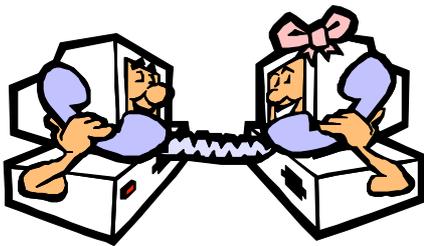# Use of email

Once again, the University's email servers are being overloaded. Users are reminded that the email service should not be abused: please try to keep non-work-related email usage to a minimum.

Ray Drainville

First ever Windows 95 course!

Windows 95 for Windows 3.1 users

Until now we have been unable to provide training in Windows 95 software as none of our classrooms had PCs with hard disks, essential for networked Windows 95. We have now fitted disks into the PCs in Langwith L/117 and are ready for a trial run. Please note that this is a prototype course, and that we hope that you will come along prepared to spend extra time on the feedback forms!

• Time and Place: Wednesday 11 June at 14.15-16.15 in L/117

• Prerequisites: Windows 3.1 user with username and password

Please register at the Computing Service Information Desk as soon as possible (email infodesk, phone 3838).

John Illingworth

PC procurement

The University is out to tender again for the supply of desktop and laptop PCs. As an innovation we've given prospective suppliers the choice of paying £20 for a paper version or downloading the tender document from the Web. An overwhelming majority of them have gone for the Web option, proving that not only is the computer industry notoriously tight-fisted, but also that internet connectivity and doing business electronically has become the norm.

Doug Moncur

Mailbase

A recent successful and well attended talk on Mailbase was given by Elaine Blair of the Mailbase team at Newcastle University. Mailbase is a discussion list service that enables groups of academics and administrators to exchange ideas and information using email.

If you would like to know more about Mailbase their web page is:

http://www.mailbase.ac.uk

Richard Jardine

New mailing list for Apple Mac users

Would you like to keep in touch with other Apple Mac users? I have set up a mailing list for Mac users which can be used for mailing genuine queries.

To subscribe to the list send a message to

`listserv@psych.york.ac.uk`

with the text

`sub macusers`

on a line in the body of the message. No subject is required. You will receive a response with further information in it.

To send a message to the list send it to

`macusers@psych.york.ac.uk`

Everyone on the list will get a copy of the message and anyone on the list can reply.

Rob Stone
(email R.Stone@psych.york.ac.uk)
Psychology

Viglen on-site maintenance

Viglen have informed us that they can no longer guarantee replacement parts for PCs that are older than 3 years. In such cases the base unit will be swapped for the nearest upgrade, and any future faults that occur on such machines should be reported to Viglen using the *original* PC serial number. It is thus advisable that all departments keep a record of all Viglen PC names and serial numbers.

Ken Finch

News from the PC classrooms

Unattended PCs

Last year it was unacceptable behaviour and misuse of computing facilities but this year's hot topic has turned out to be almost the opposite, namely the problem of unattended, logged-in PCs.

The first sign of this problem was a series of complaints about people who left their PCs logged in and went away for prolonged periods, even an hour or two, leaving those queueing for a vacant machine somewhat annoyed.

The response from the Computing Service was to point out that there is no written or implied right to leave a computer logged in and unattended, and that anyone finding a machine in that state was perfectly entitled to log the machine out, preferably nicely, and log in themselves. Equally it was pointed out that anyone leaving a logged-in machine was laying themselves open to a considerable risk of having their files tampered with or deleted. These computers are a scarce resource, and blocking someone else's use is just as bad as wasting time with Doom or recreational Webbery.

The next thing that happened was a second wave of complaints from students doing various time-consuming tasks important to their courses. This time the problem was that if they couldn't take a short break without logging out, then they would have to queue up for a machine again and lose half an hour. The most extreme case is that of a student doing an 8-hour open paper, who believes that without some guaranteed continuity over short breaks (going to the loo was the example she gave) then the time available for typing in over the 8 hours is severely curtailed.

