

Information Committee
Minutes of Meeting held on 8 November 2010

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

Action

10/10 Apologies for absence and committee membership

There were no apologies.

10/11 Minutes of meeting held 2 March 2010

The minutes were accepted.

10/12 Matters arising from minutes of meeting on 2 March 2010

i *10/03 Shared Photocopying and Printing*

As reported at the IT Infrastructure Forum on 18th November 2009, a trial with Danwood was carried out to investigate Proof of Concept for replacing current printers and photocopiers on campus with multi-function devices. SIPIG has now adopted the proposal as a formal project. The networked devices can photocopy/print direct from PCs and if successful the units will be replacing current photocopiers, while reducing the number of individual printers in offices. DC expressed an interest in her team being involved in a trial. The teaching admin office could also trial the technology.

ii *10/05 VLE/"T" drive*

All Stage One module lecture notes are now available on the VLE. Student feedback will not be sought until the end of term, however, no problems have been reported so far. No items have been added to the "T" drive for Stage One modules and other than a few tutorial items it is no longer required.

Second year spring term items are also now being transported over to the VLE and should be ready for next term.

All first year information can be deleted from the "T" drive once tutorial items have been moved to the VLE.

PW

iii *10/06 Recording of Lectures*

This is taking place on a University-wide level. There are issues to do with copyright and intellectual property rights and these concerns have been addressed by the University Teaching Committee. Within the Department, Dale Sanders, Gavin Thomas and JC have had their lectures recorded. JC has tested the video editing software which provides only limited functionality. It is not possible to 'bookmark' sections of the recording to correspond with specific slides of PowerPoint presentations. This functionality would have been useful for jumping to relevant parts of the lecture rather than having to sit through the entire presentation. The video feed from B002 to B103 for Stage One overspill provides some of the technology to carry out recordings though this is not happening at present. Feedback from students on how the video streaming has been received is not available yet.

iii *10/08 Windows 7*

Progress on rolling out Windows 7 has not developed as quickly as hoped due to some technical issues and limited staff time. The aim is to continue to press forward in the Department. However, IT services are now looking to provide a Windows 7 service from scratch led by a new Digital Workspace Group which has been set up within IT Services. The plan is to involve departments from the start and IJ advises that Biology should take an active

role in this endeavour, but only adopt the system if it fulfils the needs of the Department. Classroom machines could be upgraded to Windows 7 next summer but it is not yet clear how the rest of the Department would be affected.

In addition, the University is proposing to remove internal charging for network and supported desktop connections. Biology doesn't pay for connections as it runs its own services, but because the Computing Service still relies on income from network connections they may look to charge in a different way which may then affect Biology (connections are currently charged at approximately £150 each). The charging model will remain unchanged for the current year, but the Service is discussing possible alternative models for the future. DC and IJ will be meeting this week with Kay Mills-Hicks to discuss implications for Biology.

10/11 Biology IT Strategy

IJ tabled the paper 'Biology Department Information Strategy' (see appendix 1 below)

Pitching the level right will require a balance between too much restraining detail which leads to the document being out of date in a matter of months through to not enough detail providing guidance. The document should be read in the context of the University's Information Strategy and focuses on issues which are of significance to the Department.

The first set of points focus on the work Mike Marshal is doing with regard to a document/information management system. He has been working with JL for undergraduate teaching administration, Monica Bandeira for admissions (with a link to SITS) and Julie Knox for graduate administration. The aim is to improve the efficiency of managing information within the Department.

The next paragraph outlines methods of measuring whether a piece of software as useful with the focus on the end user being key.

The final paragraphs concerns centrally provided services which could be made available in Biology if they are considered potentially useful and cost effective.

One point raised from the document was the need to include a statement about mobile devices.

10/12 CMS Rollout & VLE

The external facing pages have now gone live. The internal facing pages will be next, with the graduate pages to be published first.

It was hoped that staff would be able to receive training in-house on Web CMS with a view to managing their own pages. However, the Web Office have requested that XO'D provide only supplementary training. Further they are unwilling to provide XO'D with high-level access to the CMS, limiting her ability to make structural changes to CMS pages or administer Biology user access rights as they expressed concerns over the number of users having access rights. This is severely extending the time it takes to make the necessary changes as such changes have to be routed through the Web Office.

Other limitations encountered include the long lag between updating and publishing pages on the web – currently it can take over two hours. Also, real-time updates to the seminar database are not possible with the Web Office being reluctant to provide the functionality. Having some pages in CMS and some managed by Dreamweaver would not be beneficial, however, staff do need to be able to manage their own pages. Further discussion is required with the Web Office on how this can be moved forward and JC will follow this up.

