



THE UNIVERSITY *of York*
Computing Service

Keynotes

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The HEFCE Capital Programme: where the money's going

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Off-campus web and resource access

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The YIMS programme

Spatial datasets

From the Editor

We're pleased to be able to tell you that money made available under the HEFCE Capital Programme will enable a number of enhancements to the University's IT infrastructure over the coming years. Turn to page 2 to see details of the improvements planned.



The launch of the Virtual Private Network, part of the Network Access Service, provides off-campus users with more secure and efficient access to the web, electronic resources and other facilities. On pages 2-3, Mike Brudenell gives information on using this facility.



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/

Summer provision of SNS
Matt Holmes

Last summer it was necessary to take down the Student Network Service for an extended period for essential maintenance and development work. This year the SNS will be left running during the summer vacation but with no guaranteed level of support. A three week period from 19 September until the start of term has been reserved and designated an “at risk” period. During this time it may be necessary to take all or part of the system down for maintenance at relatively short notice.

New users wishing to use SNS over the vacation will need to purchase a voucher from Finance Services and follow the instructions on the Computing Service web pages.

Classroom upgrades
Brian Souter

The usual programme of PC replacement, safety testing, maintenance and cleaning is scheduled for the Summer Vacation. See: www.york.ac.uk/services/cserv/class/updates.html

In total, 196 PCs will be replaced in Halifax, Alcuin, Derwent and Goodricke Colleges. The new PCs will have Pentium 4 3.0GHz processors, 512MB memory, LCD TFT display screens (flat screens), CD writers and accessible USB ports.

Student leavers
Brian Souter

If you are leaving the University at the end of the summer term your computer username will be set to expire shortly after degree day in July. For information on closing your account and applying for an extension please see: www.york.ac.uk/services/cserv/advice/desk/leavers.htm

Tower and Ebor replacement
Andrew Smith

The UNIX servers “Tower” and “Ebor”, which provide an interactive UNIX service for research and undergraduate project students, have finally come to the end of their useful life of 5 years. A replacement Sun V890 has been purchased and it is planned to offer the new service to users during the summer. The Sun V890 has four UltraSPARC IV processors, 16 GigaBytes of RAM and 400 GigaBytes of local disk. The operating system will be Solaris 10.

It is planned to offer the current range of applications and some new ones - watch this space! The interactive service will be accessible via traditional telnet/ssh, X Windows, and a trial Citrix Presentation Server service. The Citrix service offers an exciting and revolutionary means of access to Solaris, whereby a simple client running on most desktops platforms (Windows, Linux, Macintosh) and web browsers, can seamlessly run applications on the server.

Users will be informed in more detail of the availability and facilities of the service at a future date.

Staff news
Mike Jinks

Chris Kilgour has taken up a new post in Sheffield having lived there for some while, commuting back to York throughout the winter. Chris was responsible for technical administration and development of our Web service and he will continue to be involved in web development in his new post. We wish him all the best in his new role.

We welcome two new members of staff. Eleanor Morrison has recently moved into the area having worked at the University of Paisley and, more recently, at South Ayrshire Council. She will be joining the Technicians Group.

Dr Anthony Leonard has joined us from the University of Sunderland. Anthony has a background in Astrophysics but, more recently, has been involved with student record systems and VLE integration. He will continue that work here, but will also work with Library systems and on Library-related developments of the VLE in a post part-funded by the Library. We hope that both Eleanor and Anthony will enjoy their time working with us.