In the latter case we believe that it is up to the department setting such an exam to make sure that essential facilities are available, and indeed some departments book PC classrooms for this very purpose. With the current pressure on computers it is unreasonable to set an 8-hour open paper during which it is expected that the majority of the time will be spent at the keyboard without ensuring that those keyboards will in fact be available.

Despite the reaction against our initial guidance, the Computing Service continues to believe that not only is an unattended PC fair game, but that anyone leaving valuable work on an unattended computer is taking a considerable risk. Like leaving a credit card on the bus.

John Illingworth

Windows 95 teaching

You will see from the article on page 1 that an initial class is to be held in L/117 based on Windows 95. This has been made possible by adding hard disks to the previously diskless PCs as it has become clear that it is not practicable to run Windows 95 any other way.

This means that Windows 95 teaching will be available next academic year, but at this point we cannot say how many of the classrooms it will run in. It depends on how much money the University invests in improving the PC stock and what priorities are assigned by the relevant committees.

Up until now all the PC classrooms have had similar configurations, so that when you booked a PC classroom for teaching it was not necessary to specify which one; the timetablers could safely provide you with whatever room fitted your class size.

If next term there are differences in the classrooms, such as their ability to support Windows 95 teaching, we will inform the timetablers, and it will be necessary for you to inform them of what facilities you require. It is important that we avoid booking classes into rooms where the software they need won't run!

John Illingworth

FOR SALE! – data projector

The Electrohome ECP3000 data/video projector that formerly adorned the ceiling of G/169 is now surplus to requirements. This device was bought originally in 1987 to project the image of a VT terminal onto a large screen. It was also occasionally used for projecting videos, and more recently PCs. It has the resolution to handle SVGA PC output. It is a three-lens device, and physically quite large. It comes with three remote control devices, two "executive" versions with only a few simple buttons, and a technicians' version with all the functionality necessary to configure and converge. Thre are also reference manuals, cables and an interface box to allow connection to a PC. When new this device cost about £15000, or as a member of the Computing Committee at the time remarked, "that's as much as three small cars!". Cars were cheaper in 1987.

The bad news is that the device is too old to be maintained professionally, which is one reason why we took it out of service, and the projection tubes are not as bright as they used to be, which limited its usefulness in a very large room such as G/169.

The projector is offered in the first instance to departments of the University, and if no-one is interested, then to individuals. We have already had expressions of interest from one department and one individual.

If you or your department are interested in acquiring this device, please contact me as soon as possible (email jji1).

John Illingworth

Security

As a result of our ongoing project to look at improving the security of our central computer systems, a number of measures will be taken after the end of the summer term. More details will appear in the form of News items and login notices, but note that both dialup access and interactive access from non-York sites to the central UNIX systems (eg tower, ebor and the Indigo workstations) will be restricted to those users who specifically request it.

If you require dialup or access to UNIX systems from another site please contact the Information Desk with some proof of identity before the end of term.

Dave Atkin
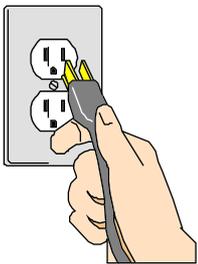
Electrical safety testing

Under health and safety legislation we are required to perform periodic electrical safety checks on all our equipment including the routers, hubs and servers located in over 60 wiring closets all over campus. This summer we continue our rolling programme of testing which will involve powering off equipment and the consequent loss of network connectivity for periods of up to an hour.

We will endeavour to minimize disruption by carrying out work on major switching centres during the regular network-at-risk period (Tuesday mornings 08.00-10.00), though the scale of the undertaking means that some locations will have to be checked at other times, typically mornings between 09.00 and 10.00.

As usual we will advertise scheduled downtime for the affected areas well in advance.

We hope you will bear with this us during this exercise.

Robert Demaine

Some important printing changes

Various important changes are scheduled to be made to printing arrangements for the next academic year, partly as a result of the Computing Service Review which recommended that all printing be chargeable, ie staff should be charged for printing as well as students.

Central lineprinter

The central lineprinter (UNIX print queue "central") will be withdrawn. All output in future will be on high quality cut-sheet stationery.

