Web Committee
February 2006
General Update

1.0 Update on the CMS and Portal re-phasing

In light of the budgetary challenges faced by the University, the Web Development Project has been reviewed. Highlights of the revised programme of work for the period February 2006 to August 2006 are as follows:

1. Recruit two new Computing Service Web Developers with a start date of 1 August 2006. The aim is to commence the recruitment process in April 2006 and tap into the graduate recruitment market. The original start date was 1 February 2006.

2. Relaunch the University’s home page and top level navigation pages as previously planned. The relaunched pages will be based on the information structure which evolved from the User Needs Analysis Project conducted in 2005. The relaunched pages will also incorporate a revised ‘look and feel’ which is being developed by the web design agency, LeapFrog, http://www.leap-frog.co.uk/.

3. Examine portal options with special emphasis on uPortal, http://www.uportal.org/. uPortal is open source software which is now widely used in the international HE sector. In the UK, Bristol, Edinburgh, Hull, Liverpool and Nottingham are major users. The evaluation will contrast uPortal with comparable systems such as Oracle Portal and a recommendation will be submitted to SIPIG.

It should be noted that in the absence of two new Computing Service Web Developers being in place from 1 February 2006, the portal evaluation will not be an exhaustive in depth study. However, it is felt that the evaluation will be a useful learning opportunity for the Web Office and Computing Service with the potential of gaining experience of a product which the University may decide to deploy.

4. The CMS and Portal specification will be amended in light of the results of the Portal evaluation. The specification will be completed by 31 July 2006 ready for the arrival of new Computing Service staff who will provide final input to the document before a formal procurement process commences which will examine commercial and open source solutions.

5. Review of Google search technology. Google has launched a new search appliance (hardware and software) called Google Mini, http://www.google.co.uk/enterprise/mini/. The appliance is of potential interest to York and will be investigated further.

6. The Library in consultation with the Web Office will investigate the use of Macromedia’s Contribute 3. Other institutions have reported that Contribute 3 is a simple authoring tool which works well at a departmental level. The investigation will look at a number of topics including the practical challenges associated with making Contribute 3 available across the institution.
2.0 Update on the redesign of the website and the production of templates

After a series of on campus demonstrations in October 2005, the contract for the redesign of York’s website was awarded to Leap Frog, [http://www.leap-frog.co.uk/](http://www.leap-frog.co.uk/). The design company came up with a number of designs which were shown to the Web Office, Communications Office, the Chair of Web Committee and the Chair of Web Forum. The latter two members of staff represent York’s community of DWOs (Departmental Web Officers).

A new home page, set of top level navigation pages and departmental home page template have been developed. Final testing of the pages will be completed before Easter. Further information about the new home page and departmental templates will be given in the coming weeks.

3.0 Computing Service Web Staff Update

Two members of staff have joined the Web Services Group:

1. Kelvin Hai has been appointed as VLE Systems Administrator. This is a new role. Kelvin joins from the University of East Anglia.
2. Carl Stovell has joined as YorkWeb Systems Administrator to replace Chris Kilgour who left last year. Carl formerly worked for Bishop Burton College.

4.0 Web Forum Update - Role of DWO

A generic job description for the DWO, [http://www.york.ac.uk/coord/docs/sumtasks.pdf](http://www.york.ac.uk/coord/docs/sumtasks.pdf) was compiled in 2003. In light of changing technology and legislation, the role of the DWO needs to be re-examined. A working group will be setup to progress this. Members of Web Forum will be invited to participate.

5.0 Committee Reform

Information Committee was retired at the end of the last calendar year. The Committee will be replaced by the Information Strategy Group (ISG). Further information can be found at [http://www.york.ac.uk/admin/po/cmte/isg/](http://www.york.ac.uk/admin/po/cmte/isg/) The Chair of Web Committee and the Director of Communications are members of ISG.

In parallel with ISG, the PVC for Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning & Teaching), Professor Trevor Sheldon, the Librarian, the Director of the Computing Service and the Web Manager will meet on a termly basis to co-ordinate work and share information.

The role of Web Committee will be reviewed as the Web Development Project gathers momentum.

William Mackintosh
Web Manager
9 February, 2006