Keynotes

All change...

From the Editor

There's a general theme of change running through this issue, as some articles concentrate on phasing out, while others look towards future development.

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On page 2, Mike Jinks writes about staff changes, introducing the new Head of Support Services, and detailing changes to the structure of the Service.

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The Virtual Learning Environment project is of interest to many of our readers. On page 4, Peter Halls writes about the potential benefits of VLEs, and details the fact-finding activities of the VLE steering group.

Joanne Casey

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Keynotes on the web

**Back copies of Keynotes can be found at:
www.york.ac.uk/services/cserv/offdocs/keynotes/**

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Christmas holidays
Brian Souter

The Computing Service building will be closed over the Christmas holiday period from 12.30 on Wednesday 24 December until 09.00 on Friday 2 January. All services will be available as usual outside normal hours but access to the PC rooms will be subject to college opening hours. The Information Desk will be closed throughout this period and no staff will be on duty to attend to any faults.

Access course
Susanne Hodges

In response to staff requests, the popular Microsoft Access course will run over the Christmas vacation on 15, 18 and 19 December at 2.15 in the Wentworth staff training room. The course covers creating tables, importing data, creating multi-table queries, forms and reports, as well as designing and creating a relational database in Access. To book a place, please contact the Information Desk (**infodesk@york.ac.uk**).

SNS update
Robert Demaine

The planned expansion of the Student Network Service (SNS) took place over the summer. In just three months a network infrastructure was built to support the connection of a further 1894 study bedrooms, making a total of 2484 connected study bedrooms. All that effort appears to have been worthwhile as at the time of writing (the start of week 5) some 1359 students are using the service, a takeup of about 55%.

The SNS Support Team of Matt Holmes and Ben Thompson has worked hard, keeping the service running and dealing with over 200 support calls in the first two weeks alone. Only 4% of these related to cabling faults, testimony to the quality of the summer's installation work.

In parallel with their support role, the SNS team, along with other colleagues in the Networking Group, are actively exploring ways and means of extending access to areas not presently covered by the service.

Spam working group
Robert Demaine

Everyone who uses email is familiar with the problem of unsolicited bulk email, or spam as it is more commonly known. It is estimated that spam currently accounts for about 55% of all Internet mail traffic worldwide. This figure may rise to 65% by the end of 2003.

While current anti-spam measures on the central mail service block some 69% of externally initiated mail coming into york.ac.uk, the unsolicited messages which do get through continue to waste enormous amounts of University staff time in dealing with them and in some cases cause offence due to their content. Accordingly, at its last meeting Information Committee decided to set up a working group to devise a University strategy to address this growing problem. The group, chaired by Andy Tudor from Sociology, will have its first meeting shortly.

Information Desk news
Joanne Casey

October is traditionally a busy month on the Information Desk, and this year saw an increase in transactions at the desk. The figures below show a 15% increase in the transactions dealt with at the Information Desk compared to the same period last year, and a 43% increase in the number of queries entered into the Enquiry Tracking System (ETS). An increased level of telephone and electronic enquiries saw a commensurate decrease in the number of 'in person' enquiries, but traffic at the desk was kept high, as anyone who visited us in October will know, boosted by a 45% increase in cash transactions - many of these were students paying for SNS.

ETS entries	October 2002	October 2003
In person	125	115
Telephone	150	185
Email	1206	1981
YorkWeb forms	297	393
Answerphone messages	69	48
In-house	75	30
Total	1922	2752

Transactions	October 2002	October 2003
In person enquiries	1613	1150
Cash transactions	930	1348
Telephone calls	1376	1444
Electronic enquiries	1572	2422
Total transactions	5491	6364
Daily average	239	277

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Staff news
Mike Jinks

We're pleased to welcome Dr David Surtees as Head of Support Services. Following John Illingworth's retirement, we reviewed the responsibilities and activities of the Service in the light of emerging requirements, and implemented some restructuring to:

- provide a clearer focus for web development and support
- integrate the development and support of critical University Information Systems
- exploit strategic liaison with departments
- focus on end-to-end service delivery

David Surtees

The resulting Support Services Group has the following principal responsibilities:

- provision, development and support of the University's standard desktop
- first-line advice, problem-solving and fault-reporting via the Information Desk
- provision and support of standard 'Office' applications eg Microsoft Office, mail, internet browser
- provision and support of academic applications software for both teaching and research
- playing a leading role in the implementation of the University's online learning strategy by the provision, development and support of appropriate software eg VLE
- provision, development and support of computer classrooms and study centres
- tailoring services to reflect the needs of specific constituencies eg racial background or disability
- participating in national initiatives and bodies
- software licence management
- software sales
- information provision eg user guides, Keynotes, Service's web presence
- provision of IT training courses and co-ordination of IT training throughout the University
- ILIAD
- departmental liaison
- supporting the Departmental Computing Officers
- development and monitoring of performance indicators for end-to-end service delivery

David joins us from the University of Newcastle upon Tyne where he held a senior position with similar core responsibilities. He is bringing considerable experience to the role and we look forward to working with him to develop the Service.

