

keynotes

Connecting Heslington East

Also in this issue:

looking ahead

it security

collaborative tools

compute cluster

online accommodation



From the Editor

In preparation for the new academic year, we have once again had a busy summer - and this year, in addition to classroom upgrades (page 4), checking connections in study bedrooms (page 6), and updating applications on the desktop (page 9), we've been instrumental in ensuring that users of the Heslington East campus have access to the full range of network facilities. Turn to page 5 to learn more about what you do with 2 kilometres of fibre.

This year, for the first time, new students have been able to apply for accommodation online. This has been highly successful - not just in reducing delays and printing costs, but also in giving students details such as their room number far earlier in the process. Full details of the project can be found on page 4.

We continue to see much user interest in using collaborative technologies, and are pleased to be able to announce the recently established Collaborative Tools Project - more information can be found on page 10.

JOANNE CASEY

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Twitter JOANNE CASEY

The Computing Service now has a Twitter feed which we are using to announce news, status updates etc.

Twitter is a micro-blogging service which allows its users to post brief updates (up to 140 characters). You can find our feed at: twitter.com/UoYCompServ - you can then choose to follow us or subscribe using an RSS feed if you wish. With the forthcoming move of the Computing Service website to the Web CMS, we'll also be looking at publishing our most recent tweets on our home page.

We will, of course, also continue to publish information by the more traditional routes such as York Extra, messages to mailing lists and the like.

PC Classroom W/N/036

SARAH KENNEDY

PC Classroom W/N/036 is currently suffering from damp problems which caused a period of closure in July. Estates are working to identify and address the cause of the problem.

To allow for repair work, the affected part of the room has been separated off with a temporary wall, leaving 15 PCs (including the lecturer's PC) available. This means that the room can remain open, and bookings for smaller classes can be honoured.

We apologise for any inconvenience caused by the partial closure.

Departmental IT Provision Survey JOANNE CASEY

We will shortly be running the regular Departmental IT Provision survey at the behest of University Computing Committee. As previously, we will administer the survey using our Online Questionnaire System, and will contact the Heads of Departments and Departmental Computing Officers mailing lists to invite responses.

The information garnered from this survey is used to inform our responses to various surveys of HE institutions, including the Times and UCISA surveys, so prompt and full responses will be much appreciated.

Staff News LORRAINE MOOR

We start the new academic year by welcoming back two familiar faces on a part-time basis after maternity leave: Tamsyn Quormby to the IT Support Office and Heather Walker to the departmental administrative team.

We are pleased that Patricia McNamara, who provided maternity leave cover for Heather and is currently completing a masters degree in Politics, will be staying on as a permanent member of the admin team.

Congratulations go to Dave Wells who has been appointed to a permanent position in the IT Support Office after providing temporary help during the summer months. Dave has several years' experience of working in education in a variety of roles, both at the University and elsewhere, after graduating in Physical Education and Sports Studies.

We welcome Jo Reid to the IT Support Office. You may recognise Jo from her former position in Security and Support Services; she also brings extensive help desk experience from her previous employment at Nestle UK.

Finally, we welcome Tom Smith who joins us as Collaborative Software Support Specialist. Prior to joining us, Tom was self-employed, helping companies make sense of social media. He has been a "user experience guy" at a London web agency. Before that he worked in educational technology research labs creating online learning environments with companies like Apple and Oracle.

We hope that our new and returning colleagues enjoy their time with us.



JO REID



TOM SMITH

User Comments and Feedback AIMEE PHILLIPS

As reported in the last issue of Keynotes, comments cards are available in all of our PC classrooms and study areas. We have continued to act upon the feedback received, although there has been a drop in comments over the summer vacation, with fewer students being around. Details of the comments received so far, along with the Computing Service's response to them, are available at: www.york.ac.uk/services/cserv/feedback/.