Black-and-white A4 printing

All central laser printing (UNIX print queue "ps") will be chargeable.

Colour A4, A4 film and A3 printing

The existing colour printer (UNIX print queue "colps") is now unreliable and expensive to maintain. It will be replaced over the summer with one or more new printers. Output will continue to be chargeable, but the tariffs will be reviewed.

Classroom printing

Output from these printers will continue to be chargeable, and the tariffs will be reviewed.

Departmental printing

Departmentally owned and maintained printers driven from the central print server will incur a small annual charge to cover the equipment and effort needed in order to support them.

Billing

We envisage that each department will be billed for usage by its staff and research graduates. The exact billing mechanism is not yet decided, however full itemised bills will be provided.

Implementation

A small group led by Dave Atkin will be responsible for implementing these changes. The details are not yet finalised and further information will be made available during the summer vacation. Please email dla1@york.ac.uk with any suggestions or comments regarding the implementation of the new charging scheme.

Dave Atkin

The future of Indigo workstations

The future of the Indigo workstations in D/104 (and in A/140) is still unclear. The Computing Service has bid for funding to replace them in time for the next academic year, but if funding is not forthcoming, they pose a problem in that they are not capable of running version 6 of the IRIX operating system (which has now been available for some time).

Over the summer vacation we intend to upgrade the central systems (ebor and tower) and various Indy workstations to version 6 of the IRIX operating system. We have in the past tried to keep the Indigos and the central systems in step, but this will no longer be possible if the Indigos are not replaced, in which case the Indigo software will be frozen at its current level.

Dave Atkin

Finding information on the Internet: English Literature

There is a wealth of information concerning English Literature on the Internet, so much so that navigating and keeping up is a problem. The English Literature Information Sources page, accessible from York Information Connections, organises access to resources on English literature to make it easier for you. You will find it on **http://www.york.ac.uk/services/library/subjects/englint.htm**. A complementary source of information can be found at the University of York's Department of English and Related Literature site under the heading Online Research Resources on **http://www.york.ac.uk/depts/engl/gsp/resource/reso_fra.htm**, where the Internet links have been divided into areas of interest roughly analogous to the Department's four research schools.

Academic sites and resource centres

English Literature academic sites are prolific and reflect the world-wide interest in literature and related studies. One of the oldest established and best is at the Northern Illinois University – on **http://www.niu.edu/acad/english/english1.html** – which has the following links: Literature links, Teaching with the Internet, Vico Home Page, Rhetoric & composition links, and Linguistic links. Examples of resource centres are British Literature Resources – at **http://www.as.wvu.edu/english/clc/britlit.html** – and the English Studies Information Server at **http://www.uni-mannheim.de/users/bibsplit/anglistik/**.

Author pages

There are many author pages which provide a wealth of information about various aspects of the lives and works of particular authors. See, for instance, the one on William Langland – **http://dept.english.upenn.edu:80/~lwarner/piers.html/** – which has the following sections: Piers Plowman Listserve; Piers Plowman: Texts and Images; E-Articles on Langland; Book Reviews on Langland; Fourteenth-Century Political and Social Upheaval: Labor Strife and the Plague, the Peasants' Revolt, and an outline of political history; Piers Plowman: References, Influences, Contexts; Langland's Poetics and Lexicon; Langland's Readers; and The Middle Ages on the Web. From a later period, try that for Mary Wollstonecraft – **http://www.ehche.ac.uk/college/schools/human/english/mw.html** – which has the following sections: Complete list of MW's writings including texts available online; MW Chronology; Bibliography; Sophie: Woman's Education According to Rousseau and Wollstonecraft' (essay by Heather A. Wallace); Women Romantic-Era Writers; and Romantic related sites from Romanticism on the Net (internet journal). And coming right up to date, have a look at Michel Foucault at **gopher://jefferson.village.Virginia.EDU:70/11/pubs/listservs/spoons/foucault.archive**.

