

# Keynotes

Volume 32 Number 1 October 2005

## Laptops – keep clean ... stay safe!



*Also in this Issue:*

Upgraded central UNIX service

Planon – the final YIMS system

Iliad for University now free

Software news

**From the Editor**

The summer vacation is always a busy time for the Computing Service and this year has been no exception. We are therefore happy to start the academic year by offering a range of new developments and enhancements to University computing facilities.



In total, 196 PCs in several PC classrooms around campus have been replaced by new models during the summer, and a number of software site licences have been purchased or upgraded. Further information may be found on pages 1 and 3.



Students will no doubt welcome the announcement that, from the start of the autumn term, the *Iliad for University* programme will be delivered free of charge. See page 1 for details.



The deployment of the YIMS systems has continued with the recent introduction of the SITS Student Records Admissions component for handling A-level results and the implementation of the Planon Works Management system for the reporting and management of Estates maintenance jobs. Jenny Smailes and Nicola Normandale provide details on pages 1 and 3 respectively.



Finally, as you will see from the staff news, our usual *Keynotes* editor, Joanne Casey, has been productive in a different way during the summer and we warmly congratulate her on the birth of a daughter, Lily Erin. Joanne expects to be back at work, and editing *Keynotes* again, in the new year.

Lorraine Moor  
Acting Editor

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**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/)

## Staff news

Mike Jinks

Two colleagues have left over the summer: Matt Holmes and Phil O'Connell. Matt was responsible for the rollout of the Student Network Service (SNS) which has provided ethernet connectivity to on-campus student study bedrooms. He leaves us to take up a post with the National Centre for Science Learning so he's still visible on campus. Phil was a member of the Information Desk team and has left to return to the North East. Thanks to both for their important work for the University and we wish them well in their careers.

Matt's post has been filled by Ben Thompson who worked in the SNS team. Ben now has a wider role as a networking specialist including wireless networking. Ben's post has been filled by Eleanor Morrison who joined us earlier in the year as a member of the technicians' team. In addition to her new duties, she will continue to help with the technicians' team until her replacement is recruited. Richard Stoddart has joined us as Phil's replacement. Richard is a recent graduate in Computer Science from Teesside University.

John Isles joined us as a Web Systems Developer, focusing on our identity management systems. John comes to us from the University of the South Pacific in Fiji where he has been involved in a wide variety of activities within the Computing Service. We trust that all our new colleagues will enjoy working with us.

Joanne Casey took maternity leave from the end of July and gave birth to a daughter, Lily Erin, on 15 August; mother and baby are both doing well and have visited us. Joanne's duties as Information Officer have been taken on by several colleagues but with Dan Granville now working full time and taking on the bulk of the load. We welcome back Linda Bailey who has recently returned part-time for two days a week after her maternity leave. Heather Payne, who covered for the full-time post during Linda's maternity leave, is continuing to undertake similar duties, working with Linda.



Richard Stoddart



John Isles

## Iliad for University

Susanne Hodges

Teaching Committee has decided that the *Iliad for University* programme should now be delivered free of charge. This decision will be implemented in Autumn Term 2005.

The programme, originally set up in 1996, aims to develop the IT and study skills of incoming students. It comprises five two-hour units: Computing at York, Researching and Evaluating Information Sources, Word Processing for Academic Purposes, Using Spreadsheets and Presenting Information using a Computer. Each unit may be taken individually or en bloc and may be studied with a tutor or via self study.

Full details of *Iliad for University* and *Iliad for Work* – aimed at students interested in developing skills in preparation for employment – may be accessed from: [www.york.ac.uk/services/cserv/liad/](http://www.york.ac.uk/services/cserv/liad/).

