

OUCS Report, Trinity Term 2011

1. College Contribution to OUCS Costs

Discussions are still underway with colleges re possible contribution to OUCS costs. At present, it would appear that for now colleges may be willing to contribute towards the costs of services offered by OUCS that they use, but not 'infrastructure' (e.g. the backbone). However, full discussion needs to take place at Conference of Colleges before anything is finalised. If there was agreement this would not start until AY 2012/13.

2. ViDaaS

OUCS has won an award of £1.2m from JISC/HEFCE under the University Modernisation Fund for the Virtual Infrastructure with Database as a Service. This Project will provide a local virtual infrastructure (VI) which will interface with a national Higher Education VI – or 'cloud' – to enable the sharing of services across the whole HE sector. As a result there will be substantial cost savings through economies of scale. The virtual infrastructure will host a self-service 'Database as a Service' (DaaS) system which will give researchers a way of creating, configuring, editing and querying databases through a simple Web interface which is flexible and intuitive to use. This will help improve the efficiency of UK Higher Education research. User support materials, courses and documentation will be developed in close collaboration with the Digital Curation Centre.

3. Shared Data Centre

The fit-out of the new Shared Data Centre is moving ahead rapidly, as are plans for the costing models which will be announced very soon. We still aim to have the service up and running in August. We are requesting that departments and colleges start to consider now what use they may wish to make of the SDC, in particular for co-location and hosting infrastructure on our new virtualised services (which will be boosted by the ViDaaS project). For further information see:
<http://www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/datacentres/southparksroad/>.

4. VOIP

OUCS's Telecoms and Networks groups are currently looking at trialing converged networks for VOIP (i.e. voice and data). It is clearly very advantageous for Colleges and Departments, both from a resource and (possibly listed) buildings perspective, to be able to avoid adding significant amounts of cabling just for digital voice. We are planning to run some small field trials of fully converged networks. In order for this to be possible and allow us to investigate the larger range of options, e.g. softphones, wireless redirection etc we have to upgrade our existing platform. This is already being done and we anticipate that we will have completed this by the summer.

5. OUCS Internships

OUCS is repeating its highly successful internship scheme this year, and is also taking on an apprenticeship in digital media (to be advertised).

6. OxTALENT Awards

The OxTALENT annual awards recognise those who have made use of ICT to foster learning and academic practice at either undergraduate or postgraduate level. Awards can be given either to individuals or to teams. There are currently seven award categories open: 1. Use of WebLearn to support a course or programme of study, 2. Academic podcasting, 3. Student podcasting, 4. Student IT for learning, 5. Research project poster, 6. Digital images, 7. Use of technology in learning spaces. There will also be awards made for use of technology in access and outreach.

7. WebLearn training

A variety of taught courses are offered by LTG to support the use of WebLearn. The courses are aimed at staff members who are involved in designing and building WebLearn sites for various purposes. In most cases, the course books can also be downloaded for self study. Of particular importance this term is the course 'Migrating your content', since all content must be migrated from old to new WebLearn before September 2011 when the old system becomes read-only. Topics covered by training this term are: WebLearn: Fundamentals, WebLearn: Migrating your content, WebLearn: Making your site work, WebLearn: for Teaching, Learning and teaching: using technology tools, WebLearn: Surveys, WebLearn User Group, WebLearn: via Mobile Oxford, Plagiarism: WebLearn and Turnitin. The WebLearn User Group meeting on 7 July is followed by our now traditional cream tea. The recorded presentations from the user group meeting of Michaelmas Term 2010 are now available. The presentations include the following: 1. Andy Cotgreave: "Site Stats - customising reports to monitor your site activity" (10 mins) 2. Wulf Forrester-Barker: "Instant Extranet - just add WebLearn" (20 mins) 3. Adam Marshall - latest upgrades (16 mins)

8. Online reading lists

Improvements have been made to Reading Lists within WebLearn. This was made possible by virtue of the successful completion of the JISC funded Sir Louie Project. It is now possible to invoke SOLO, the Bodleian Library's search interface, from within WebLearn and, at the click of a button, import any citations into a WebLearn Reading List. When viewed by a student, the Reading List will contain up-to-date availability information and links to full text versions of Journal Articles. More information: <http://blogs.oucs.ox.ac.uk/adamweblearn/2011/05/reading-list-improvements/>

9. Active Directory beta service

OUCS is looking at how various different topologies for a possible Active Directory service for the University would look, and how viable these are. This is very much at the investigative stage at present but more news to follow.

10. PICT Bids

OUCS will be submitting bids to PICT this term to set up a Whole Disk Encryption service (2011-2012), to work further on enhancing our network (especially in establishing a second link to JANET), further developments of Mobile Oxford (<http://m.ox.ac.uk>), and upgrading Nexus.

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