Eleanor Morrison



Anthony Leonard

HEFCE Capital Programme

Mike Jinks

The HEFCE Capital Programme for learning and teaching, research and infrastructure has provided an opportunity to enhance the University's IT infrastructure and services above that possible under current University funding. Several areas relating to IT infrastructure and teaching facilities have been included in the University's submission:

Upgrade of the PC classrooms

- 2005/6: Alcuin (EW/004), Halifax College Learning Resource Centre, Derwent (D/114), Goodricke (G/169)
- 2006/7: Wentworth (W/036), Langwith (L/117), Wentworth (W/218&W/202), Kings Manor (K/120)
- 2007/8: Vanbrugh (V/058), Library (R/002)

Enhanced email facilities

With the critical reliance on email, the University's email systems need to be enhanced. The proposed system will provide:

- high availability
- increased personal file allocation, giving staff 250Mb and students 100Mb

Increased data storage

Business continuity - Phase 2

We have continued to take steps to improve the level of business continuity associated with the IT systems in the event of an incident jeopardising the operation of the central IT services. New opportunities have arisen with the recent provision of secondary computer room in the HYMS building where basic facilities have been provided as 'Phase1'. Funding for Phase 2 will enable these facilities to be enhanced to cover the major systems:

- resilient processing for a range of YIMS applications including SITS and Agresso - high availability
- secure repository for critical information
- resilient storage - see above
- enhanced network infrastructure to support resilient processing and data storage
 - higher capacity
 - increased resilience - multiple routes

The enhancements funded under this initiative will help to maintain the regular classroom upgrade programme as well as providing a robust infrastructure for future developments.

Changes to off-campus web and resource access

Mike Brudenell

If you use a computer away from campus and access the subscription-only electronic journals and resources arranged through the University Library you are probably familiar with setting up your machine to use the Campus Web Caches. Once done, any items you request from the Web are sent via the caches which are then able to fetch any subscription-controlled pages for you, along with all the other pages you view.

One problem with using the Campus Web Caches in this way is that your University username and password is sent over the public Internet connection with every web page item you view. This is potentially a security concern. A second problem is that using the Campus Web Caches from a computer off-site can actually slow down your browsing: each and every request is first sent to the University before going onwards to the web site you are visiting.

Following the launch of the Network Access Service (NAS) we have been reviewing how to provide access to the subscription-only resources. The conclusion is that the best course of action is for people to do this using the new Virtual Private Network (VPN) service: a part of the NAS. To tackle the problems associated with use of the web caches, we

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recommend that all off-campus access takes place via the VPN. Please migrate to using the VPN as soon as possible; external access to the web caches will be withdrawn on 1 November 2005.

The VPN is extremely useful as, for the duration of your session, your computer is effectively 'here at the University', giving you access to a range of useful facilities not previously available to you off-site. For example you can:

- Mount your area from the central filestore onto your computer and access it directly to open or save files
- Use SSH to connect directly to computers on campus, rather than via the **ssh.york.ac.uk** gateway machine
- Print work directly to the classroom print queue for holding and subsequent release. (With the technical know-how it is also possible to send work to other printers.)
- Benefit from much greater security: your VPN session encrypts all information flowing between your computer and the University. This prevents the risk of others being able to snoop on your username and password, or any sensitive information you are working with.

The NAS web site (www.nas.york.ac.uk/) gives more information about the service, as well as guides and tutorials on setting up the VPN service for computers running Windows XP, Windows 2000 or Mac OS X. This also explains how you can set up your machine up to work with the VPN when on campus, accessing it from both wireless hotspots and wired connection points available across campus, useful if you have a laptop you sometimes bring to campus.

Digital spatial dataset agreements

Peter Halls

Through the University's Digital Datasets Policy, a number of new spatial datasets are available at York. Below is a summary of these datasets and an indication of their application. Full details, with access arrangements, are provided at: www.york.ac.uk/services/cserv/sw/gis/datayork.htm. There are proposals for additional datasets, details of which will be announced in due course. The major datasets currently available are:

Bartholomew: digital map data. These data are the basis for the range of road maps published by HarperCollins-Bartholomew and cover the British Isles, Europe and the World at a variety of digitisation scales. They include PostCode Sector boundaries for Great Britain and are applicable for work at a regional scale, but are not suitable for detailed work for small areas. These are current data.

