UCISA) partner Jadu is sponsoring an in-depth research survey into the challenges, applications and benefits of social media. Research findings will provide HE institutions with:

- Better understanding of the challenges and issues faced in implementing social media strategies.
- Shared knowledge of how others are using social media to support strategic and operational activities.
- An understanding of social media usage in UK HE.
- Insight into the range of benefits delivered through social media, currently and in the future.

Anyone involved in the development and/or use of social media in a UK university is invited to complete the online research survey (which should take no more than ten minutes). The closing date is 6th September, and entrants will be put into a random draw for an iPod.

The survey is at https://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=oLJipsh_2bk6lJTovBdfCYfA_3d_3d *

Christine Fiddis (Jadu)

(* URLs are clickable in the online versions of BITS! Ed.)

How UK HE uses the Web

Eduserv – the not-for-profit organisation that provides IT services for Higher Education – has published the report of its key findings from an investigation into the Management of Web Content in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The research involved 134 respondents from 103 universities.

The key findings include:

- Increasing demands on web teams are not always matched by the necessary resources (despite senior management widely recognising the importance of a good web presence).
- Only 44% of institutions have a web strategy.
- 43% have systems for publishing content to style, content and branding guidelines.
- The most important audience for HEI websites is potential students (UK and Overseas).
- Most institutions use a Content Management System.
- HE websites are increasingly likely to use greater, richer media content and shift towards user-led, personalised websites.
- 63% of university web teams do not have enough resource and strategy to keep up with technological developments.

The aim of the research was to share understanding of how HE institutions are currently managing their web content and to raise awareness of trends and future directions. University websites make an increasingly important contribution to promoting 'brand', and are also the hub for the 'connected institution', delivering crucial operational and communication benefits.

The 'Survey into web content management in higher education' is in the August 2009 section at <http://www.eduserv.org.uk/news>

Simon Bains (IS)

University Website update for Schools and Colleges

The project team for the University's new Website has published a report detailing progress with the rollout and ongoing technical development. This summarises the benefits of working with the project team, and gives some case study examples of recent activities.

Current priorities include planning rollout workload to take the project through to July 2010. It is important that we all talk to each other to manage expectations along the way. The report is at http://www.projects.ed.ac.uk/WDP/restricted_docs/headsofschools/090706-UWP-activity-update.pdf

Dawn Ellis (University Website Project)



IT support for additional needs

Nearly 150 teachers, therapists, lecturers and other staff from schools, colleges and universities attended CALL Scotland's 'ICT and Inclusion' day at Moray House on 17th June. They came to meet 18 of the UK's leading suppliers of technology and software for students with additional support needs in schools and colleges.

Devices that attracted particular attention included:

- The *Livescribe Pulse Smartpen* (available from lansysyt). There are now many digital pens which can be used to transfer handwritten notes into a computer as digital text. The Smartpen does much more; for example the facility to combine audio recordings with written notes is particularly useful – a student could use it to write short notes linked to audio recordings of a lecture.
- The *MyTobii* computer access system, demonstrated by Smartbox, allows a person with severe and complex disabilities to control a computer by eye-gaze, with the mouse pointer following the direction of their eyes. This device has allowed a number of people with physical disabilities and no speech to communicate independently for the first time.

There were presentations by staff from CALL Scotland on the *Scottish Books for All* database of accessible print materials, and on adding text-to-speech facilities to web browsers. Teachers from local schools gave presentations on using technology to support pupils with autism and dyslexia.

The focus of this year's 'ICT and Inclusion' day was broadened to include further and higher education. The presentation by Craig Mill from the JISC Regional Support Centre in Edinburgh on *AccessApps* (a collection of free utilities that can be run from a memory stick) was particularly popular. The session on transition from school to further education, led by Alison Cox from the Brite Centre, was also well-attended.

Feedback from the day was very positive, with 80% of attendees describing it as "very useful" or "extremely useful". 'ICT and Inclusion' has run annually since 2001. Next year's event, the tenth, will be held in June 2010.

Allan Wilson (CALL Scotland)



The world watches Edinburgh graduations

The University's graduation ceremonies took place in June and July, and were webcast by the IS Multimedia Team. The ceremonies were watched in over 80 countries around the world – including the United States, Canada, China, Germany, Australia, Japan, South Africa, India and Nepal. They were very popular in the University itself, allowing students and staff who were not able to attend in person to enjoy their friend's big day.