Directories

The BUBL Information Service has a subject tree which can be approached via the BUBL Link. The location **http://link.bubl.ac.uk/literature/** allows access to literature in general, American literature in English, English and Old-English (Anglo-Saxon) Literature, and other literatures. The Yahoo sites are also very extensive – try **http://www.yahoo.com/Art/Literature/** for a slightly different approach.

Discussion lists

There are discussion lists on various aspects of English and its related literatures. A good example is the Women Writers Project Electronic Discussion List (WWP-L), an electronic community of more than 300 scholars and students of Pre-Victorian women's literature. Traffic on the list is light to moderate and discussion topics range from specific authors to more general issues of research and teaching. Its location is **http://www.wwp.brown.edu/wwp-l.html**. A reasonably full list of discussion lists relating to the subject of English and other literatures can be found at **http://tile.net/NS/DoSearch**.

Library catalogues

Anyone working in the field of literature is bound to need the catalogues of other libraries at some stage, either for finding works published on a particular subject or to verify bibliographical information. Two catalogues are particularly important. First, the catalogue of the British Library, access to which can be gained by clicking on the Information Resources icon on the University's Program Manager, and then on that of the British Library Catalogue. This catalogue has two particularly relevant files: General retrospective catalogue of printed books (listing holdings from 1450 to 1975) and General current catalogue or printed books (listing holdings form 1976 onwards). Second, COPAC, which is a new national Online Public Access Catalogue, providing unified access to

the online catalogues of some of the largest university research libraries in the UK and Ireland. Begun in 1987 the database currently contains about 8.6 million catalogue records, representing an estimated 3.4 million separate titles, and is expected to expand considerably in the future. COPAC is being produced by the COPAC Project and uses records provided by the Consortium of University Research Libraries. COPAC's location is **http://copac.ac.uk/copac/info/info.html**.

Periodical indexes

There are several online periodical indexes which are particularly useful, access to which can be gained by clicking on the Information Resources icon on the University's Program Manager. The *Arts & Humanities Citation Index*, with files dating back to 1981, has been available for many years and is available via the BIDS gateway. Of the indexes via ARC, there are the *Humanities index* (covering the period 1984 to the present) and the *MLA bibliography* (covering the period 1963 to the present); and via EDINA, the *Periodical contents index*, which provides online access to reference to the periodical literature of the humanities and social sciences, containing information from the tables of contents of thousands of English and other European language journals, from their first date of issue to 1990.

LION

Finally, it remains to mention Chadwyck Healey's *LION* (*Li*terature *On* line) which is free to users of the University of York during a trial period which ends on 31 May 1997. *LION* combines hundreds of thousands of fully-searchable texts, with reference works, bibliographies and catalogues on a single site, and provides hypertext links to relevant resources on other websites. The initial screen contains the following access points: Master index; Literary databases; Dictionaries; Reference works; Web resources; and Help. Its location is **http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk**.

David Griffiths (email dg7)
J B Morrell Library

The Success of ILIAD

Following a hectic but successful year, evaluation of the ILIAD (Information Literacy in All Departments) programme has now taken place. A full report has been produced, copies of which are available from Debra Fayter (email daf3, ext 3839). All members of staff involved in the project will receive a copy automatically.

Evaluation forms were received from 261 students and some of their comments are listed below.

> *"It's good that the University of York takes such an effort in providing computer skills to the students and this proves beneficial in the long run."*

> *"It encourages greater personal confidence in using IT and proves it's not impossible for anyone to get to grips with a PC."*

> *"I have learned a lot during this course and I am sure this knowledge will be useful to me during my degree course and in my chosen career."*

> *"The course booklets were very useful and will be helpful in the future - they were well organised and clearly presented."*

> *"The tutor was always helpful and never used confusing technical advice and jargon."*

Overall the course was well received with 77% rating it very good or good; the remainder finding it acceptable. Naturally, we have found some improvements which will ensure that the course is still better next year. The major changes are that we will develop a fast track course in addition to the standard course, so that those with more experience can reach the required level in a shorter time. We may use a pre-course questionnaire to guide students onto the correct route. We will add more material to challenge the more advanced students.

