

# Keynotes

Volume 30 Number 5 May 2004

## Using Google



*Also in this Issue:*

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**From the Editor**

We all use search engines to find information on the web, and Google seems to be especially popular with most internet users. But there's a whole lot more to it than just typing a word or two in the search box and pressing enter. Turn to page 4 for tips on getting the most from your favourite search engine.



Over the summer, both the Computing Service classrooms located in Derwent College will be closed to allow for upgrade, and for one of the rooms to be re-located. See Rob Fletcher's article opposite for full details.



Many of you will have completed the YorkExtra user and information provider surveys at the end of last year. These surveys highlighted some concerns - on page 2, John Byrne explains how these are to be addressed.



Those of you who are looking forward to the introduction of a spam blocking service should turn to page 3 to learn more about the forthcoming trial of the MessageLabs service.

*Joanne Casey*

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**Windows 95 countdown....**

The supported Windows 95 service will be withdrawn in around five months, at midnight on Friday 1 October. See Keynotes March 2004 for more information.

**Keynotes on the web**

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

## Course news *Susanne Hodges*

Two new courses - Graphics Using PaintShop Pro and an Introduction to SPSS - were piloted over the Easter vacation. Both courses proved very popular and will be encompassed into our regular training schedules.

The Summer Term course schedule is now available from the Computing Service Information Desk and at:

**[www.york.ac.uk/services/cserv/training/](http://www.york.ac.uk/services/cserv/training/)**

I have received requests from various members of staff to vary the times of our training. In light of these requests and in order to ensure that all members of staff are able to participate in training, courses in Autumn 2004 will run from 10.15-12.15.

## OS Digital Mapping *Peter Halls*

The University has now joined the JISC Agreement with the Ordnance Survey for access to OS Digital Mapping through Edina DIGIMAP.

Details of how to access these data and to exploit these data through the GIS packages supported at York will be published when they are available.

## Email hoaxes *Joanne Casey*

We have recently seen a resurgence of email hoaxes that purport to warn recipients of a scam or security threat, and encourage them to forward the email to others in their address book. A recent example warned of a mobile phone scam which would result in huge phone bills. These messages are rarely factual, and their mass-forwarding places a huge load on mail servers, as well as causing unnecessary anxiety. Before forwarding such email, please check its veracity, either by using a site such as Snopes (**[www.snopes.com](http://www.snopes.com)**), or by contacting the Computing Service for advice.

## Spring Bank Holiday

The Computing Service will be closed on the Spring Bank Holiday (26 May). All systems will be left running as for a normal weekend with no staff on duty. Availability of Computing Service PCs and printers is subject to the opening hours of the colleges and the Kings Manor over the holiday weekends.

## Student leavers - expiry and extensions *Brian Souter*

If you are a student leaver this year at the end of the Summer Term then your computer account will be set to expire on Saturday 10 July, the day after Degree Day. A countdown to this expiry date will be displayed when you login. If you have a requirement to use your account beyond this date, or you are returning in the Autumn, you can apply for an extension - details on how to apply will be emailed to student leavers in June.

If you are the owner of any other computer accounts then these will expire at the same time as your normal username. You should consider what to do with any society accounts BEFORE you leave as we may not be able to transfer ownership without your permission.

All expired accounts are removed from our registration database automatically after one month, and all files are saved for one year. There is nothing for you to do in this respect, although you may wish to make your own copies of any important files or delete any unwanted ones.

As with your other files, email folders will be saved for one year after expiry, but it would be useful if you tidied up your area and deleted any unwanted messages. At the very least, you should unsubscribe from any mailing lists. Once your computer account expires all email will be rejected unless you have set a forwarding address. Check out the E-mail Management section on our Electronic Information Desk:

**[www-db.york.ac.uk/cgi-bin-auth/edesk\\_email](http://www-db.york.ac.uk/cgi-bin-auth/edesk_email)**

You will also need to give some thought to closing your print charge account. If your account is in credit then we will be happy to make a refund, if it is debit then you must pay the difference before leaving. Call in at our Information Desk once you are certain you will no longer need to do any printing.

## Derwent classrooms *Rob Fletcher*

### Summer closure

Derwent College is the closed college this year from 1 August to 27 August: during this time, some important alterations are being made to the nucleus, and the D/114 PC classroom will be unavailable to users throughout this period.