For information about webcasting events see the IS Multimedia team's website at <http://www.media.is.ed.ac.uk/>

Alex Carter (IS)



UNESCO City of Literature in full swing

The University played a key part in Edinburgh becoming the world's first City of Literature in 2004. A City of Literature Trust was then established to promote this side of the city's cultural life. A great deal is going on this month, not least with the Book Festival, as you can see at <http://www.cityofliterature.com/whats-on.aspx?sec=5&pid=20>

If you'd like to sign up for the monthly newsletter, send your name and email address to newsletter@cityofliterature.com.

Nick Stroud (IS)

Sustainable IT

'Implementing Green IT' is a free meeting on Monday 24th August, at Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh. Topics to be addressed by speakers from Edinburgh Napier University, Norwich City College, SusteIT and others include:

- Identifying cost-effective and easily-achieved improvement opportunities
- Persuading managers and colleagues that Green IT is feasible and worthwhile
- How automatic power-down can pay back in a few months
- Effective implementation of virtualisation

- More efficient data centre cooling
 - Raising the desktop bar through the new Energy Star 5 scheme.
- There are more details at http://www.rsc-eden.co.uk/events/event_details.asp?eid=29

A short briefing paper on Zero Carbon Data Centres is available at <http://www.susteit.org.uk/>

Lisa Hopkinson (Bradford)

How time flies...

It is 15 years since the University launched its presence on the World Wide Web – EDINFO; <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/bits/1994/august.html>

Liam McDowell (IS)

Historic database of Edinburgh students

In an age where the demand for online content is huge, we often find ourselves wrestling for ways to resurrect legacy databases and get them online in a meaningful way. At the same time we can find a lot of tabulated data in paper format, very database-friendly, which just needs a resource allocated to allow it to be keyed. These two aspects came together recently.

Some years ago the Library's Special Collections received an extensive database of past medical students compiled by Dr (now Prof.) Lisa Rosner as part of her research. Covering the period 1762–1826, this listed students studying medicine here during the extremely important Enlightenment period. The data from this core record has been supplemented with other biographical and career-related data.

This database was of course never designed to go online, but to be read by specific local software – and technology has since moved on. The data sat around for some time on floppy disks, largely inaccessible. After a few unsuccessful attempts, we eventually managed to convert it into a readable format. We were also able to marry up some of the entries (1762–1809) to digital images we had already created from the University's first Laureation Album, which shows the students' signatures at graduation.

The original idea was just to get the data into a manageable format, see what we could do with it, and hopefully use it as a resource for ourselves. A simple MySQL database was used for that.

Once we could get tangible results from the data, we soon realised the significance of what we had recovered, and the large potential audience for it. Special Collections receives an extremely large number of genealogical enquiries every year and the quality and quantity of this data would contribute significantly towards answering some of those.

The success of this conversion initiated a more thorough trawl for any similar data that might be sitting around on network drives, CDs, floppy disks *etc.* Three further sets of data emerged: a small sample of medical students from the mid 19th century, Veterinary students 1911–1955, and First Matriculations 1890–1899.

We also had discussions with other colleagues. Those at New College were looking to put online some data they had in paper format to much the same end (see following article). Interestingly, some names known to me as having University of Edinburgh degrees turn up in the New College data, indicating the close relationship

between the two institutions before they came together in the 1930s.

Although the database is far from perfectly formed (it is amateur-ish in construction and has both technical and editorial glitches) it has allowed us to surface information on over 30,000 former students. It also allows us to evaluate data content and structure and the user interface for future development, a direction we are keen to pursue as resources allow. In the shorter term we will add any other legacy data that we can, should any more come to light.

In the meantime, rather than keeping it invisible, we have made it publicly available – with the caveat that it is still very much work-in-progress – at <http://www.archives.lib.ed.ac.uk/students/>

Grant Buttars (IS)

New College students 1843–1943

New College, Edinburgh was founded 166 years ago as an independent college for the training of ministers for the newly formed Free Church of Scotland, only becoming part of the University of Edinburgh in 1935. Today New College Library frequently receives enquiries from family historians, and from the Presbyterian church family worldwide, about ministers who studied at New College. While New College Library does not keep student records, we were able to answer these enquiries using typewritten lists of matriculated New College students and the printed reference resources in New College Library. We were keen to make this information more easily accessible to the world and took the opportunity to work as a project partner with the Edinburgh University Archives.