Historic Mapping: there are two datasets available here, the History Data Service 1851 Parish Boundary Project and the Landmark Historic Ordnance Survey of Great Britain data. The former includes both the parish boundaries, the reporting basis for the 1851 Census, and a set of monochrome-scanned 1:63360 Ordnance Survey New Popular Edition maps, surveyed in the 1920s. The Landmark data comprise scanned Ordnance Survey 1:10560 ('six inch') and 1:10000 mapping from various surveys over about the past 150 years. Whilst the HDS mapping offers complete coverage of England and Wales for a single period, the Landmark data is incomplete for Great Britain and represents several different surveys, for none of which is complete coverage available. Nevertheless, both datasets offer a valuable resource for workers needing pre-World War 2 mapping.

Isle of Man: digital mapping for the Isle of Man. These data are available on a project by project basis, individual clearance having to be obtained from the Government of

the Isle of Man, but are available at no charge for academic research purposes. These data are functionally similar to those data provided by the Ordnance Survey.

Landmap Project: raster datasets. These are remote sensing data, primarily providing coverage of the British Isles in satellite imagery and in the form of a detailed canopy-top digital elevation model (DEM). The satellite data include both LANDSAT and SPOT imagery. They represent various temporal periods and there is an active acquisition programme, the new data becoming available under the terms of the agreement. Unlike the Ordnance Survey data, they depict land cover and are thus of value to all workers concerned with the environment, rural or urban.

Office of National Statistics: Census boundary data. There are two sets of data available at present, for the 1981 and 2001 censuses. The 1981 data comprise County and District boundaries, together with ward boundaries for some counties. The 2001 Census was postcode-based and the data are available at Output Area, Ward and District / Unitary Authority units, at present for England & Wales and Scotland. These data are important for anyone working with Census data and for other demographic work.

Ordnance Survey: digital map data for Great Britain (excludes Ireland, the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands); these data include facsimiles of published maps together with the vector data used in the preparation of the maps. The vector data can be used selectively, on the basis of the features represented. These data are current and applicable to any studies requiring spatial context for Great Britain, especially where great detail is required. They do not include information regarding land cover or usage.

MySQL database service

Jonathan Wheeler

We have recently introduced a MySQL database service (version 4.1). MySQL is a widely used open source database and although it lacks some features of enterprise-level databases, it is fast, reliable and easy to use. It is intended as a shared database server for Coldfusion applications and lightweight databases. It is available to all York University account holders.

To register for this service please send an email to **csrv510@york.ac.uk** with the subject line 'MySQL Registration'. Please include the username that you would like to own the account if this is different from the email account. This should be a valid York username.

To connect to the MySQL service and manage your database(s) you can use a Windows graphical tool called SQLYog Enterprise. On supported machines this can be installed from Run Advertised Programs. It will then appear in the 'Databases' folder of your programs directory. You may also wish to install the MyODBC database drivers from the same location to enable you to link MySQL tables into MS Access.

For more resource intensive database applications we recommend using the ORACLE database service instead. This service is available for Academic and Staff users who need the extra processing resources of a large scale enterprise system.

If you would like more detailed advice on which database might be most appropriate for your needs, please contact the Computing Service Database Advisor **jdw5@york.ac.uk**. For more information about MySQL visit: **www.mysql.com**.

The YIMS Programme – building for the future

Tim Franklin

The YIMS Programme is due to conclude this summer. Over the past 5 years it has introduced a complete suite of modern business systems – some have been replacements for old legacy systems (e.g. Personnel & Payroll, Finance, Student, Timetabling and Estates), whilst others have introduced central systems support into our business areas for the first time (e.g. Time & Attendance, Hospitality, Imaging etc.).

Throughout this period project teams have come together from all parts of the campus (Administrative & Academic departments, Computing Service, Facilities Management etc.) and have worked collaboratively to introduce the new technologies. At the same time they have sought to change working practices with the target of improved efficiency, effectiveness and service provision. The Programme would not have achieved its goals within the time frame and budget established back in 2000, without the huge personal commitment given by so many staff over the past 5 years to each of the projects.

Looking to the future, the new suite of business systems is capable of supporting the continued rapid expansion planned for the University of York. The challenge will be to use these systems to improve our business processes targeting improved services for all of our staff, students and commercial partners associated with the University of York.