### Derwent 104

Derwent 104 will close on Monday 26 July and a small number of workstations will be relocated to Wentworth W/202. Following the summer's refurbishment of the college, a new room with high performance PCs running Windows 2000 will open in D/016 on Monday 20 September. Both this new PC room and D/114 will have air conditioning installed.

The new PC room will be restricted to postgraduates and staff only, as is the case with D/104 at present, with undergraduates required to get written permission from their supervisors if they require the extra facilities of these workstations.

Please contact Rob Fletcher (**rpfl**, 3816) if you need more information or have any concerns about this closure and/or change of platform.

## People Database project - new facilities for departments

### John Byrne

The People Database represents basic information about staff, students and associates of the University, including names and contact details, and affiliations with departments - eg a member of staff in Philosophy, or a third year undergraduate in Chemistry. It takes its data from corporate sources such as SITS, Resource Link, and the Associates Database which all have different ways of representing information, and turns them into a uniform format for use by service providers such as the Computing Service and Library. It also keeps track of people who move between databases, eg a student who becomes a member of staff, ensuring that only one record is kept on them.

Major components of the People database are expected to go live towards the beginning of July. This is expected to be a relatively unseen process from a user's point of view but lays the foundations for a much more integrated data environment. Over the summer the following facilities should be available to departments via a simple set of web forms.

### New Associates Database

The current Associates Database is due for a major overhaul and we expect the web page for managing Associates to be much simpler.

### Early registration

Departments will be able to register new members of staff so that they get early access to intranet facilities such as login accounts, email, and access to restricted web pages.

### Continuity

Staff sometimes have short breaks between contracts. Departments will be able to register such people so that continuity between contracts is preserved - eg they keep the same username and email account.

### Informal links

Departments will be able to assign staff in other departments temporary affiliation so that they can access resources normally restricted to their own department. One use of this facility would be to allow members of the Temp Pool working with the department to get access to restricted web pages.

Further details will be announced in due course. If you have any queries please contact John Byrne ([jcb1](#)).

## ColdFusion upgrade

### John Byrne

Over the summer vacation we are planning to upgrade our current ColdFusion 5 service to ColdFusion MX. ColdFusion MX will be running in a Java J2EE environment which should be faster and should give much better resilience. A test environment will be made available to developers during the summer term. We will also make an updated development suite available, which includes the facility to check and report on the compatibility of existing scripts with the upgraded service. Further details will be announced in due course. In the meantime if you would like further information please contact Chris Kilgour ([crhk1](#)).

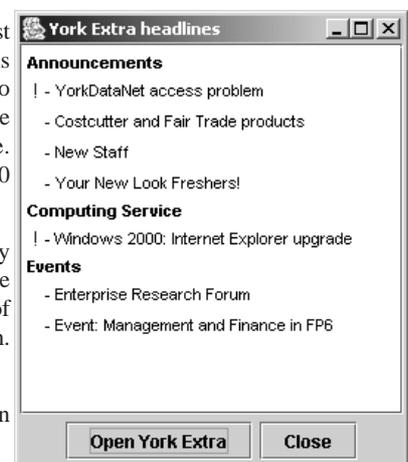
## York Extra - changes to startup procedure

### John Byrne

Results from the York Extra user survey conducted at the end of last year suggest that although the system has been generally welcomed from a communications perspective, there have been usability problems, particularly in relation to startup times and user choice. The main reason for the slow startup is that the Web browser is competing with several background processes at login time. After consultation the following change will be implemented on Windows 2000 PCs managed by the Computing Service.

A Start Menu item will let users choose between running York Extra automatically at login or running a message previewer which links through to York Extra. The previewer occupies a small amount of the desktop and displays a simple list of message headlines. Pressing 'Open York Extra' opens the York Extra application. Pressing 'Close' dismisses the previewer without starting York Extra.

It is hoped that the previewer will provide more efficient access to York Extra on slower PCs.



## Spam blocking

*Mike Brudenell*

You may recall from Keynotes January 2004 that a University Working Group has been considering various measures to reduce the quantity of Unsolicited Commercial Email (UCE, or “spam”) delivered into people’s inboxes. In conjunction with this, the Computing Service has been investigating a free software package called SpamAssassin, with a view to possible deployment on the University’s central mail service.