The data are a combination of two different lists drawn up by J. Robb and Hugh Watt. Together they provide the master list of students who matriculated at New College for the first 100 years of its existence. Nearly 5,000 men (and a few women) are listed, who came from all over the world to study in Edinburgh. The entries have been augmented with brief biographical information (where available), drawn chiefly from the *Annals of the Free Church of Scotland*, and also the *Annals of the United Free Church of Scotland 1900–1929* and the *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae*, subject to data protection guidelines. The data entry work was generously funded by a grant from the Church of Scotland. The project database has already been welcomed by staff, students and alumni from the School of Divinity.

Christine Love-Rodgers (IS)

IS skills development courses in August and September

The IS Skills Development team runs IT courses and short sessions for Edinburgh University staff and students. We're based at 19 Buccleuch Place in the central area and also run some courses at The King's Buildings.

See below for August's and September's course dates, and our web pages for further details and bookings: <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/usd/cts/courses/>

Course dates for September 2009 to February 2010 will be available for booking on our web pages from the beginning of August.

Jenni Reeves (IS)

Date	Course	Location
August:		
3	Introduction to Access Database Management	BP
3	Smart charts: creating stylish charts in Excel (T)	DHT
4	Basic Image Manipulation Techniques using PhotoShop	BP
4	Wikis: What can I do as an Administrator?	BP
5	Producing a Thesis using Word	BP
5	WebCT Vista Fundamentals	BP
6	Editing Web Pages with Contribute	BP
6	WebCT Communication Tools	BP
10	By the numbers: Word numbered headings made easy (T)	DHT
13	Creating Leaflets and Posters with InDesign	BP
13	Writing for the Web	DHT
18	WebCT Vista Fundamentals	BP
18	Creating Web Pages with HTML	BP
18	PowerPoint: Basic Skills for Creating a Presentation	BP
19	Excel Introduction: Creating Basic Spreadsheets and Charts	BP
20	Managing Bibliographies with EndNote	BP
20	Introduction to Wikis	BP
20	Working together with Word, Excel and PowerPoint (T)	DHT
21	Introduction to Adobe PDFs and Acrobat Professional	BP
21	Intermediate Adobe Acrobat Professional	BP
September:		
1	WebCT Communication Tools	BP
8	WebCT Assessment and Assignments	BP
9	WebCT Vista Fundamentals	BP
16	Basic Image Manipulation Techniques using PhotoShop	BP
16	Excel Introduction: Creating Basic Spreadsheets and Charts (Part 1)	BP
23	Excel Introduction: Creating Basic Spreadsheets and Charts (Part 2)	BP
24	Introduction to Access Database Management	BP
24	Producing a Thesis using Word	BP
28	Introduction to Computing	BP
28	Introduction to Wikis	BP
30	Managing Bibliographies with EndNote	BP

Venues:

- BP – 19 Buccleuch Place
- DHT – David Hume Tower

(T) denotes lunchtime taster session – bring your sandwiches!

Using WebCT tools to keep in touch

Technology-enhanced learning, and some WebCT tools in particular, can support a strategy for keeping in touch with students and maintaining a teaching programme that has little or no face-to-face contact.

Information Services provides courses – summarised below – to support staff in their use of WebCT, and can also provide tailored training for small groups in Schools. Courses cater for both new and more advanced WebCT users.

If you are considering this option, please start now! Developing a usable WebCT course component need not be time-consuming or require advanced skills, but does have to be thoughtfully integrated into course planning and delivery. Don't leave it to the last minute!

If you would like to discuss any aspect of using technology to support teaching and learning, please contact the team at ellearnhelp@ed.ac.uk.

WebCT Vista Fundamentals

This course introduces new users to the basics of course-building and teaching with WebCT Vista.

- 5th August, 2–5pm
- 18th August, 9.30–12.30
- 9th September, 2–5pm

Communications Tools

This course explores how to use WebCT tools to support interaction.

- 6th August, 2–5pm
- 1st September, 9.20–12.30

Assessment and Assignments

This course looks at the built-in WebCT tools that help manage formative quizzes, self-tests, assignments and submissions.