Gavin Atkinson has taken up the post of Systems Administrator/Programmer vacated by Simon Thompson. Gavin has been working for us as a temporary technician associated with the Windows 2000 rollout, but will work with Chris Reece and now concentrate on Unix system administration, particularly in respect of the YIMS systems. We wish him well in his continuing work with us.

Keynotes

Old email addresses to be phased out
Mike Brudenell

Many years ago, in the late 1980s, the main computing facilities offered by the University were on large mainframe computers running an operating system called VAX/VMS. Then in the early 1990s the service was migrated to UNIX mainframes, and for a time people had an e-mail address on each service:

VAX/VMS: ozw1@york.ac.uk
UNIX: ozw1@unix.york.ac.uk

In time the VAX/VMX service was retired but, to maintain compatibility, we have so far continued to accept mail arriving for *<username@*unix.york.ac.uk*>*, treating it identically as if it had been destined for the proper *<username@*york.ac.uk*>* address and delivering it accordingly.

At one stage in the past we ran the central mail service on a small workstation (how times have changed!) called "mailer.york.ac.uk". (But note that this was some years ago, and is *not* the same as the mail *reading* machine that has just been retired.) This had a slight idiosyncrasy in that it often sent mail out marked as being from *<username@*mailer.york.ac.uk*>* instead of the official *<username@*york.ac.uk*>* form of address.

When this central mail server was replaced by its successor we again continued to accept and deliver any messages arriving for its idiosyncratic forms of address.

Things have moved on. We are now at a point where no students, and relatively few staff, are using either of these old "@unix.york.ac.uk" and "@mailer.york.ac.uk" forms of address. But spammers are!

If you have been at the University for a number of years you may have noticed you sometimes receive two, or even three, identical copies of certain unsolicited emails. This is usually because the spammer has not just sent a copy to your current address, but has also "sniffed out" and is sending their junk email to some of your old-style addresses too.

Given the ever-increasing tide of spam attempting to pour in to the University's mail service the Computing Service now believes it is time to phase out the old-style e-mail addresses.

How Will This Affect Me?

We believe that the vast majority of people will not be affected at all.

However it is possible that, if you have been at the University a long time, people you correspond with may still be in the habit of sending you messages at one of the old-style addresses. Alternatively if you have been a member of a given mailing list for a very long time, you might be subscribed to it using one of the old-style addresses.

Unfortunately it is often quite difficult to know whether someone has sent you a message at an old-style address. Consequently we will not be simply turning off these address immediately but will instead refuse messages arriving for them, rejecting them with an error response giving the correct form of email address to use instead.

When Will This Happen?

We will be changing the central mail system on the first day of next term: Monday 12 January 2004. From that date you will no longer receive any messages sent to old-style addresses such as:

<ozw1@mailer.york.ac.uk>
<ozw1@unix.york.ac.uk>

You may also receive a little less junk email because of this change!

Virtual Learning Environment
Peter Halls

As some of our readers may know, the university's Teaching and Information Committees have established a joint steering group to direct the introduction of Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) facilities to be available for all departments. The concept of VLEs at York is not new: several departments already use examples of this computer-based technology to provide support for and/or deliver teaching materials to off-campus or campus based students.

The main benefit of the VLE approach, both for students and teachers, is its capacity to offer student-centred learning. For example, 'virtual' seminars where students interact with each other and their tutor, even though they may access the VLE at different times of the day or be physically located in different continents. A supported VLE may also offer a managed mechanism by which students might submit work in electronic form for assessment, subject to the specific requirements of departments. Other benefits may include provision for students needing specialist learning aids, for example to read materials aloud to a student with limited sight or to provide more timely access to advanced training for staff and research students.

At present, this project is at a fact-finding stage: seeking to understand the likely requirements that our various disciplines may have and offering an opportunity to explore pedagogical opportunities and limitations of the VLE approach to teaching. As part of the latter, an Awareness Day has been organised for Wednesday 26 November. This will feed into the preparation of a York VLE Requirements Specification that will form the basis of discussions with the many potential suppliers.

Another issue that is of concern to the steering group is to ensure that, if a VLE were introduced, this would not have the effect of disadvantaging any group of existing or potential students. One part of the work in addressing this concern is a questionnaire for undergraduate and postgraduate students, via the Web-based Student Feedback System, which aims to gather information from current students to help inform the project.

