



# ICTF Hilary Term 2015

## IT Services Report

- **IT Services Senior Management Team:** Two significant changes are taking place within the IT Services senior management team (SMT). Firstly, Deputy CIO Darrell Sturley will be leaving the department at the end of March to take up the role of CIO at Bristol University. Secondly, CIO Anne Trefethen has taken on the role of Pro-Vice-Chancellor for ASUC, which is a 25% role. Plans are in place to support what is now a strong senior management team under Anne's leadership, and ensure that we maintain the momentum built up around several initiatives through Darrell's recent work. Stuart Lee will continue in his role as Deputy CIO and will continue to work closely with Anne and deputise for her as needed. Darrell's duties have been assigned to SMT colleagues and senior managers within the department.

As Darrell moves to his new role the service activities that he had initiated are being brought together to create a Service Transformation Programme led by Denise Conway from April 1st. Denise will oversee the continuing development of our Service Management Office as well as work with SMT to deliver the planned service changes. David White will be taking over as the Programme Manager for the Student Systems Programme.

- **IT Services Portfolio Review:** The IT Services Portfolio Review was tasked with ensuring IT services were properly aligned with the needs of the University, and whether the goal of having an open and transparent cost model for services that was affordable and adequately funded was being achieved. As a result of the review, a Service Transformation Programme has been created to manage the implementation of approved service changes. This has been endorsed by IT Committee. The proposed changes include:
  - a local IT support service for academic departments and colleges that wish to opt-in;
  - feasibility of providing the University with a managed print service;
  - with Estates, a strategy/design service for audio visual equipment in buildings;
  - future management of devices (desktops, laptops, mobile devices);
  - a review of the range, content and method of delivery of the courses in the ITLP;
  - undertake software asset management with an external partner;
  - to reduce the support available for MS Access databases.
- **IT Innovation Fund:** The pilot scheme was successfully launched to UAS and IT Services staff in Michaelmas Term, with over 200 people signing up to the site across museum, library and IT Services staff. 35 ideas were contributed, which promoted extensive discussions. The Innovation Group shortlisted six ideas, of which four were selected for funding:
  - *JoinIn* - IT Services, started January 2015
  - *ReSounding: Bringing the University's Musical Instruments to Life* - IT Services, starting March 2015
  - *The Hidden Museum: Revealing Collections Content in Context* - Museum of Natural History & Museum of the History of Science, starting March 2015



- *Online Reading List Management System* - Bodleian Social Science Library, started January 2015

The full scheme was launched to University staff and students just before Christmas with close to 500 people signing up to 'Oxford Ideas' site over the Hilary Term. This first challenge focussed on the areas of widening access and student feedback against which 45 ideas were contributed to the Staff call and 16 ideas to the Student call. The challenge closed mid-February whereupon ten ideas were selected from each category to go through to the proposal stage. Applicants have been invited to present on their proposals on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> of March with offer letters to successful projects expected shortly after. The Trinity Term challenge will be announced in the week commencing 23<sup>rd</sup> March and will be open to University staff only.

Further information about the innovation scheme and the submitted ideas/projects can be found at: <https://sharepoint.nexus.ox.ac.uk/sites/itservices/innovation>

- **Data Centres:** IT Services overall strategy is to consolidate our estate into two well-connected, efficient, and resilient data centres, both of which operate on a shared basis. A Data Centres Project has been initiated to oversee expansion of the existing Shared Data Centre to offer additional capacity from December 2015, and delivery of a new data centre for the University. The new data centre is being developed through a partnership between IT Services and Medical Sciences, and will replace the end-of-life Banbury Road data centre and meet requirements arising from the Big Data Institute. The new data centre is expected to be in operation by October 2016, and currently a feasibility and design phase is assessing a location on the Harwell Campus.
- **Weblearn:** The WeRP (WebLearn Resilience Project) will shortly be completed which has renewed and improved WebLearn's infrastructure – the service is now split over two sites and should be more resilient to outages and other projects. Over the next few months the team will be working on several projects around the university, including:
  - ORLiMS innovation project - working with the Social Sciences Library to improve on-line reading lists
  - A project to improve the Researcher Training Tool – the place where graduate student discover training opportunities.
- **Web CMS Drupal Project:** IT Services's offerings around web / content management systems comprise a mixture of several platforms with overlapping capabilities and purpose. This project aims to replace these with a single CMS solution, based on Drupal, which is able to meet the range of business needs across the University.