- 8th September 9.30–12.30

Further details of all these courses and how to book are at <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/usd/cts/courses/>

Nora Moge (IS)

eLearning @ ed 2009

The eLearning@ed conference has become a keystone event for anyone in the University interested in this increasingly central aspect of teaching, learning and research. It provides an opportunity for all staff to review and discuss current activity in a selected area. Speakers this year will be highlighting ways in which technology can support group working and peer engagement.

The all-day conference is on 26th August at the National e-Science Centre (NeSC), South College Street.

The provisional timetable includes a Keynote from invited speaker Megan Quentin Baxter and a panel discussion of the University's eLearning Strategy Implementation Report, chaired by Michael Begg and with panelists David Dewhurst, Jeff Haywood, Paul McLaughlin, Charlotte Waelde and Evan Beswick. Other presentations include:

- Using 'YouTute' for group work in Informatics.
- Adobe Connect for 'canned' presentations and virtual meetings.
- Peer marking and Group Projects in VetMed.
- Collaborative learning activities on the eLLM.
- Student view of group work in eLearning.
- Talking to people who aren't there: Using Skype and Second Life in an online course.
- Teaching Studio – Design and Use.

The draft eLearning strategy and the detailed programme are available on the conference website via <https://www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/display/eLPP/>

We have space for posters and/or demos for anyone who would like to showcase their work at break times. If you would like space for a poster please contact Daniela Gachago (email Daniela.Gachago@ed.ac.uk).

Karen Howie (eLPP)

Cuda course

This course is about the Cuda technology developed by NVidia using GPU processors, which can substantially speed up certain applications. There is an explanation of Cuda at http://www.nvidia.com/object/cuda_what_is.html

A list of applications being ported can be found at <https://www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/display/ecdfwiki/Applications+Nvidia+are+porting+to+GPU>

The course is on Wednesday 19th August, in the EPCC training room, JCMB, The King's Buildings, from 10am till 5pm or thereabouts.

To book a place please send an email to epcc-support@ed.ac.uk. If you do not have an ECDF account please register for a temporary one, mentioning the Cuda course as your field of interest, at <http://www.ecdf.ed.ac.uk/accessform2.shtml>

John Blair-Fish (IS)

Mobile Learning: what exactly is it?

This conference on mobile learning is organised by the Multimedia and Information Technology group of the Chartered Institute of Library (CILIP) and Information Professionals, and will be held on 21st September at Aston University.

The event will explore current issues and developments around mobile learning in the information services environment. Speakers will include:

- Mike Sharples, (Nottingham)
- Jon Trinder (Glasgow)
- John Traxler (Wolverhampton)
- Martin Bazley (Online Experience Consultant)

Further details and booking information are available at <http://www.cilip.org.uk/specialinterestgroups/bysubject/multimedia/events>

Wilma Alexander (IS)

edikt Technical Workshop

This meeting is for edikt2 participants to share information about the technical aspects of the various activities being funded through edikt2. The meeting is also open to other interested parties around the University and beyond.

edikt – eScience Data, Information and Knowledge Transformation – has been running since 2002, and is using computational science to extract knowledge from vast datasets and simulation models. For more information, see the project website at <http://www.edikt.org.uk/>

The workshop is at 2pm on 16th September, in room 5215, James Clerk Maxwell Building, The King's Buildings. For more details see <http://www.edikt.org.uk/edikt2/WorkshopsActivity/2009-09-16>

Terry Sloan (EPCC)

e-Science Institute seminar

Istvan Juhos, of the University of Szeged, Hungary, will speak on 'Graph Vertex Colouring through Clustering', at 4pm on 18th August, at the e-Science Institute, 15 South College Street. The seminar is open to all interested parties in academia and industry. There is no need to register for this event, and those attending the lecture are invited to stay for tea and coffee at 5pm. There are full details at <http://www.nesc.ac.uk/esi/events/1008/>

Jennifer Hurst (NeSC)

Using FoI in research

The Research Information Network (RIN) is holding a free event in Glasgow in September to raise awareness of using the Freedom of Information Act (FoI) as a research tool, and to aid understanding of the new access regime. See <http://www.rin.ac.uk/foi-scotland>

Sarah Gentleman (RIN)

BCS visit to Museum of Communication

The Edinburgh branch of the British Computer Society has arranged a visit to the Museum of Communication in Burntisland, Fife on 12th August, at 6:45pm.