In addition to the comments cards, we have introduced an anonymous comments and complaints facility on the Computing Service website. If you wish to let us know your views, but would prefer not to give your name and contact details, it is possible to submit a comment or complaint anonymously using the web form linked from www.york.ac.uk/systems/itsupport/. The form provides a quick and easy way of letting us know what you think, but please bear in mind that we will not be able to update you with the response to your submission. If you would like to be kept informed, please submit your issue via the Footprints Incident Management Customer Portal (<https://footprints.york.ac.uk/footprints/cserv.html>).

Online Accommodation Project

GEOFF HOULTON AND CATHY COLLESS

A major piece of work for the Business Systems Group over the last year has been involvement with a University project for Online Accommodation booking. A new software module from Occam Systems Ltd was implemented, to enable students to apply online for their accommodation, removing the need for labour-intensive processing of paper application forms.

In order to implement the new module we had to upgrade to the latest version of the accommodation software which, in turn, required the underlying Oracle database to be upgraded from version 9i to 11g. To achieve this objective, whilst maintaining the existing system, a new platform was created based on our resilient VMWare architecture. This consisted of an Oracle Application server, a web server and a pair of load balanced web pages servers, all running Windows 2003. In addition, the database is Oracle 11g running on Linux.

The first stage was to migrate from the existing accommodation system to the new one and after thorough testing, this was achieved in March. The second stage was to add in the Online accommodation module. After extensive trials and testing and cross group co-operation within the Department and the Accommodation office, this was launched a couple of weeks before the release of the A-Level results in August.

In addition, BSG developed bespoke ColdFusion software to provide additional functionality not readily available within the OCCAM system. This software enabled key users in Accommodation Office and Colleges to: manage student preferences, process bookings, and manage stock levels of the different accommodation types. Business Objects reports were also developed to help manage the operation.

The project also provided the opportunity to review Desktop hardware used by Accommodation Office and College Administrators, and upgraded hardware was installed where needed, prior to go-live.

Cathy Colless, the project manager from Student Administrative Services, said:

“The new online accommodation system was launched big-bang style on A-Level results day. More than 2,500 new students have since used the online system to apply for accommodation. The Computing Service-managed systems and servers experienced very high traffic loads on A-Level results day but operated flawlessly. Even at the peak of the demand around lunchtime, response times were below seven seconds.

Within seven days of application, all students were offered a specific bedroom. The new students have used the room number to find their neighbours and make friends through social networking sites. The College/Block Facebook groups exploded with Freshers announcing their room numbers, introducing themselves and pleading for “add me” requests from neighbours.

The online process has eliminated the need to include a paper application form in the admission pack. This reduced the printing costs and, importantly for international students, the anxiety caused to students by delays in international postal services.

The accommodation application processes and systems were integrated tightly with the UG admission and enrolment processes. Students were notified of the accommodation application process in the joining instructions email sent by Student Administrative Services on results day. The accommodation application option was made available to students in eVision only after they completed the enrolment task. This linking of the two processes in this way has dramatically improved the level of compliance with the request to enrol.

The second phase of the project will extend the online process to postgraduate, visiting and continuing students.”

PC Rooms

BRIAN SOUTER

The summer period has been a busy and exciting time which has seen a lot of changes and improvements to our PC classrooms and study areas.

Most notably, room D/N/016 in Derwent College has been taken out of the teaching pool and made available as a non-bookable study area open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The room has been equipped with new PCs, a printer and a scanner, and we hope it will prove to be as popular as the neighbouring rooms in Langwith College. The room has also been given a makeover including new carpets and decoration.

Our colleagues in the Department of Facilities Management have been responsible for improving the look of several of our rooms including D/N/016, D/N/114, G/N/169, G/N/022, HSL/LRC/001, L/N/117 and V/N/058. A total of 224 old chairs have been replaced as part of the makeover.

With regard to equipment, we have replaced 142 old PCs in rooms G/N/169, D/N/114, D/N/016 and L/N/050. We have also replaced the old scanners in A/EW/107 and L/N/138, and provided an additional scanner in D/N/016. New printers have been installed in G/N/169, D/N/016 and GNU/009, bringing the total number of classroom printers to 15. GNU/009 is the Graduate Common Room in Goodricke College on Campus East where we have installed two new PCs and a printer (*see opposite for more information about the Heslington East network*).