A limited trial of SpamAssassin was conducted using volunteers from within the Computing Service. The results showed a reasonable success rate in identifying spam. However, concerns were raised over the computing resources it would demand of the existing mail gateways - both now and in the future as both mail and spam increase - and the amount of staff time that would be required to keep it up to date and effective.

After considering this, and many other factors, the Working Group has recommended that we instead use the commercial managed mail filtering service offered by MessageLabs. This organisation is an established and well-respected company specialising in anti-virus and anti-spam filtering of email. Their services are used by various high-profile companies as well as government departments and a number of other high-profile UK academic institutions, with very good results.

From early May, the University will be using a three month trial of the MessageLabs service, with a view to adopting the paid-for service from 1 August. This will pre-filter all email arriving at the central mail service from the outside world, removing viruses and eliminating significant proportions of spam.

At the time of writing the proposed deployment timetable is as follows:

- **Week commencing Tuesday 4 May**  
Migration of smaller mail domains whose email is already relayed through the central service. (I will be contacting the Postmasters of these domains to advise them further.)
- **Monday 10 May**  
Migration of the main “@york.ac.uk” mail domain.
- **Early August**  
Assuming the trial period has been successful, MessageLabs’ filtering will be continued.

As an interim measure whilst we gain experience of the MessageLabs service, and to help build user confidence, we will initially be using their **Spam Manager** service: this is likely to continue through to the end of this calendar year. Instead of blocking junk email, Spam Manager holds it in a quarantine area for a number of days, during which time you can check retained messages for any ‘false positives’: messages that should not have been marked as spam. With feedback from this we will be able to further fine-tune the service.

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## Replacement of Lists Service

*Mike Brudenell*

The Lists Service run by the Computing Service enables departments and other groups to create email lists for the purpose of collaborative discussion or announcement of information to relevant parties.

To date we have used the Lyris ListManager software to run this service. Unfortunately the version we are currently using is now old and is no longer supported by Lyris. Their newer versions are not only significantly more expensive but also lack many of the features that first attracted us to the package.

Because of this the Computing Service will be investigating replacement software to use for running the Lists Service, and also investing in a newer computer system to run it on. We will be looking to ease migration of existing lists to the new server but, because it will be using a different software package, the list administration and user web pages will very likely be quite different in appearance and use.

I will keep you informed of developments as work in this area progresses.

## Using Google

### *Susanne Hodges and Dan Granville*

Google is currently the dominant 'spider' type search engine. Its UK site can be found at [www.google.co.uk](http://www.google.co.uk).

#### Choosing search terms

The search terms you enter and the order in which you enter them affect both the order and pages that appear in your results. To get good results, choose a keyword or keywords that are specific, making them less likely to generate irrelevant returns. If you need to use a common term, consider including other words to make your search more specific: eg 'Sun newspaper' or 'Sun computers' rather than just 'Sun'.

Include synonyms if necessary - if you're looking for information about cars, and want to search UK and US sites, you may also need to use 'automobiles' as a search term. Another way of adding synonyms to your search is to use the tilde character immediately before your search term. Thus if you search for ~food, Google will automatically search for cooking, cuisine, nutrition, recipes, etc.

Note that Google automatically applies stemming technology. Thus if you type in education as your search term, it will search for educational, educator, educate, etc.

Use quotation marks to denote phrases or people's names. Google will search for the exact phrase, rather than pages containing both words, but separately. It is especially important to use quotation marks if you are looking for phrases that include stop words (very common words such as a, the, of, who, when, etc). If your search only contains stop words, eg The Who, you would generate millions of unwanted pages if you did not include quotation marks.

If you should mistype your search term, or spell it incorrectly, Google will search for pages with your search terms but will also suggest a correct spelling.

#### Using Boolean operators

It is possible to broaden or narrow a search to achieve better results. This can be done by using Boolean operators - the operators are **AND**, **OR** and **NOT**. Note they are always capitalised.

Searching for a **AND** b will retrieve only pages that contain **both** a and b. This will narrow your search, and is a good idea if your search returns lots of irrelevant pages.

Searching for a **OR** b will return pages that contain **either** a or b. This will broaden your search - you may want to consider using OR if you only find a small number of pages, or know of a common synonym. OR logic is used to search for synonymous terms or concepts. With Google, the OR command can be shortened to a vertical bar |.