I would like to thank all those who played a part in ensuring the success of ILIAD this year, and in particular:

Arthur Andersen for their strong support.

ILIAD Steering Group – Mike Jinks, John Illingworth, Chris Ellwood and Elizabeth Heaps.

Teaching Staff from York College and from the University's Computing Service especially Vivienne Hemingway, Richard Jardine and Anne Worden.

Library Staff especially Subject Librarians for their help in creating materials.

ILIAD Administrative Assistant, Sophie Mort, for all her support.

Computing Service support staff including Helen Parker, Sue Dekker and Lorraine Moor.

Postgraduate Demonstrators for their valuable assistance in the classroom.

Academic Department ILIAD contacts especially Adrian Whitwood, Chemistry for his teaching support.

Margaret Ferguson, Languages For All.

Finally, many congratulations to the students who completed the programme and passed the assessments to gain the certificate.

Debra Fayter

Certificate

The Data Warehouse

A Data Warehouse is a database that contains an extract of the data that is held on a computer system. The information is rearranged to make it easier to use and is read-only.

At this University selected data from the MAC (Management and Administrative Computing) system is transferred overnight to the Data Warehouse. The information in the Data Warehouse is examined using Paradox which asks the Data Warehouse for part of its data.

The diagram below shows what happens.
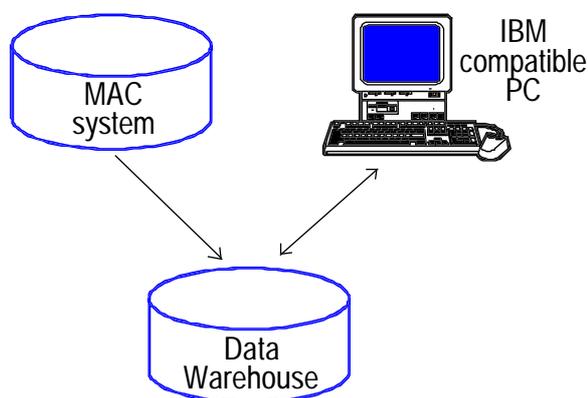
Paradox

Paradox is a Windows application program that allows you manipulate and examine relational databases. Relational databases allow tables to be linked together because each table has at least one field that corresponds to an identically named field in another table.

In the example below two tables have been "joined" using a common field that contains a student identity number.

1. Two tables containing information

The table TSD contains student data and TSS additional student information such as the name of the student's supervisor.

2. The tables are joined by linking the common field
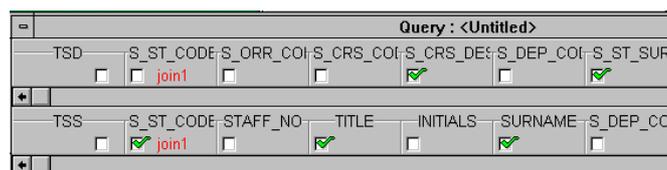
The join1 underneath S_ST_Code (student identity number) means link this field. A tick in a box means display that field.

3. An answer table is produced

In the answer table student surnames from TSD and their supervisor's surname from TSS are shown. Information from both tables has been selected.

Richard Jardine

Gaining hands-on experience in Paradox and the Data Warehouse

Two Computing Service courses are available:

Introduction to Paradox

This all day course will get you started in using Paradox. It is open to staff and graduates.

• Tuesday 1 July at 10.15-12.15 and 14.15-16.15 in L/117
• Instructor: Vivienne Hemingway

Paradox for the Data Warehouse User

This two-hour course explains how you connect to the Data Warehouse and how you would use Paradox to select the information that you require and produce reports.

You should have some previous experience of using Paradox or have attended a Computing Service Paradox course and must be a member of staff.

• Course 1: Thursday 3 July at 9.15-11.15 in L/117
  Course 2: Tuesday 15 July at 14.15-16.15 in L/117
• Instructor: Richard Jardine

To register for a course contact the Information Desk (email infodesk, ext 3838).