Work has also included the regular cleaning and rebuilding of PCs not due to be replaced, as well as upgrading the memory in 131 PCs, replacing 25 flat screens on PCs in the Library and helping to prepare for the Library refurbishment by relocating PCs: general access PCs and printers managed by the Computing Service can now be found in temporary locations in the RBL Seminar Room, the RBL Microform Room, the RBL Reading Room and the AV Room.

Connecting to Heslington East

PETE TURNBULL

In the last week of August, contractors installed the first fibre optic cables between Heslington West and Heslington East, blowing a 1.83 kilometre length of multicore fibre down a tube laid in the corridor connecting the two campuses. In the same week, Computing Service was given "beneficial access" to our first network hub building, to the south of the new Goodricke College. The network team had been working on the Berrick Saul building until then, but with the handover of Goodricke College only three weeks away, we started to configure and install equipment for the new campus. On Friday 29 August, we celebrated the University's first live connection between the campuses, followed early the next week by the first links for the telephone systems.

The new College buildings are networked by two fibre optic rings centred on the Nucleus, which in turn has 10 Gigabit fibre connections to the nearby hub and Heslington West. The larger buildings each have two wiring centres, while the smaller ones have one each, and altogether there are around 1400 data outlets in the College. These not only provide data to study bedrooms and offices in the Nucleus, but also provide the telephony service using Voice over IP, and connections for CCTV cameras, electronic locks and access control, building and energy management systems, and other services behind the scenes. Because all these systems had to be commissioned and tested before the College is handed over to the University for occupancy on the evening of 21 September, the following weeks were very busy. At times like this, there is a bit of a juggling act, arranging access to wiring centres (past the tarmac machines and dumper trucks), making sure power is turned on and cabling is terminated and tested, while getting sections installed ready for CCTV and AC installers and obeying all the contractor's rules - because this is still a building site until handover, and subject to all the site access and safety rules. Nevertheless, we hit our second milestone, connecting the last of the switches required for the handover just before four o'clock on Friday afternoon. Also on Friday 21, contractors installed the second set of blown fibre, along the longer southern route between the campuses, providing a resilient service.

Over the next few weeks we'll be bringing more services online on the new campus, and are already preparing for the next buildings to "go live".



PETE TURNBULL ILLUSTRATES THE SIZE OF DRUM NEEDED FOR 2.1KM OF 48-CORE FIBRE

Office 2007 – Support and Training Information

SUSANNE HODGES

The Computing Service is running a project to upgrade to Office 2007 on supported office and classroom PCs, to keep in line with the demands and needs of our users. The upgrade is taking place from July to December 2009. For information about the upgrade, including timescales, system requirements and links to support and training information, visit: www.york.ac.uk/services/cserv/sw/office2007/

Office 2007 has a very different look and feel to previous versions. For this reason, the Computing Service has set in place a number of support and training options to ease you through the upgrade.

Attend an information briefing before you upgrade

A series of information briefings have been organised to introduce you to the restructured user interface, new file formats and other features of the Office 2007 suite. It is highly recommended that staff attend a session prior to upgrading. Upcoming briefings are listed below, and further dates will be published on the Office 2007 web pages and York Extra.

Upcoming briefings:

- Tues 3 Nov, 10:30 - 11:30 in H/G21
- Thur 5 Nov, 14:30 - 15:30 in D/056
- Thur 19 Nov, 14:00 - 15:00 in D/056

There's no need to book - just turn up on the day.

Office 2007 training courses are now available

From Autumn 2009, all training in Microsoft Office applications will take place using the 2007 software versions. As well as our usual courses, we are offering two new sessions:

Office 2007 Help Session

If you are having problems with using features in Microsoft Office 2007 applications, register for this session. Computing Service staff will be on hand to give advice and helpful tips.

Office 2007 Hints and Tips

Find out about useful new features in Office 2007 and how to get the best out of them. Lecture and hands on session.