## SITS confirmation and clearing

Jenny Smailes

Sunday 14 August saw the SITS Student Records Admissions component used for the first time for the bulk receipt of A-Level results. The 2005/6 admissions cycle has not only seen the use of the SITS software for the first time but has also been the first to use a new method of communicating with UCAS via a direct link to the UCAS database. During the admissions season a variety of qualification results are received such as International Baccalaureate and Scottish Highers but the volume of A-Level results is by far the highest. The results were successfully loaded into the system and Admissions staff used SITS reporting tools, the Data Warehouse and Business Objects reports to assist them in their fast turn-around of confirmation decisions.

## Student Network Service update

Robert Demaine

Cabling contractor Plexus began work on Monday 19 September to install network connections into 92 bedrooms in Fairfax House. The late starting date is due to the fact that Fairfax is occupied by visitors for much of the summer. However we are hopeful that the project will be completed just in time for the start of term.

Work is progressing on the construction of the Alcuin Phase 3 residential complex which will be handed over in stages between September and December. On completion a further 238 study bedrooms will be connected to the SNS infrastructure.

## Upgraded central UNIX service

Mike Brudenell and Peter Halls

Over the summer we have been working on bringing into service replacement hardware for the central UNIX service, Ebor and Tower. The new service is called `unix0.york.ac.uk` and is based on the Sun Solaris 10 UNIX operating system.

From an applications perspective, applications previously offered on Ebor, for example Gauss, Maple, Matlab, and SPSS, will continue to be available on the new service, although we may be able to offer updated versions of some that will exploit the 64bit computing environment. Access to the service will be supported through command line interfaces, such as through putty and through X-Windows with Hummingbird. We will be able to introduce some new facilities to take advantage of the updated hardware: these will include ArcGIS Server, which will offer enhanced GIS processing facilities for existing PC desktop users, and the 'R' mathematical and statistical package, which is very similar to S-Plus. Further details of these developments will be provided in future issues of *Keynotes*.

For users who need to write their own applications, existing applications are expected to be binary-compatible, although it is never possible to be categorical about this. Both the standard Sun and GNU compilers are available and both will be maintained at the latest stable versions. The programming libraries will be available as before, with some updates and some additions – especially from the GNU portfolio.

For the present, access authorisation for this service is obtained through the Electronic Information Desk (for staff and research graduates) or on application to the Information Desk (for all other users). It is planned to review this arrangement once the service has been running for a few months.

## Extra web authoring course

Dan Granville

Due to high demand we have scheduled an additional *Introduction to Dreamweaver* course, to run on Friday 16, Monday 19 and Wednesday 21 December 2005, from 14.15 to 16.15.

To book a place please contact the Information Desk (extension 3838 or email [infodesk@york.ac.uk](mailto:infodesk@york.ac.uk)).

## Printing upgrade

Sam Vines

During the next month the Windows 2000 Print Server will be migrated to Windows 2003. Whilst the change should be transparent to users, there is a possibility that discrepancies with printer settings will occur. Please watch for further announcements relating to the migration on YorkExtra, and should printer settings be incorrect please email the details to [infodesk@york.ac.uk](mailto:infodesk@york.ac.uk).

## New classroom facilities

Brian Souter

The programme of PC replacement, safety testing, maintenance and cleaning all went according to schedule over the summer. In total, 196 PCs were replaced in rooms SL/LRC/001, A/EW/004, D/114 and G/169. The new PCs have Pentium 4 3.00 GHz processors, 512MB memory, 17" LCD TFT display screens, CD writers and accessible USB ports.

Since the opening of the staff training room W/218, the facility in H/B40 had remained open temporarily as a supplementary training room. To make way for building alterations this summer, the room closed at the end of the summer term and was stripped out on Thursday 4 August.

Following a decision to remove the books from Langwith College Upper Library, the space has been offered by Langwith College Council to the Computing Service to provide additional PCs for study purposes. Provisional plans indicate space for twenty PCs together with four NAS ports, two scanners and a colour printer. Refurbishment of this space will commence following a book sale by the college in the second week of the autumn term. There will be some disruption to the lower PC room, L/050, during the works and it will have to close for two weeks from Monday 24 October. The new facility is scheduled to open on Monday 5 December.