Speeding things up again

MIS are continually investigating the performance of the MAC applications. One of the reasons for poor performance may be that an increasing number of programs are being run during the day. If you have an option to run a job in batch then please do so.

Trevor Bolton

IQ to be removed

The PowerHouse enquiry facility 'IQ' will be removed from the Advax system as from 1 October 1997. The Data Warehouse should contain all the data; if not, please contact the relevant Database Administrator.

Trevor Bolton

UCAS applications

Please note that the UCAS application will only be populated in the DEPT accounts for the 97/98 cycle. The Data Warehouse should be used for the 98/99 cycle.

Trevor Bolton

Important: logging out of MAC

Please remember to log out of MAC in an orderly manner at the end of each working day. A facility automatically runs each weekend to re-organise the MAC data files but this is not able to run successfully if users leave programs accessing data files, *so please log out – especially on Fridays!*

Trevor Bolton

Access to MAC and Data Warehouse

If you wish to access the administrative systems you need to be registered with the Computing Service and to have applied for access to the MAC system or the Data Warehouse. In order to access the data within the MAC system, you must then also apply to the relevant Database Administrator. To access the data in the Data Warehouse, you must apply to Richard Shephard in the Finance department.

The appropriate forms are available from the Information Desk in the Computing Service.

Trevor Bolton

Finance – nominal and project reporting

As from 1 July it will only be possible to run nominal and project reports in batch.

Trevor Bolton

A day in the life of...

Timothy Willson, Management Information Systems Application Support Officer

... 27 miles, persistent light rain. *Pip pip pip* ... "Good Morning, it's 6am and this is News Briefing" and so my day begins. I live 47 miles away on top of a Pennine in West Yorkshire so I have to leave home at the crack of dawn. Home is a converted Co-op shop (circa 1895) with a 1-in-4 garden; strong westerly winds and ill-fitting windows do nothing to encourage one to escape the warmth of one's bed. However, post cat-feeding, tea in bed for my partner Phil, and (vegetarian) sandwich making, I drag myself out into my mobile cocoon and head east – into the sun! Once at work well ... what do I do, and how did I get here?

I've been associated with the University since 1973 (I graduated in Physics and Education?!) and have been variously Finance Officer to the Students' Union, Senior Executive Officer in the Fees Office and latterly MIS-ASO. I am therefore, unfortunately, fairly well known around campus and, never having hidden my light under a bushel, seem to be considered by some to be either the source of, or know where to get the information about, a large variety of matters well beyond the brief of my post in MIS. The telephone and email are rarely idle. (Hint No 1: If you ring 3838 – The Information Desk – your problems

will be allocated to the appropriate part of the Computing Service and resolved a lot more rapidly).

My formal job description states that I am charged with assisting in the implementation of Administrative Systems (primarily MAC) and the development and support of these systems once installed. This has meant in the recent past that I have had a heavy involvement in the MAC Research and Finance Systems implementations. Now that these systems are "Live", along with associated parts of the Estates System, I am often the first port of call for problems

logged with the InfoDesk (Hint No 2: in simple terms if it is a data problem approach the appropriate DBA; if it is a system problem ring 3838).

The MIS Group members each cover all parts of the MAC system but we each have areas in which we are probably have a greater depth of knowledge. This means that I get the unenviable task of trying to coax out of users of Finance/Research/ Estates what it was when "it just stopped working ... I didn't do anything I assure you". Often this is true but equally it can turn out that they tried something fancy or just closed down their window because they had had enough and we need to know this. There is nothing more embarrassing than telling the software maintenance team in Rugby that their system is in terminal decline and it turning out that the user actually did punch "Yes" when they have sworn blind that they punched "No".

In addition to these logged matters the MIS Group writes all of the "In-House Reports" that are found in the MAC system (I seem to be responsible for quite a number of these) and, of course, support a large number of systems outside that. I have also written several of the programs that extract MAC data for the Data Warehouse; of which more later. Inevitably these programs need care and maintenance and the users who originally specified them change their minds so I have an on-going list of "can you just change" requests to slog through when times are slacker.