For the Autumn Term timetable, please visit: www.york.ac.uk/services/cserv/training/timetable.htm

New Rented Filestore Service DARREN MILLER

In our last edition we announced that we were working on a new cheap and flexible Rented Filestore Service. Our current Rented Filestore Service (RentedFS), provides shared disk space to groups of people for an annual cost of £40 per Gigabyte (Gb). This service is very popular, with almost 200 filestores in use, but we have had requests to provide an additional cheaper and more flexible service.

We are pleased to announce that the new service, named ProjectFS, is now almost ready to use. The new service will be significantly cheaper. The new service also gives the filestore owner full control of who can access the files and folders in the filestore, with access being controllable right down to individual files. Filestore access is controlled using standard Windows file permissions.

Another nice feature of ProjectFS is built in file compression. This compression is entirely transparent to the user, it looks just like any other filestore. The compression achieved varies according to the type of data stored, but we typically see compression ratios of around 2, so you may be able to fit 10Gb into a 5Gb filestore. This means there is no need to mess around zipping up files to try and free up some space, ProjectFS has already done that for you.

ProjectFS also includes 28 days worth of on-line snapshots allowing quick and easy file recovery. In addition, ProjectFS is backed up to tape and mirrored to a second file server once a day.

We are still finalizing the details of how we will charge for and manage ProjectFS filestores. We hope to make the service available during the Autumn Term.

Our existing Rented Filestore Service will continue as normal, and owners of RentedFS filestores will be contacted to ask if they would like to migrate to ProjectFS once the service is live.

Student Assistants for NAS Setup BEN THOMPSON

During the vacation, we undertook a project to test and repair any broken network sockets in the Study Bedrooms around the University. The infrastructure is now between five and six years old in many of the colleges on Heslington West, and faults are often not reported until the new intake of students arrive. In order to reduce the workload at the beginning of term and due to the large number of rooms on campus, we employed three student helpers to go around each vacant room and repair sockets - they are: Daniel Lee, a 3rd year Computer Science student, Harry Taylor, a 4th year in Electronics, and Mark Fairburn who is beginning his 4th year as a Computer Science student. In the space of two weeks the students tested the majority of sockets in Alcuin, Derwent, Langwith, and James Colleges. Around 10% of the sockets required replacement and a further 5% required repair in some way.

As well as the socket testing, the students worked on an upgrade project to replace a number of old network switches. This involved testing and then configuring network devices via command line interface and then making up labels and leads.

Since the start of the new term the students have of course been focussing on their studies, but where time permits they have also been helping out with the resolution of software problems on student laptops - we offer drop-in sessions to all NAS users, and these are especially busy at the start of the new academic year.

Developments in the Printing Service ANDREW SMITH

A new project to review and enhance the printing service we offer is underway. This project aims to address the type of services and facilities we offer to all members of the University. Areas that will be investigated are:

- scan-to-email
- reduced price per page costs for student printing
- departmental accounting and charging
- secure printing
- improved printing facilities.

During the summer vacation two additional printers have been provided in areas where demand is exceptionally high, namely the G/N/169 classroom and the D/N/016 study area. We have also installed a new printer in the Graduate Common Room on the Heslington East campus and this was ready for the start of term.

In the immediate term a number of improvements have been made to the current printing service from feedback received via user comment cards and a user satisfaction survey. For example:

- the time taken to print (latency) is now significantly shorter due to improvements in the operation of the central print servers
- the print server software has been upgraded to better support the simultaneous printing of very large documents
- the cost of colour printing has been reduced from 30p to 18p per side of A4.

User feedback on these, or other printing issues, is welcome, and should be sent to itsupport@york.ac.uk.