The pilot of the new web platform is about to start. Representatives from all stakeholder groups have been invited to take part and report feedback about their experience in using the service in order to comprehensively understand the needs of potential users of the platform. The team is also working on the final aspects of the service architecture design including a system that would allow users to deploy their own websites. The pilot is expected to complete by the end of May.

- **The Oxford Network Evolution (TONE) Project:** The implementation phase of the University



network backbone replacement project has commenced with the signing of the contract with Pervasive to provide HP networking hardware and services in January 2015. The upgrade will enable departments and colleges to have a minimum 1Gb/s resilient connection to the backbone as standard. Options to upgrade to 2, 10 or 40Gb/s will be available as part of a cost-recovered service offering. The new core backbone service (Odin) is due to go live by September 2015, including the migration of ten pilot sites. The migration from the existing backbone service to Odin is expected to be undertaken with the minimum of disruption to departments and colleges. A subsequent phase will migrate units to the new Odin service (the capital funding includes replacement of existing Cisco Frodos). The project website is at <https://projects.it.ox.ac.uk/tone/>.

- **GOWN:** The Gown project aims to upgrade or replace the existing centrally-provide wireless service (eduroam, OWL, public wifi and access management).

Phase 1 of the project is under way with student and staff surveys and workshops having been held in December and January to gather user requirements. The results of these are now being analysed and the team will shortly be creating an options paper. Once an approach has been agreed an implementation project will be initiated.

- **ICP/ Chorus:** ICP is delivering the University's new unified communications service 'Chorus'. A pilot of the new system is about launch and will run until the summer. Following completion of the pilot, the plan is to begin deploying Chorus to early adopters in Michaelmas 2015. The wider rollout across the University will run up to the end of 2017.

The Chorus pilot will be testing the system itself, as well as the migration process, support desk and training materials, compatibility of existing Cisco VOIP phone equipment, and much more. Data collected during the pilot will inform the development of the service costing model. Up-to-date information and support resources for ITSS can be found at <http://projects.it.ox.ac.uk/icp/>

The project team also publish a monthly newsletter with the latest news on the service as it develops, which can also be found on the website. For questions not answered on the project website, please contact [chorus@it.ox.ac.uk](mailto:chorus@it.ox.ac.uk)

- **Lecture Capture Project II:** The Lecture Capture (2) project aims to formally pilot the Panopto software across the university (on an opt-in basis), with a view to deploying a central lecture capture service in the future. Lessons learned from the trial will inform this project and the development of a service and costing model. New departments have been invited to pilot the software and work according to the processes and guidelines already drafted. All the 2014 participating departments had a seamless transition to the 2015 project. Five more courses in the Physics department are now participating and the equipment supplied to the Martin Wood lecture theatre is proving invaluable in enabling scheduled recordings and minimising manual intervention. The Said Business School has equipped most of their lecture rooms and they are extremely satisfied with the current solution. Equipment is being purchased for the Examinations Schools – a venue used by several different departments and lecturers who depend on permanently fixed cameras and microphones. There are now 14 departments or groups participating in the project. A decision was taken to name the Lecture Capture project/service "Replay", reflecting the emphasis on students replaying a recorded lecture for revision purposes. A logo, brand and colour scheme have been commissioned from the Design Studio (PAD).



There have been a number of talks and presentations given on lecture capture at Oxford over the last year; to hear the talk from the Michaelmas 'Engage' series in November 2014 click: [lecture capture talk](#). More are planned this year including the Manchester OpenCast Lecture Capture Conference in March and a lunch-time training session for Oxford users is now part of the [IT Learning Programme](#), starting during Hilary Term 2015.

- **Service Desk Consolidation Project:** We are now very close to switching across to our new service support processes, underpinned by the FrontRange HEAT toolset. System configuration is now focussing on fixing issues identified during user acceptance testing, and staff are going through a variety of training courses to prepare for transition on the 20<sup>th</sup> April 2015.