Searching with **NOT** allows you to **exclude** particular keywords. This is a good way to exclude large groups of pages not relevant to your search.

Almost all search engines, including Google, use **implied** Boolean logic where the **absence** of a symbol is also significant, as the space between keywords defaults to the AND logic. Thus if you wished to learn about the behaviour of dogs, searching for dogs behaviour would retrieve results that included both terms.

You can use a plus sign in Google to ensure that it includes that particular word in its search and a minus sign to ensure that it does not include the word in its search.

#### Using the results

If you are using the UK Google site, you will have the option to refine the search to show UK pages only.

Google defaults to returning web pages only, but if you click the tabs at the top of the page, you can select to see web pages, images, groups (ie newsgroups) or news related to your search term.

The results that are generated by your search will include the title of the page, and an extract with your search terms in bold. Beneath each extract you will find the web address of the returned result, the size of the text portion of the found web page and the last date that the found web page was updated. You will also find a cached link, which will enable you to see the contents of the web page at the time it was indexed by Google. If, for some reason, the site link does not connect to the current page and you receive an error message, the cached version can still be retrieved here.

#### Advanced searches

Clicking on the Advanced Searches link leads to a page that helps you to restrict your search if necessary. Here you will find a form with drop down menu choices that allow more complex searches, such as options to search a particular period or pages in a specified language.

## 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:	<i>username@york.ac.uk</i>

[www.york.ac.uk/services/cserv/](http://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	<i>knj1</i>
Departmental Secretary:	Lorraine Moor	3801	<i>lsm1</i>
Head of Infrastructure:	Robert Demaine	3808	<i>rld1</i>
Head of Information Systems:	Kay Mills-Hicks	2101	<i>kmh8</i>
Head of Support Services:	David Surtees	3803	<i>dps4</i>
Operations Manager:	Brian Souter	3814	<i>bs1</i>
Information Officer:	Joanne Casey	3805	<i>jmc8</i>

Kashif Amin	3817	<i>ka14</i>	Jenny Jackson	4455	<i>jj5</i>
Gavin Atkinson	3738	<i>ga9</i>	Chris Kilgour	4454	<i>crhk1</i>
Linda Bailey	3800	<i>lcb6</i>	Fergus McGlynn	3822	<i>fam6</i>
Sue Bolton	2102	<i>sjb28</i>	John Marsden	3832	<i>jpm1</i>
David Broom	3229	<i>dlb10</i>	John Mason	3813	<i>jrm13</i>
Mike Brudenell	3811	<i>pmb1</i>	Darren Miller	3815	<i>dm26</i>
John Byrne	3812	<i>jcb1</i>	Darren Munday	3821	<i>dam6</i>
David Chambers	3742	<i>dac6</i>	Colin Noble	1747	<i>cdn1</i>
Michael Clark	3745	<i>mpc3</i>	Nicola Normandale	4695	<i>ncn1</i>
Arthur Clune	3129	<i>ajc22</i>	Phil O'Connell	3825	<i>paoc1</i>
Steve Downes	3741	<i>sd21</i>	Suran Perera	4689	<i>sjp25</i>
Ken Finch	4452	<i>kf1</i>	Aimee Phillips	3897	<i>amp11</i>
Rob Fletcher	3816	<i>rpf1</i>	Chris Reece	3807	<i>car7</i>
Kevin Gardner	3739	<i>pkg4</i>	Sam Scott	3817	<i>svs2</i>
Chris Gowland	3823	<i>cg1</i>	Daniel Shelton	4349	<i>ds23</i>
Dan Granville	3839	<i>dsg2</i>	Philip Smailes	3833	<i>pjrs1</i>
Sarah Hall	3827	<i>seh11</i>	Andrew Smith	3809	<i>abs4</i>
Peter Halls	3806	<i>pjh1</i>	Ben Thompson	3230	<i>bt4</i>
John Hawes	4347	<i>jeh11</i>	Pete Turnbull	3804	<i>pnt1</i>
Susanne Hodges	3839	<i>sh32</i>	Sam Vines	3749	<i>sccv1</i>
Matt Holmes	3820	<i>mjh25</i>	Jonathan Wheeler	3818	<i>jdw5</i>
Geoff Houlton	2100	<i>gph2</i>	Timothy Willson	2123	<i>ftmw1</i>
John Hutchinson	3898	<i>jh57</i>			