Looking Ahead KAY MILLS-HICKS

We are planning many service developments during the 2009/10 academic year, in support of the University's Information Strategy, and expect to be very busy throughout. Our aspirations include:

Physical Infrastructure Developments

- Migration of operational services to a new data centre on the Heslington West campus
- Planning for the commissioning and operation of the new Heslington East data centre
- Installation of a second YHMAN feed to provide resilience and expansion capacity
- Appointment of a Data Centre Manager to provide strategic lead and operational capacity to manage the expanding physical infrastructure
- Commissioning of a commercial network to support departmental activities which are not permitted under the JANET Acceptable Use Policy
- Design and planning for refurbishment of the PC classroom and study area in Langwith College
- Commissioning of the IT infrastructure in the new academic buildings on Heslington East: Computer Science, TFTV, Law and Management, the Hub.

Enhanced Support Services

- Investigation of NORMAN out-of-hours service for student support
- Enhancements to the incident management process
- Migration of Computing Service web site to the University Web Content Management System
- New IT training opportunities for students, developed in partnership with the Academic Support Office
- Improved frequency and scope of PC classroom checks

New and/or Enhanced IT Services

- Completion of migration to Windows XP and start of work towards implementing Windows 7
- Completion of migration to Office 2007
- Replacement of the print management infrastructure, working in partnership with DoFM
- Continued work to introduce real-name email addresses for all account holders
- Introduction of a Streaming Service following the pilot held in 2008/09
- Support for the introduction of the University's 'Research and Innovation Information System' including integration with existing information systems
- Collaborative Tools – requirements definition and implementation
- Email and Calendaring – agree a strategic direction and commence implementation
- IT Assets – requirements definition for University-wide IT asset management system, including replacement of the current LAN database
- IT services for student leavers – requirements definition, in partnership with the Development and Alumni Relations Office

Strategy and Policy

- Development of an IT strategy
- Development and implementation of new University Information Security Policy and Guidelines in line with BS27001/2 to meet more stringent requirements from research funders and auditors
- Development of policy defining access to IT resources (who has access to what) to meet the broader range of needs of account holders including applicants and, potentially in the next year, alumni
- Ongoing development of business continuity plans

In addition to all of the above, Stephen Town will be establishing permanent arrangements for the leadership of the Computing Service following the interim arrangements that were put in place following Mike Jinks' retirement in March.

We are looking forward to the coming year and will keep you updated with more details of our plans and progress via Keynotes and the usual channels. In the meantime if you would like any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me (kmh8@york.ac.uk).

Tips for New Users JOANNE CASEY

Are you new to the University this year? Here are just a few things you can do to help you make best use of the IT facilities:

- Look at our training courses (www.york.ac.uk/services/cserv/training/)
- Visit IDM (<https://idm.york.ac.uk/idm/>) to set up security questions on your account
- Set up the Virtual Private Network (VPN - www.york.ac.uk/services/cserv/net/vpn/) to access University files from home
- Find out who your Departmental Computing Officer is (www.york.ac.uk/services/cserv/cfm/dcos.yrk/dco_contact.cfm).

Avoiding the Phishers JOANNE CASEY

Phishing is the use of fake email messages that claim to be from an institution or company (eg the University or a bank) that you may trust. The message will usually ask you to provide personal details, either by replying to the email, or by clicking on a web link. They may suggest that you will lose your account if you don't do so.

As you may be aware, we regularly see phishing attacks targeted at University email addresses, many claiming to be from the Computing Service, and some linking to convincing web pages. These phishing attacks continue to be at least partially successful, from the phishers' viewpoint, as each time some members of the University reply giving out personal information including their password, or visit the associated websites and enter their details. Once an account has been compromised in this way, it can then be misused in a variety of ways – primarily as a means to launch further spam runs.

What Do We Do About It?

The Webroot spam filtering service which checks all incoming email removes most unwanted email before it reaches your inbox. But the people sending these messages use a variety of means to get round such filters, so with each new batch of messages some will get through to users. Once we become aware of a phishing attack, we have procedures in place to quickly block the messages, and to alert users via mailing lists and York Extra. From the start of the Autumn Term, we will also be using our Twitter feed to warn of phishing attacks – follow us at: twitter.com/UoYCompServ.

Once we've blocked a message, we check to see which accounts have replied to the email, or visited any web links therein. These accounts are regarded as being compromised and are immediately disabled. To reactivate an account, its owner has to visit the IT Support Office, where they'll be given advice on avoiding future scams.