VLEs are not plug-and-play type computer applications: the University and its departments will be making a substantial investment of time, money and support in order to bring an effective facility to York. One application for funding towards these costs has already been submitted and it is hoped that this will enable us to commence evaluation and procurement procedures. This work is estimated to take at least until May 2004, at which point a decision may be possible as to which VLE(s) to obtain/recommend to be supported at York.

This project is only in its early stages and contributions are most welcome. The University has appointed a Learning Technologist, Richard Walker, who is based in the Academic Support Office to act as the project leader and who would be pleased to provide further information or discuss ideas.

Web news
Kriss Fearon

A working group was set up some months ago to investigate the possibility of providing standard templates and style sheets for the use of departmental web authors.

This resource has now been completed and is available on the web at: **www.york.ac.uk/ coord/docs/style/**

Use of the templates and style sheets is not compulsory (although some of the elements included may be). They may be used as they are or adapted to your own requirements.

York Extra
Mike Jinks

The York Extra system provides a personalised mechanism both for University announcements and for departmental communication. It is becoming the *de facto* approach for rapid dissemination of internal University information and is installed automatically on 'supported connections' which constitute around half of the devices connected to the campus network. Other devices, principally 'unsupported connections' and PCs managed as parts of departmental networks, need to have the software installed explicitly. Information on how to do this for 'unsupported connections' is available at **www.york.ac.uk/yorkextra/ help/autostart.htm** or from your Departmental Computing Officer. Information and expertise on exploiting the system for departmental communications is available from the Communications Office. Please take advantage of this facility to ensure that you don't miss important University information.

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YIMS Finance Project update
Tim Franklin

Over the past two years the University YIMS [York Information Management & Systems] Finance project team have been working with Agresso to develop a replacement for the present MAC accounting system. The new system offers significant benefits to all departments and for individual members of staff, in that it will enable staff in all departments to check the status of research grants and run reports/enquiries without the need for hard copy printed transaction reports.

The new system will be introduced to departments from the 12th January 2004 and in order to ensure all departments are well prepared for this major change we are communicating as much detail as possible about the change and its effect on the day to day operations within departments.

Support Arrangements

Access to support will be via the YIMS Online Support Centre at:
www.york.ac.uk/univ/mis/cfm/supportcentre/support_main.cfm

Agresso Training

The Agresso training programme started on 6 October and will see 85 courses delivered during October, November and December. Booking of users onto training courses is being co-ordinated via the departmental administrators. Full details can be found on York Web at:
www.york.ac.uk/univ/mis/cfm/yims/crsbkg.yku/crsbkg_list.cfm

Tutorials (Self-help)

Tutorials covering Stationery web requisitioning, Non-stock web requisitioning, Stock web requisitioning, Logging into Agresso Web Services and Changing your password have been developed by the project team. They are available from 1 December via the YIMS On-line Support Centre:
www.york.ac.uk/univ/mis/cfm/supportcentre/support_main.cfm

and from the YIMS pages accessed through the Interactive York Web section of the Staff web pages:
www.york.ac.uk/np/staffonly/interactive.htm

Post go live training

Post go live training will take the form of reference to tutorials and drop in sessions. There are currently over 2000 members of staff who will need training in the use of Web Requisitioning and Reporting. To enable the training to be delivered in an efficient way and at a time and pace to suit individuals, tutorials in both areas will be made available via the York Web site allowing members of staff to work through the simple processes. To supplement this, from March 2004 through to May 2004, drop in sessions will be made available. This will allow any member of staff to drop in and ask any questions/resolve any issues in the use of the Agresso Web requisitioning and reporting. Full details will be available shortly.

Ordering goods or services from the Computing Service
Sarah Hall

Departments are asked to ensure that all goods demand and charge notes sent to the Computing Service after 1 December 2003 be coded with the new Agresso finance codes. This will greatly aid processing of GDCNs after the cut-off date.

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Frequently asked questions - migrating from Windows 95 to Windows 2000
Joanne Casey

How much longer will the supported Windows 95 service remain in operation?

Following consultation with departments, via the Departmental Computing Officers, Computing Committee recommended that the supported Windows 95 service should cease at the end of the 2003/4 academic year: this was agreed by Information Committee. The exact date for discontinuation is to be confirmed.

Will I need to buy a new PC?

Not necessarily - the recommended specification machine to run Windows 2000 is a Pentium III with 400 MHz processor, 128 Mb RAM and 8Gb hard disk. If your current machine meets this specification, it can be converted to run Windows 2000.

Will I access my email in the same way?