## Did you know?

- The Computing Service manages 20,227 user accounts.
- The combined size of the central staff and student filestores is 600 gigabytes.
- On the main file server alone (called `crypt0`) we have 1.3 terabytes of data (1 terabyte equals 1,024 gigabytes or 1 trillion bytes).
- We back up to tape 2.6 terabytes of data every week.
- There are 2,500 supported Windows 2000 PCs connected to the campus network, and 2,500 unsupported PCs. The total amount of storage on all supported PC hard disks is 90 terabytes.
- During the last academic year, 599 places on Computing Service IT training courses were taken up by University staff. The courses provided a total of 2218 training hours.
- During the last academic year, 793 students participated in the Iliad programme.

## Software news

David Surtees

The Computing Service is pleased to announce a number of enhancements to its software portfolio and upgrades to the software installed on supported PCs.

A site licence for Scientific Workplace version 5.5, a package for mathematical word processing, LaTeX typesetting and computer algebra, has been arranged. It is being installed on supported PCs and is available through the Information Desk for unsupported PCs. More detail on this product can be found on the web at [www.mackichan.com](http://www.mackichan.com).

The statistical software package Stata has been upgraded to version 9, and another 25 licences added to the pool of 25 purchased last year. Information about Stata can be found at [www.stata.com](http://www.stata.com).

The Real Player multimedia application on supported PCs is being upgraded to the commercial version 10, which will be free of the advertisements found on the free version. In addition, a number of copies of Real Producer and the Helix Universal streaming media server have been purchased; departments with a serious interest in streaming media who would like to look at these products should contact David Surtees ([dps4@york.ac.uk](mailto:dps4@york.ac.uk)).

A site licence for the accessibility tool, textHELP Read & Write 7.1, has been purchased, and is being installed on supported PCs. This offers a toolbar to help with reading and writing skills, and includes support for speech feedback, phonetic spell checking, word prediction and homophone support. More details can be found at [www.texthelp.com](http://www.texthelp.com).

The bibliographic management package, Endnote, has been upgraded to version 9 on supported PCs; the open source statistical analysis package 'R' has been upgraded to version 2.1 and the Flash and Shockwave players have been upgraded to the latest version.

Allround Automations' Integrated Development Environment, PL/SQL developer, is now available as a site licence. More details can be found on the company's web site at [www.allroundautomations.nl/plsqldev.html](http://www.allroundautomations.nl/plsqldev.html). The application will be available to install on supported connections. Please contact the Information Desk for more information on this product.

Finally, the Corel Licence for Learning now includes the popular graphics package PaintShop Pro, and is available through the Information Desk.

