ICTF Michaelmas Term 2012
IT Services Report

1. IT Services (formerly OUCS, BSP & ICTST)

IT Services was formed on 1st August 2012 from a merger of the three central IT departments – BSP (Business Services and Projects), ICTST (ICT Support Team) and OUCS (Oxford University Computing Services). It is envisaged to take at least a year before the process of integrating the three central IT departments is fully achieved. The IT Services top-level website, including a consolidated list of services and projects, is at <http://www.it.ox.ac.uk/>; other websites (e.g. oucs.ox.ac.uk) will remain in place for the foreseeable future. The terms of reference for the IT Committee (reporting to Council) were published in the *Gazette*, 19 July 2012, <http://www.ox.ac.uk/gazette/2011-2012/19july2012-no4997/councilandmaincommittees/>.

2. Services update

2.1 Malware and Website security

Currently, the biggest malware threat to University or college-managed systems tends to come from vulnerabilities in third-party software such as Java, Flash and Acrobat. Updates for these need to be applied in a timely manner. OxCERT appreciate that there can be conflicts between securing these products and other applications which insist on the presence of versions with known vulnerabilities. OxCERT have also seen a large number of attacks against University webservers, with both financial and political motivations. Successful attacks have resulted in significant downtime for several sites, and in some cases the loss of personal data.

2.2. Information Security

IT Services has a subsite dedicated to Information Security, including the University-approved Information Security Policy; details of this term's series of presentations about protecting your data online; the Information Security Toolkit; and further information about the pilot PGP Whole Disk Encryption project. See <http://www.it.ox.ac.uk/infosec/>.

2.3. Nexus SharePoint Best Practice Project

The SharePoint Best Practice Project commenced in June 2012 and is working with the Social Sciences Divisional Office and key members of the Council Secretariat to improve the use of SharePoint for supporting committee administration. One of the most useful and re-usable outputs from the project will be a new committee site template with functionality that suits most Oxford committees. The project is also looking at handling high volumes of meeting documentation, including multi- document collation and conversion into PDF. Support documentation will also include advice about which apps are best to use on iPads and other mobile devices for compatibility with SharePoint. Project website is at <http://projects.oucs.ox.ac.uk/spbp/>.

2.4. Nexus SharePoint MySites

The Nexus SharePoint service includes SharePoint MySites – a personal, fully-featured SharePoint site that may be used to securely store working documents for remote access; share documents with colleagues (including external collaborators); maintain a personal profile; an internal blog and pretty much anything else you can do with a team-based SharePoint site. The initial quota for a MySite is 2GB with an increase to 3GB if required. To activate your own MySite see <http://www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/nexus/sharepoint/index.xml?ID=body.1_div.4>.

2.5. IT Learning Programme: Engage – Social Media Michaelmas

This term IT Services and Bodleian Libraries are running *engage* – a term of social media and digital communications events to explore tools and strategies for building online presence, academic networking, engagement and impact.. The full schedule is at <http://www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/itlp/engage/>. #oxengage

2.6 Great Writers Inspire & Open Educational Resources

Great Writers Inspire is making a substantial collection of literary themed learning resources available for global reuse (as Open Educational Resources (OER)). Audio and video lectures, talks, ebooks and background contextual resources are available, many of which are clustered by theme. A significant proportion of the resources have been specially created by members of the Faculty of English Language and Literature for the website (<http://writersinspire.org/>). See also the related Humanities OER list of podcasts at <http://podcasts.ox.ac.uk/openspires.html#human_div>

2.7. University Shared Data Centre (USDC)

The USDC is accepting equipment from across the collegiate University. The USDC offers space to host rack-mounted computer equipment in a secure, managed environment with resilient power and cooling, full CCTV and biometric access control. Currently use of the USDC is subsidised such that in the first year the tenant only pays the cost of the electricity their equipment uses. In year two they pay this plus half of their share of the other costs (this is 0.25x energy usage to cover cooling and half the advertised price for their general rent). Finally in the third year, and thereafter, prices are as per the website (http://www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/sis/pricing/). This charging policy has been put in place to encourage uptake of the USDC which offers a more secure, reliable and energy efficient environment to host computer equipment.

2.8. Private Cloud

The University Private Cloud platform is now hosting customers of the former NSMS VM-for-rent service. The Cloud still has capacity and we are encouraging those who want to make use of the service to contact us sooner rather than later (<http://www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/sis/cloud/>).

2.9. Core User Directory Service (CUD)

The Core User Directory service (<http://www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/services/iam/cud.xml>) extends the suite of Identity and Access Management services (IAM) offered by IT Services. CUD focuses on establishing a reliable source of user identity information and complements other identity and access management services. The CUD has successfully been used to populate college members databses (in time for 0th week) and is being used within the Student Systems Programme to help ensure that staff within the collegiate University have access to eVision (the new web-based student system that will replace OSS from August 2013).