Communications regarding the transition have been prepared, and will be shared with ITSS, with the most visible immediate change for users being that auto-responses and notifications from the new toolset will look different. As we settle into our new ways of working and get used to the new toolset then the primary benefits around speed, reliability, and quality of response will begin to show through.

- **Online thesis submission Project:** (Central) IT Services is supporting Exams & Assessments and Medical Sciences IT Services to pilot a process and underpinning IT solution for the digital submission and distribution of research graduate theses. It is hoped that this will enhance the speed and quality of service to examiners and improve information security over existing *ad hoc* approaches to requests for theses to be provided electronically. Requirements gathering is taking place now, a preferred IT solution will be selected by 11<sup>th</sup> May, and a full proposal for the pilot will be made to the June meeting of Education IT Board.
- **University Card replacement Projects:** The University Card production system is now reaching end of life, and a project has been started to look at how it can be replaced by mid 2016. This is not as simple as it sounds, as the card is intimately linked with a database of entitlement information, and the production of the card is used to drive other registration processes. In addition, the production of cards for the Bodleian has diverged to its own operation. It has been agreed, therefore, to undertake a new review of central identity management processes across the university, and create a new workflow in which the physical smart card (and the myriad uses it is put to) is an output from the system rather than a driver of it. The identity management review will start shortly and report back in May about what can be achieved in the next 12 months; at the same time, investigation will continue into the best way to produce and use the physical cards.
- **WebLearn Improved Student Experience (WISE) Project:** The WISE project is due to commence shortly and is being managed by Liz Masterman. The project will support departments, faculties, colleges and units to fast-track the development and improvement of their WebLearn presence in order to deliver an enhanced (and consistent) student digital experience, as per recommendations from previous projects. The objectives include:
  - To promote staff engagement with the tools and features offered by WebLearn to enrich teaching and learning
  - To enhance the student WebLearn experience
  - To work closely with selected units to fast-track their use of WebLearn for teaching and learning



- To facilitate the use of WebLearn according to best practice
- To provide improved tools and templates to support best practice
- To establish a peer community of WebLearn champions (enthusiasts)

The funding will allow the central WebLearn team to employ two fixed-term learning technologists to work closely with departments, as well as developer resources to focus on technical enhancements and unit-specific templates. For more information: (<https://blogs.it.ox.ac.uk/adamweblearn/2015/01/weblearn-improved-student-experience-wise-project/>)

- **Student Systems:** The new student records system, built on Tribal SITS, went live for staff user on Monday 5th January 2015. This phase delivers on-course student record functionality (registration through to examination). Student self-service re-opened, now in SITS:eVision, to students on Tuesday 6th January. OSS remains active and will be used to support the 15/16 admissions cycle in September, after which graduate and undergraduate admissions will also be delivered through eVision.

Support for SITS and other student administration systems including OSS, GSS, ADSS, and OxCORT is provided by the Student Systems Support Centre which also launched on 5<sup>th</sup> January. Staff needing support for student systems should contact [student.systems@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:student.systems@admin.ox.ac.uk).

Further information about the student systems programme is available from [ssp@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:ssp@admin.ox.ac.uk)

- **DARS:** The most significant change to DARS has been the application of Service Pack 9. This brought with it significant performance in all areas relating to Gift Aid amounts, including queries, exports and reports. The team have also delivered the 23rd BBIS website, for St Peter's College. Currently the team are conducting a number of focus groups to find out what participants think works and what doesn't work in DARS in order to guide further development and improvement.

A new initiative for DARS is to review the causes of data quality issues. The team have devised a twofold action plan: on one hand kicking off work to develop data fixes for the most significant issues, on the other hand to clearly communicate to the user community where the cause is local and can be addressed locally.

The team has recently marked a significant milestone – since DARS started in September 2009, it has been used to send just over ten million emails.

- **Finance Systems:** The Financials programme has successfully completed 5 projects and 11 more projects are at various stages from initial analysis to delivery. Benefits received to date are a patched and stabilised system, standardised and streamlined consolidation process for subsidiary and foreign financial reporting, FTE headcount within General Ledger and many reports developed and improved following the R12 implementation. The FSSC has commenced a series of departmental visits which is proving mutually beneficial to all parties and is now working closely with the Financial User Advisory Group.

John Ireland, 2015-03-18