OUCS Report

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1. College Contribution to OUCS Funding

Discussions with the group representing the colleges (Richard Sommers, Alison Reid, John Church, Steve Kerskey, Ben Bridle, David Hart, Jo Ashbourn) concluded and a report was submitted to the bursars. It was approved by the Efficiencies and Best Practice Committee, and the Colleges IT Committee, but objections were raised by a few Estates Bursars. We are now in the process of collating the concerns, addressing them, and resubmitting for EBC in February. If this funding does not come from colleges then the Divisions will need to seriously look at alternative scenarios.

2. ICT Governance

As mentioned on ITSS-D, the internal auditors (Price Waterhouse Cooper) have produced a report on possible future models for ICT Governance. The focus of the report was mainly on the central IT providers though (OUCS, BSP, ICT ST).

3. WebLearn

News: http://blogs.oucs.ox.ac.uk/adamweblearn

- OUCS has recently introduced an improved method of migrating content from old WebLearn and into the new WebLearn, employing IMS Content Packages as a transport medium, thus preserving HTML descriptions from the old system: http://blogs.oucs.ox.ac.uk/adamweblearn/2010/09/a-much-better-way-of-migrating-content-from-old-weblearn/
- Please see the OUCS list of courses available to assist in this & other WL areas. There's a monthly intro course "WL: Fundamentals"
- WebLearn is now accessible via OUCS's Mobile Oxford service (m.ox).
- The (Tutorial) Sign-up Tool is the first of many tools that will offer a special interface optimized for use on a smartphone. Other tools including Polls, Surveys, Announcements and Resources will be appearing in the next few months. The current service allows you to sign up for events and in the future you will be able to read announcements, complete surveys and view documents.
- Video screencast tutorials demonstrating the use of some of the most important tools in WebLearn are now available, providing users with short, visual demos of particular tools: http://blogs.oucs.ox.ac.uk/adamweblearn/2010/09/video-tutorial-guides-for-site-managers/
- The WebLearn Site Stats tool has enabled the IT Learning Programme to log how many university people are using their site, thereby confirming how valuable the service is.
- MPLS are using the brand SES (Student Enrolment System) tool to allow their grad. students to sign up for taught courses
- The new Surveys Beta tool enables course evaluation, data gathering and public surveys
- 14 on-line courses have been added covering Avoidance of Plagiarism, Career Planning, Conferences, Entrepreneurship, Ethics, Intellectual Property, Project Management,

Publishing, and Managing Your Supervisor. Access via Skills Hub:
http://blogs.oucs.ox.ac.uk/adamweblearn/2010/09/university-skills-group-online-skills-courses-now-hosted-in-weblearn/

4. Freshers' Fair survey (initial findings)

Each year at the Freshers' Fair, OUCS runs a survey on IT use. This will be run online for a few weeks but a snapshot glance at the paper returns indicated that there was a considerable increase in Mac penetration possibly now rising as high as 35%. More details to follow. See also Sander's graph at: https://spreadsheets.google.com/ccc?key=0Ao-gb7vI1LS8dE84MzgxT2JGT1AxdWp2TW1uWFNZbEE&hl=en&authkey=CMHf5-8O#gid=0

5. iTunes

This October marks the second anniversary of the launch of Oxford's iTunes U site, featuring audio and video podcasts from across the University. 5 million downloads have been made from the site, which contains more hours of material than any other UK university. We currently have three podcasts in the global top ten. Awareness among first years that Oxford produces podcasts has risen from 15 per cent at last year's freshers' fair to 60 per cent this year.

6. Mobile Oxford (m.ox.ac.uk)

We are engaging in a major activity to advertise the new Mobile Oxford service to staff and students. We have received funding to take its development forwards and are working closely with Brookes to add local facilities.

7. EndNote X4

The latest version of EndNote X4 is available through the OUCS Online Shop and can be installed free of charge for computers owned by the University. This is currently the only version that works with Word 2010.

8. ITLP Schedule

The IT Learning Programme schedule for Michaelmas included a number of new courses such as AppleMac – iWorks Fundamentals; Multimedia: Screen capture – assessing student learning and a new lunchtime series entitled "Secrets of …."

9. Nexus mail

Nexus provides the centrally-supported mail, calendaring and collaboration service for the University (around 50,000 mailboxes). The Nexus team have been providing assistance to two significant migration projects: the migration of UAS users from Lotus Domino (900 users, completed by end of October 2010); and the migration of IMSU users from Novell Groupwise (around 2,000 mailboxes, to complete in 2011). Other departments and colleges are considering or are in the process of migrating from local email solutions to Nexus.

The Nexus team are undertaking an evaluation of the SharePoint component of the Nexus

service. SharePoint has been available to early adopters since Trinity Term 2010 with support provided for using SharePoint to assist with committee administration, research collaboration and the running of student clubs. The results of the evaluation will feed into the upgrade and wider rollout of the service to the University in Hilary Term 2011.