With the telephone safely back in its cradle it may be time to revise parts of the Stores and Stock Bar Coding suite of programs. Those of you who visit Science Department Stores will know about the Bar Code Readers; the software that transfers the data from the capture device into MAC and then processes the issues was written by colleagues in MIS. I have recently spent some considerable amount of time amending it to allow "Returns" to be processed in the same way as "Issues" – so when you take back the 3 gallon beaker and swap it for a 3ml one remember to take your card with you. This new program should have gone live just before
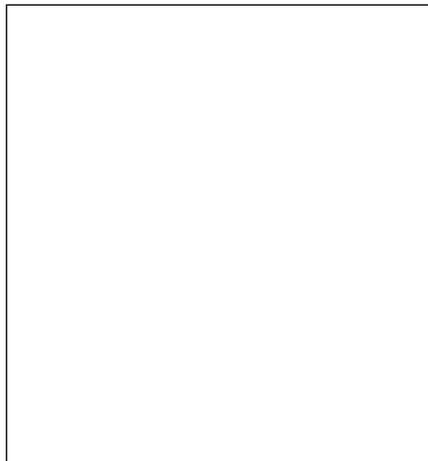
this article is published so the bulk of my day as you read this is probably being spent tying in the ends I thought were already firmly knotted! I always thought that programming was a matter of logic, planned processing and analysis but the more I get into it I find it is an art – the art of getting the system to write with its left hand when it is really right-handed and of persuading punters that the annoying six sets of "PF4's" is a useful design feature and not ... a badly programmed annoying set of six "PF4's" (that should have been only one.)

What else do I do? I attend countless meetings to discuss vital matters of the day, such as Purchase Order Processing, Stores and Stocks, and Research Accounting. Until yesterday I was one of the University Council appointed representatives on the Campus Nursery Committee (a matter of some irony as you will understand if you know of my domestic arrangements). I am the elected Chair of the Computing Service Board – the equivalent within a University Service of an academic department's Board of Studies ... and I am a Justice of the Peace. Much to my surprise, and I suspect the amazement of colleagues, the (now ex) Lord Chancellor, Lord Mackay of Clashfern, appointed me to the Calderdale Petty Sessional Bench in November last year. So a couple of days every month I am found, not in my corner of the office, but sitting on one of the (fairly uncomfortable) benches in Halifax Courthouse. It is a world of which I had

virtually no knowledge until recently and I have had my preconceptions and prejudices blown away. If you are ever within hearing distance I will bore you with it all but suffice to say I find my involvement with the bench both challenging and very rewarding.

So that takes me to about tea time (Camomile in my case) – what else do I do? The answer is really whatever is the latest project that MIS has on the go. I referred earlier to our latest attempt to "answer all ills", the Data Warehouse. This is a set of data extracted from MAC (and elsewhere) overnight and used to populate an InterBase database. This allows users, with appropriate security constraints, to extract data and manipulate it using tools like Paradox, Quattro Pro and WordPerfect, or to transfer it into Excel and Access and similar products. They can then design reports, do trend analysis, send letters etc in formats that they control totally. Using In-House reports etc is clearly constrained by the original designer. It also means that the Transaction Processing (Data Entry etc) is on the Advax machines and the reporting is on the DWH machine and neither affects the performance of the other! All of this, needless to say, involves analysis of data, programming, consulting users – especially in the early stages of development of a particular module – and, inevitably, firefighting.

It's probably at least five fifteen by now and I'm off in my little Corsa heading westwards – into the sun. Some people say that if they won the Lottery they would buy a large house or a Rolls Royce – myself, I'd fund research into the feasibility of moving the Pennines into the Howardian Hills!

Once home I cook, feed the cat again, play Bridge (a pastime I have had for over thirty years!), decorate (the Old Co-op is like the Forth Bridge), ski (some of you will remember me on crutches a few years ago) and try to learn Italian. Three times I've begun but I've not really got beyond Buongiorno or, more appropriately for the end of my day, Buona Notte.

Timothy Willson