The Museum specialises in communications technology from the pre-electric telegraph to the present time, and has a major collection of artefacts covering early electrics, telegraphy, telephony, radio, television and information technology.

This year it has a new exhibition 'Great Scots who Changed the World' that features Scottish inventors and innovators in the field of communications, science and technology, whose works and ideas have literally changed the world. Alongside high-profile Scots such as Bell, Baird, Maxwell, Kelvin and Watson-Watt, there are David Brewster, Lord George Murray, James Bowman Lindsay and Alexander Bain – to name but a few. Their contributions too were enormous.

There are full details at <http://www.edinburgh.bcs.org/events/>

David Muxworthy (BCS)

Talbot Rice in the Festival

The University's Talbot Rice Gallery exhibition for the Edinburgh Festival features Jane and Louise Wilson, two of the most important and innovative artists working in film and video today. The exhibition centres on the story of an unmade Kubrick film and the actress who was to play the lead role, Johanna ter Steege.

Unfolding the Aryan Papers is a work based on the Wilsons' extensive research in the Stanley Kubrick Archives, and on his abandoned film based on Louis Begley's novel *Wartime Lies*, the story of a Polish Jewish woman assuming the identity of a Catholic in order to save her family.

Jane and Louise Wilson studied at Newcastle and Dundee respectively, graduated together from Goldsmiths in 1992, and were nominated for the Turner Prize in 1999. This is their first solo exhibition in Scotland.

The exhibition is open in the Talbot Rice Gallery, Old College, on weekdays from 10am to 5pm, until 26th September. Admission is free, and there are further details at <http://www.trg.ed.ac.uk/>

Martin Minton (IS)

Courses on writing research proposals

The Library & Information Research Group (LIRG) and Career Development Group Scottish Division are offering two linked courses in September on how to write a successful research proposal.

The first is on 4th September and consists of presentations by successful library and information researchers. The second, on the 21st, is a half-day workshop for discussing sample proposals and experiences of applying.

Both sessions are at Strathclyde University, Glasgow, and are aimed at students and academics. They will be particularly suitable for those who have never submitted a research proposal and for those who might apply for LIRG funding.

For further information please email Alan.Poulter@cis.strath.ac.uk.

Sheila Cannell (IS)

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Some acronyms explained:

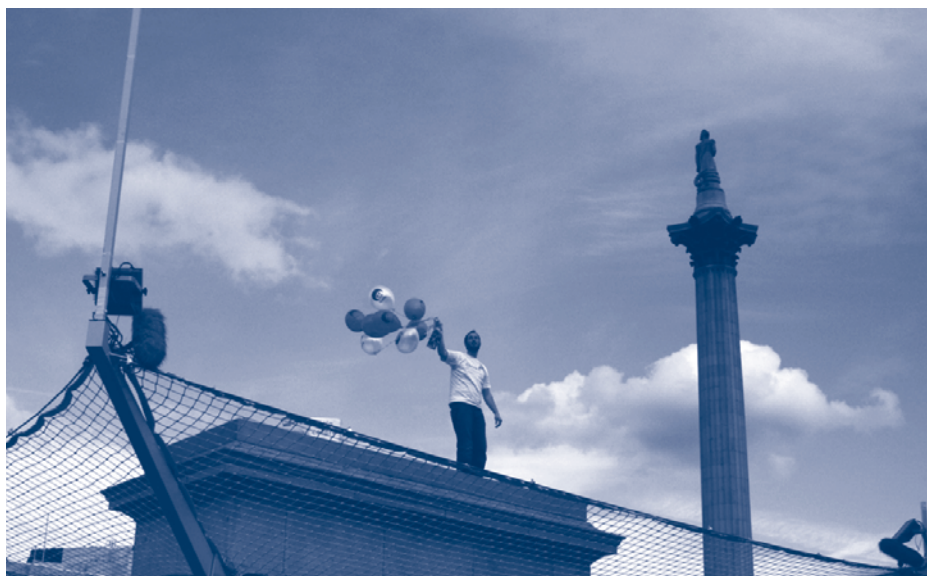
<http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/ucsinfo/acronyms.html>

NB: if you fail to access a URL shown in *BITS*, 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 September *BITS*:

Friday 14th August



Shawn Coulman on the fourth plinth in London's Trafalgar Square; you can find out about his exploit at <https://www.bmycharity.com/V2/shawnonthep4thplinth>