The supported mail reader on Windows 2000 is Microsoft Outlook 2002. Help with using Outlook 2002 can be found at: **www.york.ac.uk/services/cserv/help/mail/Outlook/Outlook2002/**. It's particularly important that you follow carefully the initial configuration instructions the first time you use Outlook.

What about the web?

The default web browser on Windows 2000 is Internet Explorer. You can import your Netscape bookmarks following the instructions at: **www.york.ac.uk/services/cserv/help/migration/bookmark.htm**.

Is the filestore different?

You should store your files on the H: drive (Windows 2000 filestore), also known as My Documents. You will also be able to access your M: drive (Windows 95 filestore), so you will have access to all your existing work.

What if I don't want to switch to Windows 2000?

You can continue to run Windows 95 on your machine but it will operate as an unsupported PC. Either the machine owner or department should take responsibility for management of the system.

I'm using Windows 2000, but can't see any applications. Where are they?

On Windows 2000 Office PCs, the user installs the applications that they require from the centrally provided software. There are two installation procedures in use - step-by-step instructions can be found at: **www.york.ac.uk/services/cserv/help/compyrk/apps.htm**.

Where can I find more help?

See the full set of migration faqs at: **www.york.ac.uk/services/cserv/help/migration/**.

User satisfaction survey
Joanne Casey

The Computing Service will be carrying out a user satisfaction survey in the Spring term, using the Online Feedback System. We plan to offer two separate surveys, one for taught course students, and one for staff and research graduates. The exercise will enable us to determine levels of satisfaction with the service currently offered, and give us the opportunity to ask users their views about potential developments. More detail will be available closer to the date.

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Contacting the Computing Service

Computing Service	Telephone: (01904) 433800
University of York	Direct dial: (01904) 43 followed by ext no.
Heslington	Fax: (01904) 433740
YORK YO10 5DD	Email: *username*@york.ac.uk

www.york.ac.uk/services/cserv/

Information Desk

The Information Desk is your first point of contact with the Computing Service
Telephone: ext 3838
Email: *infodesk*
Open from 9am to 5.15pm Monday to Thursday, and 9am to 4.15pm Friday (*may be closed for training Wednesdays 2pm-3pm*), for problem solving, advice and information, fault reporting, network connections, file restoration, sales, course bookings and user registration. Printed output can be collected from the lobby entrance during opening hours.

Computing Service Staff

Director:	Mike Jinks	3801	*kmj1*
Departmental Secretary:	Lorraine Moor	3801	*lsm1*
Head of Infrastructure:	Robert Demaine	3808	*rld1*
Head of Information Systems:	Kay Mills-Hicks	2101	*kmh8*
Head of Support Services:	David Surtees	3803	*dps4*
Operations Manager:	Brian Souter	3814	*bs1*
Information Officer:	Joanne Casey	3805	*jmc8*

Kashif Amin	3817	*ka14*		Jenny Jackson	4455	*jj5*
Gavin Atkinson	3738	*ga9*		Chris Kilgour	4454	*crhk1*
Linda Bailey	3800	*lcb6*		Fergus McGlynn	3822	*fam6*
Sue Bolton	2102	*sjb28*		John Marsden	3832	*jpm1*
Mike Brudenell	3811	*pmb1*		John Mason	3813	*jrm13*
John Byrne	3812	*jcb1*		Darren Munday	3821	*dam6*
David Chambers	3742	*dac6*		Colin Noble	1747	*cdn1*
Michael Clark	3745	*mpc3*		Nicola Normandale	4695	*ncn1*
Arthur Clune	3129	*ajc22*		Phil O'Connell	3825	*paoc1*
Steve Downes	3741	*sd21*		Suran Perera	4689	*sjp25*
Ken Finch	4452	*kf1*		Aimee Phillips	3897	*amp11*
Rob Fletcher	3816	*rpf1*		Chris Reece	3807	*car7*
Kevin Gardner	3739	*pkg4*		Sam Scott	3817	*svs2*
Chris Gowland	3823	*cg1*		Daniel Shelton	4349	*ds23*
Dan Granville	3839	*dsg2*		Philip Smailes	3833	*pjrs1*
Sarah Hall	3827	*seh11*		Andrew Smith	3809	*abs4*
Peter Halls	3806	*pjh1*		Ben Thompson	3230	*bt4*
John Hawes	4347	*jeh11*		Pete Turnbull	3804	*pnt1*
Susanne Hodges	3839	*sh32*		Sam Vines	3749	*sccv1*
Matt Holmes	3820	*mjh25*		Jonathan Wheeler	3818	*jdw5*
Geoff Houlton	2100	*gph2*		Timothy Willson	2123	*ftmw1*
John Hutchinson	3898	*jh57*				