JC

10/13 FOIA co-ordinator

SH-G will take over Lorna Evans' role as contact in the Department for Freedom of Information enquiries. As FOI requests need to be dealt with within 20 days of receipt, someone else needs to be to pick up biology@york.ac.uk emails if SH-G is away.

It was proposed that JL approach Chiko Barlow and PW set up a new email account so that she can access the emails.

JL,PW

10/14 Reports from University Committees

i University Infrastructure Forum

Most of the discussions were tied up with issues on Heslington East and Windows 7 deployment. The points raised of interest to Biology was the proposal for IT Services to

manage the Department's network infrastructure. There should be no problem with this in principle, but operational details may need to be formalised with service level agreements.

ii University Computing Committee

Rachel Curwen from the Research Policy Office has run a project to look at introducing a system to bring together information from across the University. A system called Pure has been purchased.

iii Strategic Information Projects Implementation Group

There is a plan to introduce new University ID Cards which contain both a chip (as used in Heslington East) and a magnetic strip (as used in Biology) to allow access to different parts of campus without having to carry two items. Cards available to staff may also contain a photo and could be used for photocopying, purchasing etc. Some departments are objecting to the card being used as a photo ID.

10/15 Research Data Archive

When academics retire or move they often leave behind large volumes of data which no-one can gain access to. It is unclear what to do with such data. One option would be to delete it; another to make it available to everyone in the Department. It was proposed that Research Committee be consulted for advice. IJ will contact the chair of Research Committee.

IJ

10/16 Any other business

DC receive a query from Jane Hill regarding accessing the Sun Calendar on a Blackberry. IJ reported that IT Services are currently reviewing their strategy regarding calendar provision which may or may not include the Sun Calendar.

09/09 Date of next meeting:

TBC

Appendix 1

Department of Biology Information Strategy 2010

To ensure that information relating to the Department of Biology is gathered, stored and processed securely and efficiently and made available to those who require it.

To this end, the Department will develop an information system which will:

- Enable effective searching by using metadata.
- Fulfil obligations under the Data Protection Act by:
 - Ensuring information is not held unnecessarily (automatically archived or destroyed).
 - Document retention policies are built into the workflow rules.
 - Audit who has access to what.
 - Sanitise (redaction of) protected data.
- Enable a document audit trail through versioning control.
- Enable efficient document collaboration with colleagues within the Department, the University and other selected people outside the University.
- Allow access control to be managed at a local (data manager) level.
- Have multiple interfaces to data: web browser, file share (CIFS), imap email folders.
- Integrate with and complement existing systems such as SITS, authentication systems (IDM), CMS (Terminal 4), the Research and Innovation Information System.

To ensure that the information technology which underpins the key processes of the Department (Teaching/Learning, Research and Administration) is useful, dependable and cost-effective.

- Useful. The provision of IT services must meet the needs of the Department. Any service, whether that be the network infrastructure, provision of a desktop (Windows, Macintosh OSX or Linux) or software application (word processing, email, etc.), must as far as possible, fulfil a particular requirement as efficiently as possible. In most cases the needs of the Department are reflected in the needs of individual staff and students and from their perspective, this generally means keeping processes (e.g. software) as simple as possible while at the same time providing the required functionality. However, there are circumstances where the wishes of individuals need to be tempered against the requirements of the overall department. For example, with regard to data security, many individuals will be unaware or think it unnecessary or too cumbersome to back up their data or encrypt potentially sensitive data. It is clearly in the Department's interest to secure such data in order to comply with legislation and also to provide tools and procedures to staff to enable this to happen.
- Dependable. Services need to be available when required, stable when in use and under load (many users) and accurate in their data processing. As it is inevitable that at some point, a service will fail, there needs to be a support structure in place to fix a specific problem and business continuity procedures in place to recover from major incidents.
- Cost-effective. This is a best value judgement based on product cost, functionality, easy of use and support costs.

The Department will make use of centrally provided services (such as email, VLE, central file store) as long as such services fulfil the needs of and are cost-effective to the Department.

The Department believes that in many cases, services are best managed within the Department where local knowledge and better communication with end users enables faster and more accurate responses. It is anticipated that centrally provided services are set up in such a way to facilitate devolved management and that documentation and software configuration tools are made available.

The Department will continue to support a mixed environment of desktop operating systems (Windows, Macintosh OSX and Linux) in support of research, teaching and learning.