2.10. OXAM available via Weblearn

Oxford Examination Papers Online (OXAM) is now provided via Weblearn,

<https://weblearn.ox.ac.uk/portal/hierarchy/oxam>.

2.11. Operating system support

The venerable Windows XP will cease to receive security support after April 2014, after over 12 years. Colleges and departments that still have Windows XP deployments should start thinking about upgrading or replacing such systems. Mac OS 10.7 and 10.8 (Lion and Mountain Lion) are the only versions of Mac OS X we believe still to be receiving full security support. Earlier versions should be upgraded as soon as possible.

2.12. University Backbone Chassis Maintenance Completed

The Backbone Chassis upgrade project has now been successfully completed with all 13 production routers having had their chassis changed over. No major issues were experienced with any of the routers, and each chassis was completed with a downtime of less than 40 minutes. All network connections were reinstated before 0800, with minimal impact on users. Planning has commenced to scope a programme of projects to upgrade the University backbone network, the wireless service and the rollout of VOIP.

3. Administrative IT - update on priority investment areas

3.1 Human Resources Information Systems (HRIS) Programme

The HRIS business case was approved by Council in July 2009 and the HRIS Programme was launched in November 2009. This followed a comprehensive review of the HR information requirements and processes across the University.

Within the overall HRIS programme there are five major implementation projects (Recruitment, Personnel Administration, Budgeting and Forecasting, Training Administration, and Payroll). The   e-recruitment functionality has now been fully rolled out and the personnel module has been rolled out in a phased approached from January 2012 to July 2012.

Work on the payroll module is underway with parallel running of the main payroll now in progress. The payroll module is already in live use for the pensioners' payroll and for Linacre College, for whom we provide a bureau service. Further details can be found at http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/hrisprogramme.

3.2 Development and Alumni Relations System (DARS)

The new fundraising database (Blackbaud Enterprise CRM) to support the new collaborative and cohesive process of development and alumni relations process is now in use in a growing number of colleges, departments, and overseas offices.

The focus of the programme is now on further rollout to more colleges and departments.   DARS is now in use in 25 colleges, departments, and offices with a further 16 migrations in progress or planned.

Further information can be found at the DARS website http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/dars .

3.3 Student Systems Programme

The Student Systems Programme is overseeing the replacement and improvement of our current range of IT-based systems used in support of the administration of applicants and students. There are three main components to the programme:

a. To prioritise the replacement of the functions of the University's existing core student records system, the Oracle Student System (OSS), by August 2013 when Oracle will stop providing support for it;
b. To work on better integration and data-sharing between the new student records system and other systems that are used in support of applicants and student administration, and to improve administrative processes;
c. To review those other systems to determine whether they are meeting requirements, and if they are not, to carry out development or replacement work where appropriate.

Following a procurement phase in 2011, the SITS:Vision system from Tribal selected to replace OSS. Work is now well underway under the direction of Workstreams that have been set-up in order to oversee the development and implementation of each area of the new system. Each workstream is led by a Chair who is a senior member of academic or administrative staff with expertise and interest in the workstream's activities. The first use of SITS:Vision, will be to support the administration of degree ceremony bookings from the end of October 2012.

Further details can be found at http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/ac-div/studentsystems/ .

3.4 Oracle Financial re-implementation

The current version of the Oracle Financials system will be out of support in late 2013. This means that any bugs or issues will no longer be fixed by Oracle. As these could occur in any area - GL, Grants, Purchasing - operating without this guaranteed support is a risk to the University it is unwilling to take. A business case was approved last year for the first stage of a re-implementation to the latest release, R12. This re-implementation also provides us with the opportunity to review the existing finance processes, improve key system processes and revisit and align customisations and interfaces.

The R12 project is the first phase of a programme, which focuses on implementing the new version of Oracle and implementing some new functionality. In order to avoid overloading departments, some changes will be deferred until a next phase of the programme, an example of this might be e-expenses.

The project is now well underway and is being carried out with support from Hitachi Consulting. Implementation is scheduled for 2013.

3.5 Resolve Replacement

Resolve is the University's research costing, and pricing and approval tool used to calculate the Full Economic Costs (FEC) of a sponsored research project and then determine the price according to the requirements of each sponsor. The current in-house developed system no longer meets the University's requirements.

Unit 4, a third party supplier of HE systems, have been engaged to build a new system for both Oxford and Cambridge. Unit 4 will then create a new product for sale to other HE institutions. This collaborative approach will bring further cost savings to the original plan.

The system has now been developed and the team have thoroughly tested the costing functionality from end to end, including manually checking all the calculations in the new system. The developers are now busy dealing with any bugs and issues that were found.

Further details can be found at http://www.x5project.net/ .

Submitted by John Ireland, 6th December 2012