

Minutes of the meeting held 13th Dec 2006 *Present:* James Chong, Paul Waite, Julie Lord, Richard Firn (Chair), Dawn Cartwright, Ian Jennings, Lorna Evans. *Cake:* Carrot/apple. Apologies for absence. None

ICDB 06/22 Minutes of the previous meeting

These were accepted.

ICDB 06/22 Matters arising from previous minutes

Software Audit (ICDB 06/02, 03/22, 02/21 and 06/11). There is no evidence of this being a significant problem so this will now be implemented when time allows.

Agresso and e-procurement. (ICDB 06/11) DC reported a lack of urgency at the University level but some hints that they are looking for a cheaper option. The committee agreed that after the considerable effort by Andrew Collingwood and others in evaluating three systems, the possible adoption of any other system should be fully discussed with users. The Agresso system will be updated in mid 2007 but that update will not address the usability issues that bedevil the ordering modules. IJ said that he had been assured that the updated Agresso will be fully browser compliant and will not depend on IE.

Bulletin revamp. (ICDB 06/11). The Chair apologised for his inaction. PW suggested that now the University servers would be able to run PHP some other options were becoming available and he would suggest some alternative formats to Jo Brighton and Julie Lord. He could provide some training to those contributing to the Bulletin but University training should also be available.

Classroom PC facilities. (ICDB 04/14). Plans were being made for the adaptation of existing facilities. It was agreed that IJ and his team needed to be fully consulted so that he could agree to a scheduled period during which to complete their work.

New IT post. This appointment had been stopped by the university and department's financial crisis. There was some uncertainty as to whether the post had been frozen or lost. Clarity on this issue will be needed before the next meeting when that the implications can be considered.

Web Updating (ICDB 06/19) The top level pages are all now based on the new template. However, it was noted that this had been a much more demanding exercise that had been intimated at the time Biology had been assigned to the trial. Once again the communication and consultation between University IT planners and the actual users in departments had not been

optimal (see ICDB 06/19). Had the Biology Dept not been able to devote its own IT resources to supporting the work, it would have placed excessive demands on many staff who would not have received adequate training and support from the University. The long delayed Content Management System is not expected before 2009 and there have been some reassurances (?) that the new template will migrate to the new system.

Authoritative Staff Database. (ICDB 06/15) IJ introduced his strategy document which met with general approval. It was agreed that his approach would take the department one step closer to its aim of having one key database containing all staff information. This database would derive some information from the University Computing Service IDM Project database and all other departmental databases would share key information with this master database. There was some concern that too many people were seeking to store staff information in their own systems without acknowledging the need to co-ordinate our information systems. The plans under discussion could only be implemented efficiently and effectively if the Database/Web position was to be filled. The issue of co-ordinating the databases in the department and resourcing the future developments would be discussed at the next meeting.

ICDB 06/23 University Computing Service Issues

The Committee welcomed the news that IJ attended several groups:

- Data Storage
- Identity Management
- IT Business Continuity
- Information Security
- Home Working

on behalf of the department, groups which were discussing some important issues that could well have an impact on the Biology IT services. Discussions of all these topics were at an early stage and he would bring to the Committee any specific items that required more consideration.

ICDB 06/24 VLE.

PW had been given the role of Departmental VLE Co-ordinator. He reported that the first phase of the implementation had been satisfactory. However, both he and Julie Lord expressed concern that too many staff were inadequately trained in using the VLE, consequently they were not really exploiting the opportunities that the system could give them. As usual, too many staff were not allowing enough time to prepare and mount their material

on the system, with the first year examinations seemingly being poorly considered. It was agreed that these were academic issues and the Chair of the BoS would be alerted to them.

Richard Firn

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