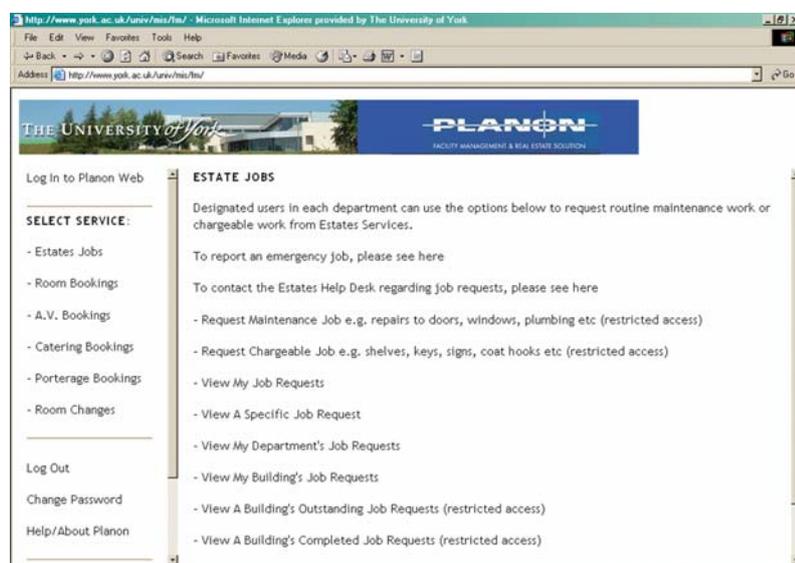
## Planon – the final YIMS system

Nicola Normandale

The Planon Works Management system went live on Monday 12 September for the reporting and management of Estates maintenance jobs. The new system allows for problems such as blocked toilets or broken lights to be reported via the web. Requests for 'recharge' jobs, such as fitting shelves or supplying keys can also be made on the web. Those who report jobs, and porters and senior Estates staff, can also track the progress of jobs through the web. For Estates office staff, it means they can finally say good-bye to the MAC system, the last group of staff to be able to do so.

Planon now holds the University's full space record, previously held in MAC. Work is now progressing to switch room bookings, Audio-Visual and catering requests over to the Planon system.

Inventory assets are also being loaded into Planon, and staff will be able to start using the system for inventory asset management in the next few weeks.



This is the last system to be implemented under the aegis of the YIMS programme, set up five years ago to replace and enhance our existing business systems, as mentioned in the previous copy of *Keynotes*.

People wishing to be able to report maintenance or recharge work via the web should use the YIMS Registration system at [www.york.ac.uk/univ/mis/cfm/systemaccess/](http://www.york.ac.uk/univ/mis/cfm/systemaccess/) to request access.

# Security advice for laptops

Arthur Clune

Laptops that are used away from the campus network and then bought back have been the source of the last few virus outbreaks on campus. Viruses infecting such laptops not only cause problems for the original laptop but can propagate to other machines on campus, thus causing problems and a great deal of inconvenience for many other people who find their systems rendered unusable.

## Why should I care?

Firstly, any machine on campus that has a worm or a virus on it may be disconnected from the network at any time without warning. Whilst we appreciate that this can cause great disruption and inconvenience to you, it is a necessary step in order to stop viruses propagating to other machines and users.

Secondly, people who regularly clean their machines of spyware and viruses usually find that it becomes much more stable (crashes less) and runs faster.

## Basic precautions

1. Keep your machine patched at all times

For Windows users, visit the website <http://windowsupdate.microsoft.com>. Once there you can set your machine to download patches automatically in future. Download and install the patches Windows Update offers, and then go back to the <http://windowsupdate.microsoft.com> to see if you still need more. Repeat until no more patches are offered.

If you have enabled the automatic downloading of patches, keep an eye out for the 'New Updates Available' icon in the system tray and apply them as soon as possible.

For Apple users, choose 'Software Update' from the Apple menu.

Unless you have broadband at home, do this whilst connected to the campus network.

2. Use a web browser with a pop-up blocker

Pop-up blockers make browsing the web a much nicer experience by getting rid of most of those annoying pop-up windows with adverts in.

For Windows, XP Service Pack 2 adds popup blocking to Internet Explorer. FireFox (for Mac/Linux or Windows) is an alternative web browser and has an excellent built-in popup blocker (see website [www.mozilla.org/products/firefox/](http://www.mozilla.org/products/firefox/))

If you are running a version of Windows other than Windows XP, I highly recommend switching to FireFox just to get the pop-up blocking.

Of course, if you do run FireFox then it needs updating regularly just like any other software. At the time of writing, the current version is 1.0.7 and earlier versions should be updated.

3. Run a firewall

There are two options here: a personal firewall that runs on your laptop or remote firewalls that run on the network.

For Windows users, XP Service Pack 2 includes a good personal firewall. If you don't run XP, then ZoneAlarm is a commonly used firewall product.

Mac OS X has a built-in firewall (see 'System Preferences' then 'Sharing'), as do most Linux distributions. Read your documentation for more advice.