What Can You Do About It?

Read and follow the advice below, and share it with your colleagues and students – especially new starters.

Protect Your Password

Don't give out your password by phone, email or in person. The Computing Service will never ask you to give your password in this way – neither should any other reputable organisation.

Be Suspicious

If you receive an email apparently from the Computing Service, please contact the IT Support Office to confirm whether it is genuine.

If the email directs you to what appears to be a University web page, check whether it is genuine. For example, check the URL (as it appears in the web browser, not in the email) - University sites asking for your username and password will generally begin 'https' rather than 'http', and be of the form '<https://shib.york.ac.uk>', '<https://www.york.ac.uk>', '<https://deptname.york.ac.uk>', or '<https://www.deptname.york.ac.uk>'. The YUSU web site (www.yusu.org) may also ask for your username and password.

Web pages which don't include [york.ac.uk](http://www.york.ac.uk) near the start of the url - for example '<http://www.yorkit.com/www.york.ac.uk/login/>', or don't include it at all, are unlikely to be genuine University pages. If you are unsure whether a page asking for your University username and password is genuine, please contact your DCO or the Computing Service for advice (there will always be exceptions - for example the Webroot spam filtering service, and the ComplyWise service used for online Health and Safety training - so it's ok to check if you're not sure). For more IT Security information and advice, please visit: www.york.ac.uk/services/cserv/security/

IT Security at Home

GAVIN ATKINSON AND ARTHUR CLUNE

Keep Your Machine Patched

If you're using Windows, visit update.microsoft.com and set your PC to download future patches automatically. You should select the option to patch both Windows and other Microsoft products (such as Office) etc, this is referred to as "Microsoft Update" on XP. Install any patches offered, reboot and then go back to see if further patches are available. Repeat until no more patches are offered.

Apple users should choose Software Update from the Apple menu and follow the instructions.

If you use a laptop at home and at work, patch it first while connected to the campus network as this is protected by our firewall. After this, you'll be notified when updates are available - apply them as soon as possible.

Run a Firewall

For Windows users, XP Service Pack 2 and later and Vista include a good personal firewall, which is often disabled by default. If you are still using Windows 2000, ZoneAlarm is a commonly used product.

Mac OS X has a built-in firewall (see System Preferences then Sharing), disabled by default. Most Unix/Linux distributions have firewall ability.

At home, your ADSL router/wireless access point may have a firewall built in. If so, turn it on.

Run Anti-virus and Anti-spyware Software

The University site-license for Sophos allows for home use (see www.york.ac.uk/services/cserv/sw/sophos/). We advise that you only run one piece of anti-virus software on a machine.

The MS Windows Malicious Software Removal tool (www.microsoft.com/security/malwareremove/) and SpyBot Search & Destroy (www.safer-networking.org) are popular anti-spyware tools. In contrast to anti-virus software, we advise using two or three anti-spyware products.

Desktop Application Upgrades ADRIAN YOUNG

This year's desktop application summer upgrade programme was our biggest yet, with 36 updated or new applications being deployed to the supported PCS over the summer. Some of the more significant application updates were IE 8 and Office 2007.

We have also provided for the first time as a live service, virtualised applications via MS AppV. These include Firefox, Stata 11 and Tinn-R. We are hoping to expand the amount of virtualised applications in the future.

The full list of applications deployed this summer is as follows:

- . Maple 13 Updated
- . Mathematica 7 Updated
- . Matlab R2009a Updated
- . PDF Converter Pro 5.2 Updated
- . Internet Explorer 8 Updated
- . ArtStor OIV 3.1.0 Updated
- . 7 zip 4.65 (2009-02-03) Updated
- . Praat 5.1.0.2 Updated
- . MDL crossfire – Commander 7.1 Updated
- . Mercury 2.2 Updated
- . Ortep 2.02 Updated
- . NX Client 3.3.0-6 Updated
- . SPSS 17 Updated
- . Minitab 15.1.3 Updated
- . CorelDraw X4 Updated
- . R 2.9.0 Updated
- . MS Office 2007 Updated
- . ActiveTCL 8.5.5.0 Updated
- . ArcGIS 9.3.1 Updated
- . OECD June 2009 Updated
- . Endnote X3 Updated
- . Stata 11 (Via AppV) Updated
- . ActivePerl 5.08 Updated
- . Comprehensive Meta Analysis (AEW004 Only) New
- . Firefox 3.X (Via AppV) New
- . NetSupport School 10.01 (Teaching classrooms only) New
- . Renesis SVG plugin for IE 1.1.1 New
- . Adobe Digital Editions 1.7.1 New
- . Tinn R 2.2.0.2 (Via AppV) New
- . Banxia Impact Explorer New
- . Notepad ++ New
- . SMARTBoard Software (AV PCs Only) New
- . Sigmaplot 11 New
- . Oxygen 10 (Selected office PCs only) (Via AppV) New
- . WinSCP 4.2.3 New
- . TrueCrypt 6.2a New

After consulting widely, we also removed a number of old and unused applications from our classroom PCs, as follows:

- . Accutype Training module
- . Adobe SVG Viewer
- . Alladin Expander
- . AnswerTree
- . Arc (Chemistry Teaching) and Lisp Editor
- . Archaeology Slides Database
- . Archaeology Teaching Software
- . Biodiversity
- . ButtonMaker
- . Class Software Cosmo Player
- . Dariolius File Splitter
- . Dicer
- . DivaceDuo
- . Elaborate
- . HTML Tidy GUI
- . IBM Techexplorer HyperMedia Browser
- . Interbase Drivers
- . Interbase SQL
- . SToMP
- . Study Populations
- . The Chemistry Tutor
- . TLTP Modern History Tutorials
- . TPS1100 PC Simulator
- . Using Schlenk lines
- . Vensim

Moving to Windows XP

JOANNE CASEY

We are continuing work to move all supported office PCs to the Windows XP operating system – at the time of writing just over 200 supported office PCs use Windows 2000. However, the rate at which PCs are being rebuilt with Windows XP has slowed, and we'd like to remind people why it's important to move on from Windows 2000.

The Windows 2000 desktop has been frozen from the start of the Autumn Term 2008; this means that no new applications are made available to Windows 2000 machines beyond essential security updates.

From January 2010, we will no longer be able to offer any support for Windows 2000 - for example, if you have a problem with an application you are using on Windows 2000 we are unlikely to be able to help you.

Microsoft will stop issuing security updates for Windows 2000 in July 2010 and at this point, as the machines will become vulnerable to security exploits, we intend to disconnect any Windows 2000 PCs which remain in use from the campus network.

Neither Office 2007 nor Internet Explorer 8 will run on Windows 2000, and all Computing Service Office suite training courses are now on Office 2007. From January 2010, we will no longer provide any support for Office XP, and only basic maintenance and support for Office 2003. Primary support will be for Office 2007.

It is vital that all departments consider their strategy for rebuilding/replacing their remaining Windows 2000 PCs. Many can be rebuilt with Windows XP and we are happy to assist you in determining this. A list of supported PCs still running Windows 2000 can be accessed from: www.york.ac.uk/services/cserv/offdocs/dcos/techres.html - please check to see whether any remain in use within your department. NB: This list is only accessible to DCOs.

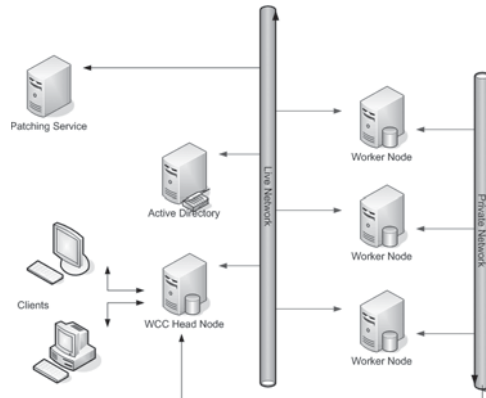
For rebuild options, please see: www.york.ac.uk/services/cserv/pc/WinXP/OfficeWinXP.htm