On Thursday 9 September 2010 at 1615 there was a total outage of the Oxford Nexus services due to a storage failure. Users were back online at around 17:45. However, another total outage occurred at 2300 the same evening. A degree of automated and manual repair procedures meant that around 19,000 mailboxes were active and usable at 06:00 on 10 September and 56,000 mailboxes were active and usable by 07:30. A set of 505 users/mailboxes did not have access to Oxford Nexus during the day on Friday 10th September. All users had access to the service by 1830 on 10 Sept.

The University has agreed to provide capital funding for two Nexus projects. The Nexus 2010 project, running until July 2011, will ensure that the Nexus service is upgraded to Exchange 2010 and to SharePoint 2010. Both upgrades will bring service enhancements including much better support for non-Microsoft Web browsers for users of Outlook Web Access and, for example, social networking-like features for SharePoint. The Nexus-Weblearn Integration Project is investigating better integration between Weblearn and Nexus (whether Exchange or SharePoint) to support activities using, or wishing to use, both services. Part of the project includes a user requirements analysis but the types of activities likely to be the subject of investigation include shared calendars (WebLearn, Exchange, SharePoint); the re-use of group information (e.g. tutorial groups) in both WebLearn and Nexus; better support for document workflows than encompass both services (e.g. the development and publication of handbooks, or enabling access to research materials on SharePoint via WebLearn).

10. Printing Service

The OUCS print room has been upgraded with a plate-making machine which allows direct production of printing plates from a computer.

11. Notifying OxCERT

Sicne May OxCERT has been implementing changes to processes for dealing with incidents to provide a more consistent service to IT staff and to meet recommendations of the University auditors.

12. HFS Changes

Changes to this service are due to take place on 01 June in order to improve the service for end users including lowering the probability of failed backups; reducing the amount of data sent each time thus reducing backup duration and ensuring more backups can occur without hitting the HFS daily limits.

In August 2010 the HFS launched a backup service designed to provide members of the University with secure data backup from outside the University. Previously backup services were limited to the University network and to the University's eduroam wireless network, in order to ensure that backups and restores were completed in a timely manner. This new pilot service provides backup and restore functionality worldwide, via the University VPN service. Further information, including how to register, from http://www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/hfs/vpn/

13. OpenSpires Project

This one year pilot funded by JISC and HEA was set up in April 2009 to investigate the release of open educational resources. The project built upon the success of Oxford on iTunes U allowing material to be free to re-use and redistribute for non-commercial use, with the creator attributed. Due to its success in the first year establishing a sustainable set of policies and workflows between departments across the University, the OER now continues past the pilot stage.

14. The Sir Louie project (July 2010-January 2011)

The project will enhance two academic and administrative systems. WebLearn (VLE) and the University's library search interface SOLO, (based on Ex-Libris Primo), in order to provide much improved experience for both students and lecturers in the area of reading lists. Specifically the search interface to SOLO will be improved and will reflect the simplicity of Google Scholar. This interface will be able to be invoked fronm within WebLearn's reading list tool; any selected items will be sent back to the VLE for inclusion in the reading list. The data will be transferred using the standard Open URL encoding.

15. Costing IT Services

With the availability of modest JISC funding as part of their Flexible Services Delivery programme, OUCS has been developing an improved costing toolkit by utilizing TRAC methodology. The toolkit has been test-run on three services and the findings used for further refinement. The final report is near completion and the project proved itself to be beneficial including the possibility of exploring a much more detailed costing model.

16. Crowdsourcing

RunCoCo ran two very successful training events earlier in the year for those interested in harnessing information from the general public – 'crowdsourcing'. OUCS has received JISC funding until the end of February 2011 to tell people how they could run a community collection sight such as The Great War Archive.

17. IPv6

Initial test trials for IPv6 have started with core network services being redeployed with IPv6 service. There is still a lot of work to do but the IRC service and NTP stratum 3 are now reachable via IPv6. One unit (maths) has received an initial development connection and is working with OUCS while we work towards a production quality service for units. A blog covering progress is online at http://blogs.oucs.ox.ac.uk/networks/

18. Research Data Management projects

Both the Supporting Data Management Infrastructure for the Humanities (Sudamih, http://sudamih.oucs.ox.ac.uk/) project and the Embedding Institutional Digital Curation Services in Research (Eidcsr, http://eidcsr/oucs.ox.ac.uk/) project are developing training and other materials to support researchers in their management of research data. The Sudamih project has contributed training materials to graduate and PI induction events; the Eidcsr project has assisted the Research Services Office (RSO) in the development of a website gateway to services and documentation to support the creation and implementation of data management plans (required by most funding bodies).

19. University Shared Data Centre

OUCS are currently planning the fit-out and provision of services from the new data centre in 2011. The data centre is due to be handed over to OUCS on 20 Dec 2010 in order that the fit-out project may begin. We will be re-assessing 'day one' demand for server colocation facilities in Michaelmas Term 2010, with the expectation that the data centre will be open for business by the beginning of Trinity Term 2011. We have also been successful in attracting funds from the UK University Modernisation Funds to assist with the above, but more importantly begin to develop a world-leading private cloud for Oxford.