If you have a separate ADSL router/wireless access point, this may well have a firewall built in. If so, it is an excellent idea to turn it on. However, if you think you might use your laptop anywhere other than at home and the University, you will additionally need to use a personal firewall.

4. Browse carefully

Experience has shown that certain types of web sites are far more likely to try and install viruses, spyware, adware etc than others. Porn sites, sites that host illegal copies of software (WareZ) and some filesharing sites are the worst culprits.

However, even reputable sites have been hacked and used to distribute viruses: so while avoiding the more dodgy corners of the web will help, it isn't a total cure.

## Windows-specific advice

1. Clean up your machine

Any unpatched Windows machine that has been used on the Internet will most likely have become infected either by a virus or spyware etc. Microsoft offer a tool to clean up some of the most common of these: [www.microsoft.com/security/malware/remove/default.msp](http://www.microsoft.com/security/malware/remove/default.msp).

The following two steps will also help.

2. Run anti-virus software

The University has a site-license for Sophos, which can be run on your laptop. Full details are on YorkWeb: [www.york.ac.uk/services/csersw/sophos/sophos\\_antivirus.htm](http://www.york.ac.uk/services/csersw/sophos/sophos_antivirus.htm).

3. Run an anti-spyware program

Spyware is software that is installed on your machine which is capable of delivering adverts to you, sending details of your web-browsing to third parties, sending spam from your machine, remote controlling your machine and other such bad things.

Often it is installed along with other software ('Web Accelerators', 'File Sharing' etc).

Microsoft's AntiSpyware is currently in Beta testing, but already seems a good product: for details see [www.microsoft.com/athome/security/spyware/software/default.msp](http://www.microsoft.com/athome/security/spyware/software/default.msp).

## Contacting the Computing Service

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Telephone: (01904) 433800  
Direct dial: (01904) 43 followed by ext no.  
Fax: (01904) 433740  
Email: [username@york.ac.uk](mailto:username@york.ac.uk)

[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](mailto: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>kmj1</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>   | Gavin Jones       | 3597 | <i>gtj500</i>  |
| Gavin Atkinson  | 3738 | <i>ga9</i>    | Anthony Leonard   | 4350 | <i>apb1500</i> |
| Amanda Bacon    | 3802 | <i>agb12</i>  | Fergus McGlynn    | 3822 | <i>fam6</i>    |
| Linda Bailey    | 3800 | <i>lcb6</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>   | Heather Payne     | 3743 | <i>hp501</i>   |
| Ken Finch       | 4452 | <i>kf1</i>    | Aimee Phillips    | 3897 | <i>amp11</i>   |
| Rob Fletcher    | 3816 | <i>rpf1</i>   | Tamsyn Quormby    | 4346 | <i>tq1</i>     |
| Iain Ford       | 3894 | <i>igf500</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   | 3819 | <i>dsg2</i>   | Jenny Smailes     | 4455 | <i>jj5</i>     |
| Sarah Hall      | 3827 | <i>seh11</i>  | Philip Smailes    | 3833 | <i>pjrs1</i>   |
| Peter Halls     | 3806 | <i>pjh1</i>   | Andrew Smith      | 3809 | <i>abs4</i>    |
| John Hawes      | 4347 | <i>jeh11</i>  | Richard Stoddart  | 3825 | <i>rjs502</i>  |
| Susanne Hodges  | 3839 | <i>sh32</i>   | Ben Thompson      | 3230 | <i>bt4</i>     |
| Geoff Houlton   | 2100 | <i>gph2</i>   | Pete Turnbull     | 3804 | <i>pnt1</i>    |
| John Hutchinson | 3898 | <i>jh57</i>   | Sam Vines         | 3749 | <i>sccv1</i>   |
| John Isles      | 4699 | <i>jdi500</i> | Jonathan Wheeler  | 3818 | <i>jdw5</i>    |

# Keynotes

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