The Microsoft Compute Cluster Trial Service

ROB FLETCHER AND PRITPAL REHAL

This project has been running since the New Year with a number of invited users from different Departments. These users have different computing requirements, ranging from classic High Performance Computing models (HPC, large memory and long CPU time jobs) which cannot be run on a standard windows desktop running 32-bit Windows (eg 9.6 Gb workspace and months of run time), to the user who requires the classic High Throughput Computing model (HTC, many smaller jobs, run simultaneously thus speeding up the workflow).

The system is a very modest four node cluster, with each node running 8 AMD-64 cores, with 16 Gb memory. It runs the latest Microsoft High Performance Computing Server 2008 64-bit operating system, as well as 64-bit versions of the application software wherever possible. This means that the memory addressing issues encountered with 32-bit Windows (as used on most desktops/laptops) are not seen, i.e., programs can use more than 4 Gb memory. The system also runs the Matlab Distributed Computing Server which allows programs using the Parallel Toolbox to take advantage of extra degrees of parallelism, up to 16 cores.



WINDOWS COMPUTE CLUSTER HTC - 2008 SERVER PLATFORM

Examples of use are:

- Parallel image processing (HPC application).
- Analysis of EEG data (HTC application reducing runtime from 4 hours to 40 minutes per data set).
- Signal Processing (HPC/HTC hybrid application, 50 hours runtime reduced to 6 hours using multiple jobs with 4-core parallel computation per job).
- Computer Algebra (larger memory models using GAP R4 and Mathematica).
- Quantum Chemistry (large HPC models).
- Atmospheric modelling (HTC/HPC hybrid application, processing reduced from 7 days down to 5 days, but 8 jobs can be run simultaneously, so 56 days work can be done in 5 days!)

A number of advantages arise from using this system. First, the user's own machine is generally only used to submit the jobs, thereafter the machine is freed for other work. In most cases a significant improvement in workflow can be achieved by running multiple jobs. At best, some programs were able to use the parallel features of Matlab, significantly speeding up the computation process.

An added advantage of this system is that it is very easy to use, giving more or less transparent access for Matlab users. It is also a Microsoft Windows system, making it easy to use for those who already have a Windows desktop/laptop system.

Additionally, some application programs and programming features are only available as Windows versions, and this system fills the gap between the user's desktop and other high end computing servers which are generally based on the Linux operating system.

Collaborative Tools Project

JOANNE CASEY

The use of collaborative technologies - for example document sharing, wikis, forums, blogs, social software and micro-blogging - has exploded in recent years, and we have seen much interest in these tools from various areas within the University.

In view of this, and to address elements within the Information Strategy, the Collaborative Tools Project has been established. This is a cross-university project to scope and implement collaborative tools for use in all aspects of University life (for example, teaching, research, administration). The project is sponsored by Stephen Town, with David Surtees acting as Project Co-Ordinator, and Joanne Casey as Project Manager.

Project members include Tom Smith, who has recently joined the Computing Service as Collaborative Software Support Specialist (see page 3), Gustav Delius (Mathematics), Dan Wiggle (Web Office), Julie Allinson (University Library), Alistair Knock (Planning Office), David Beer (Sociology), and four further members of the Computing Service - Arthur Clune, Anthony Leonard, John Cooper and Max Spicer.

The project is running under the auspices of SIPIG, and will be reporting to them regularly. We are using an agile approach for the project, with the aim of delivering components of the collaborative working environment rapidly in to user service.

The project team have already met, and identified a number of user requirements and use case scenarios. These will then spawn a number of project workstreams, and as work on these begins we expect that more members of the University will become involved, either by adding their own requirements, or by becoming involved in trying out various products.

If you're interested in becoming involved in this project, please email me - jmc8@york.ac.uk.

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Open from 09.00 to 17.00 Monday to Friday for problem solving, advice and information, fault reporting, network connections, file restoration, course bookings and user registration.

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