We have appointed four Business Systems Development Managers who will work across the areas of Student, Personnel, Finance and Facilities Management, to support Departmental Managers in delivering first class services to all who come to work and study at the University. The Information Systems Group and all colleagues in Computing Service will provide the "glue" to help ensure our investment in YIMS systems delivers long-term, sustainable benefits for the University.

Time and Attendance upgrade

Nicola Normandale and Mark Barber

We have a Time and Attendance system to record the hours worked by manual and shift workers, which allows staff to clock in via the telephone. The details are then fed through to the Payroll system, ensuring prompt and accurate payment for hours worked.

Earlier this year, we implemented a new version of this system, with the following benefits:

- 4 extra telephone lines, bringing the total to 12
- advanced rule configurations reducing the need for manual error correction by Payroll staff
- faster response times for supervisors (after initial teething problems!)
- better management reporting

The new system will give us the opportunity to provide more information to front-line supervisors via the web including statistics for the working time directive and the ability to plan manpower resources into the future.

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 | Email: | <i>username@york.ac.uk</i> |
| YO10 5DD | | |

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.

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>knh8</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> | Anthony Leonard | 4350 | <i>apbl500</i> |
| Gavin Atkinson | 3738 | <i>ga9</i> | Fergus McGlynn | 3822 | <i>fam6</i> |
| Amanda Bacon | 3802 | <i>agb12</i> | John Marsden | 3832 | <i>jpm1</i> |
| Sue Bolton | 2102 | <i>sjb28</i> | John Mason | 3813 | <i>jrm13</i> |
| David Broom | 3229 | <i>dlb10</i> | Darren Miller | 3815 | <i>dm26</i> |
| Mike Brudenell | 3811 | <i>pmb1</i> | Eleanor Morrison | 3742 | <i>emm502</i> |
| John Byrne | 3812 | <i>jcb1</i> | Darren Munday | 3821 | <i>dam6</i> |
| Michael Clark | 3745 | <i>mpc3</i> | Colin Noble | 1747 | <i>cdn1</i> |
| Arthur Clune | 3129 | <i>ajc22</i> | Nicola Normandale | 4695 | <i>ncn1</i> |
| Steve Downes | 3741 | <i>sd21</i> | Phil O'Connell | 3825 | <i>paoc1</i> |
| Ken Finch | 4452 | <i>kfl</i> | Heather Payne | 3800 | <i>hp501</i> |
| Rob Fletcher | 3816 | <i>rpf1</i> | Aimee Phillips | 3897 | <i>amp11</i> |
| Iain Ford | 3894 | <i>igf500</i> | Tamsyn Quormby | 4346 | <i>tq1</i> |
| Kevin Gardner | 3739 | <i>pkg4</i> | Chris Reece | 3807 | <i>car7</i> |
| Chris Gowland | 3823 | <i>cg1</i> | Sam Scott | 3817 | <i>svs2</i> |
| Dan Granville | 3819 | <i>dsg2</i> | Daniel Shelton | 4349 | <i>ds23</i> |
| Sarah Hall | 3827 | <i>seh11</i> | Jenny Smailes | 4455 | <i>jj5</i> |
| Peter Halls | 3806 | <i>pjh1</i> | Philip Smailes | 3833 | <i>pjrs1</i> |
| John Hawes | 4347 | <i>jeh11</i> | Andrew Smith | 3809 | <i>abs4</i> |
| Susanne Hodges | 3839 | <i>sh32</i> | Ben Thompson | 3230 | <i>bt4</i> |
| Matt Holmes | 3820 | <i>mjh25</i> | Pete Turnbull | 3804 | <i>pnt1</i> |
| Geoff Houlton | 2100 | <i>gph2</i> | Sam Vines | 3749 | <i>sccv1</i> |
| John Hutchinson | 3898 | <i>jh57</i> | Jonathan Wheeler | 3818 | <i>jdw5</i> |
| Gavin Jones | 3597 | <i>gtj500</i> | | | |