

Information Committee
Minutes of Meeting held on 2 March 2010

Present: Dawn Cartwright, James Chong, Stephanie Hazel-Gant;
Ian Jennings (Chair), Julie Lord, Paul Waites

Action

10/01 Apologies for absence and committee membership

There were no apologies.

10/02 Minutes of meeting held 14 May 2010

The minutes were accepted.

10/03 Matters arising from minutes of meeting on 14 May 2010

i *08/14ii Information Systems Developer (Information / document management)*

The position has been filled with Mike Marshal taking on the role. Part of his workload will involve setting up collaborative systems to aid in the production of grant proposals and research papers. The rest of his time will be taken up with configuring a document management system for use by the department. He is starting with the Undergraduate and Graduate offices. Advice regarding the process has been taken from people outside of the Department including Charles Fonge (Records Management Strategy) and Tom Smith (Collaborative Software Specialist, Computing Service). It is envisaged that a trial system will be in place by April.

ii *08/15ii Group Classifications*

No further update.

iii *08/17 Visiting Associates Email list*

No further update. However, the issue of providing a University wide email address book system (addresses available in Thunderbird) was raised at the last University Computing Committee and the Computing Service have agreed to implement such a system. They have also resurrected the personal name email addresses project and hope to have this operational soon.

iii *09/06 Data Security / DPA / Bulletin*

The University is looking to improve its standards of information control by conforming to ISO 27001 (full name: ISO/IEC 27001:2005 - Information technology -- Security techniques -- Information security management systems – Requirements). An increasing number of grant-funding bodies now expect institutions to conform to the standard before any data can be released for research purposes. However, the standard has to be applied on an institutional basis and although many of the current practices within Biology conform, other departments at the university have some way to go. Implementation of the standard would require the centralisation of risk data and the encryption of sensitive data on laptops and other mobile devices. Such managed encryption with backup passwords would incur an annual cost.

iii *09/04 Shared Photocopying and Printing*

The trial use of networked printers in other departments is still ongoing with a few software glitches yet to be resolved. The major barrier to the success of the system will be the cultural change in attitude towards shared as opposed to 'private' printers in every office as people may still decide purchase their own printers rather than use the ones in the corridor.

10/04 CMS rollout in Biology

A migration assistant has been based in the Department for the last two weeks. So far, content from the Undergraduate pages, Technology Facility and the Staff pages have all been moved to the new system. It is expected that the external-facing content will be ready to go live in 6-8 weeks once additional images have been found to furnish the pages. However, the Undergraduate pages may require some further thinking as to their content. There needs to be clarification as to what is migrated to the VLE (see 10/05 for further notes about the issue).

Once the site is live, updating the pages should be much simpler than using Dreamweaver with most updates requiring nothing more than a word-processing job. This means that staff can have direct control over their own pages without having to go through a third party. As it is a web-based application, no software is required and updates can take place off campus.

The new updated version of Terminal 4 (T4) will make copying and pasting from Word much easier – at the moment it is not possible to copy and paste tables from Word. It is not known when the new version of T4 will be available.

A major issue is that ColdFusion (CF) does not work with CMS. This would mean that pages requiring CF would need to be set up as stand-alone pages. They would have the same outward appearance as the rest of the site but would need to be managed via Dreamweaver. Alternatively, news feeds, as used by the Chemistry Department, could be used instead. The key affected pages include the Biology home page, admissions, room bookings and project choices etc.

10/05 VLE / “T” drive

The current policy on what should be located on the VLE is still problematic. There is a very large amount of information on the web used by students and teaching staff which would be difficult to locate on the VLE with the biggest drawback being that it is not possible to directly link to items within the VLE – clicking just takes you to the top level. However, the T drive cannot be easily accessed off campus. The spread of information across different locations is proving confusing for students.

Other institutions use ‘Portals’ which may be the way forward. With portals, there is one location where all the information a student will need can be listed so it doesn’t actually matter where the information is actually stored. Blackboard may be replaced and so clarification is needed on how information is stored and accessed in the future.

IJ to contact Calvin Dytham regarding setting up a meeting to further clarify the use of the VLE. **IJ**
JC to contact Bill Macintosh (Web manager) regarding portals. **JPJC**

10/06 Recording of lectures

A pilot study has been carried out to ascertain the success of recording lectures which would be made available to students after the event. The software is set up to start recording 5 minutes before a lecture is due to start, and then to finish 5 minutes after the end. Once edited, the lecture can be published at the discretion of the lecturer.

So far, Michael Thom and James Chong have had lectures recorded. The recordings have taken place in B006. Conclusions so far highlight the need for a radio mike when lecturing in the larger theatres to enable the lecturer to be heard more clearly and minimise background noise. Also, the software recording the slides needs to refresh much quicker to avoid skipping slides which are only shown for a short time. So far, the recordings have received positive feedback with comments about potential usefulness for revision. There doesn’t appear to be a detrimental effect on attendance.

The next step is to carry out a larger trial of 100 lectures. It’s not clear yet whether members of staff will be able to opt in or have to opt out of the scheme.

So far, £10k has been spent on equipment and software by the University. Costs are proving higher than expected as the company which provides the video editing software also provides the web hosting of the finished videos, a service which they charge for. The boxes for recording are £3k each and not beyond the means of the Department, but hosting costs could prove to be an issue.

The final drawback is that at the moment it is not possible to capture what is written on a black/white board though other people have got round this problem by using a ‘digital Visualiser’ which acts like an interactive whiteboard.

10/07 Reports from University Committees

i SIPIG

- The concept of a portal, in addition to the VLE was discussed to bring together in one place all the links and sources of information for students.
- Text-messaging is now available through the student enquiry screen.
- RIIS (Research and Innovation Information System) has chosen the PURE software product and should be in place within the next 12 months in time for the REF deadline.
- The eProcurement software trial will come to Biology in April. A range of the most frequently used catalogues will be available on the system but there will also be an option to place free text orders.
- Agresso is due to be replaced within the next 5 years.

ii UCC

- The Computing Service is going to change its name to IT Services from August.
- A new system to allow remote (including off campus) access to your University computing desktop is being developed and may replace or supplement the existing University supported desktop. The development is likely to take at least 12 months.
- A new University central file store system (ProjectFS) has been set up to complement the existing RentedFS storage facility. ProjectFS storage will be considerably less expensive than RentedFS.

10/08 Windows 7 support

Biology IT are aiming to support Windows 7 on new PCs and laptops from May and not April as originally planned. The delay is due to IT support staff being off work for several weeks.

10/09 Any other business

- There was a discussion as to whether the Bulletin should be open or closed to public viewing. The advantage of it being closed is that it prevents potentially delicate information from being seen outside of the University. However, a major drawback is that a closed system is not searchable. It was decided that the Bulletin should be restricted to University only access.
- The new university video streaming service is available online at <http://www.york.ac.uk/services/cserv/stream/site/> . The Department has been given access to a 'dropbox' in which videos can be stored. At the moment PRW, PTR and SH-G have access.
- During the annual programme review, students brought up the issue of an 'email for life' so that they can continue to receive information from the Department.

09/09 Date of next meeting:

IJ will circulate suggestions for dates in early July

IJ