ICTF Trinity Term 2014
IT Services Report

- **IT Strategic Plan:** The final IT Strategic Plan, approved by Council, is available online at http://www.it.ox.ac.uk/about/itstrategy/itstrategicplan/. Current and planned IT Services initiatives are being mapped onto this to identify how and when central initiatives will be delivered, and to identify areas that will require further attention.

- **IT Capital Plan:** The University's IT Capital Plan has been approved. This plan establishes an overall level of investment in IT for the next 10 years, including funding to support the IT Strategic Plan noted above, and is on a rolling long-term basis to accommodate future planning.

- **Service Portfolio Review:** The aim of the IT Services Portfolio Review is to better align IT Services with the needs of the University, and to ensure that services are not only good value for money but that they are also properly funded through a more rational funding model. Conversations with a range of stakeholders in the form of workshops and interviews, in small groups and one-to-one sessions, are taking place and will continue through Trinity Term. This initiative, like other complementary projects underway, is an enabling component of the IT Strategy. The work is being led by Darrell Sturley and feedback can be sent to consultations@it.ox.ac.uk. A draft report is expected in the Summer of this year.

- **Nexus News:** The Cloud Communication and Collaboration Evaluation (C3E) project, due to commence this term, is evaluating multiple cloud-based email and collaboration services, including the services offered by Google and Microsoft, to determine their suitability, quality and cost-effectiveness for the University. The project is designed as a precursor to the upgrade of Nexus Exchange and SharePoint to the next versions. Over the next six months the project will produce a report that compares cloud solutions with the existing service together with other known requirements (focussing on functional, non-functional, commercial, legal and business readiness); provide options for the future strategic direction of the Nexus services; and develop a high-level service design that describes how the Nexus service might move to the recommended next 'place' (be that on-site, cloud, or hybrid). The project will also help address recommendations arising from the 2012 report into the student digital experience at Oxford (e.g. portfolio of collaborative best-of-breed tools and services; enhance interactive calendars and timetables; make it more efficient to share files).

- **Mailing List Upgrade Project:** Our implementation of Sympa is well underway, and we expect to migrate all EZMLM lists to the new system as part of a phased process by the end of July 2014. The new service will offer improved facilities and resilience. List owners and IT support staff are being kept up to date with plans and schedules, and we expect to make documentation for users and for ITSS available shortly. The main migration of lists to the new service is expected to commence in the period 16 June to 25 July (after successful user acceptance testing and early adopter migration). Further information may be found at https://sharepoint.nexus.ox.ac.uk/maillist_update.

- **Integrated Communications Project:** The Integrated Communications Project will deliver a step change in the options for telephone and other (online) methods of communication across the University. Contract negotiations with Unify (formerly Siemens) for the implementation of their OpenScape product are now concluding. This has proved a challenging exercise since it covers significant investment and a major change to both technology and ways of working across the University. Phased delivery is due to commence in late May 2014 with an extended pilot of the complete solution concluding in early 2015. At that point if the system meets its expected performance parameters and satisfies user expectations, a phased roll out updating the telephony and communication experience for most of the University's staff will commence. This is in itself a major exercise, potentially replacing over 30,000 handsets in over 400 separate Departments and Colleges. The end point of the project is that by December 2017, when the current telephone system becomes technically obsolete, the University will have a world class integrated communications solution fit for the future.

- **Public access to the internet over University wireless:** A working group established to investigate how we might provide internet access for the general "public" over University wireless systems has recommended pursuing the following options:

  - The Cloud for general "public" access (see the Janet information page at <https://www.ja.net/products-services/janet-connect/janet-connections/public-access-internet-janet>);

  - Framework agreement to enable departments or colleges to negotiate a customised service from The Cloud;

  IT Services will also continue to provide eduroam and OWL Visitor wireless services for use by staff, students and applicable visitors to the University. The eduroam infrastructure is currently being upgraded. A project will commence in 14/15 to identify requirements for and scope a major upgrade to the central wireless network infrastructure.

- **The Oxford Network Evolution (TONE) Project:** The backbone replacement project is currently in phase 2, focussed on the evaluation of responses to an invitation to tender and the development of a service delivery model. Phase 2 will complete in October 2014 and implementation of a new backbone network service should be completed by Oct 2015. The new backbone network service encompasses the core backbone routers, the fibre and duct network, and the 'frodo' switches. 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. Phase 2 is developing a service delivery model for the new network backbone service (known as Odin), including options for chargeable elements and also exceptional requirements. The service delivery model will also detail the operational and support levels as well as an acceptance plan for transition to the new service. The migration from the existing backbone service to Odin is expected to be undertaken with the minimum of, if any, disruption to departments and colleges.

- **Student Systems Programme:** The Student Systems Programme, replacing Oracle Students System (OSS) with Tribal SITS eVision is about to enter its formal testing phase (beginning with systems testing and ending with user acceptance testing in MT14). This is a key milestone for the project and is being delivered on time. SITS will replace OSS for the on-course record (student registration to examination). The Programme remains on schedule to go live in January

2015. The migration of the admissions record to SITS will take place prior to the 15/16 admissions round. Slides from a recent briefing session are available at <https://www1.admin.ox.ac.uk/ac-div/studentsystems/news/briefings/> (the next briefing session is due to take place in July 2014)

Preparations are also underway to look at the potential economies and viability of a central SITS environment that meets the requirements of colleges, rather than each college having to buy, implementation, and maintain a local solution.

- **HRIS Programme completes:** A basic absence recording service has been introduced which means that the legacy personnel system, Opendoor, is no longer required to support HR operations and Opendoor itself will now be decommissioned. These are the final deliverables of the original HRIS Programme and marks the end of a four year programme of work.

  A new project to upgrade the HRIS system and deliver **further benefits** has been approved. These include: enabling integration of Single Sign On (upgrade to Oracle 11G is a prerequisite) which will enable employee self-service; manager requests; correspondence upgrades; and audit controls.

- **DARS:** DARS currently supports fundraising, alumni relations, events management, communications and online engagement by approximately 500 users across more than 30 departments and half of all colleges.

  Following a major upgrade to the browser-based Version 3.0 of the Blackbaud CRM software in January 2014, technical programme activity has focused on addressing a number of important product defects and gaps, improving integration with several University systems, and then implementing a number of extended features to go-live this summer. The latter include:

  - Microsoft Outlook integration for recording emails in DARS;
  - a tablet-friendly interface so that fundraisers and events managers can use DARS whilst mobile;
  - paid memberships functionality for the Ashmolean Museum ahead of their migration in the Autumn;
  - LinkedIn and Facebook social sign-on capability for alumni online; and a new professional and social networking portal for alumni developed by Graduway.

  In parallel, a number of further websites have been launched in DARS, including www.campaign.ox.ac.uk and www.advancingoxford.ox.ac.uk, and migrations have been completed for Computer Science, Kellogg College and Engineering Science, with go-lives for Wadham, Jesus and Balliol Colleges scheduled this summer. See www.darscentral.ox.ac.uk for further details.

- **HFS "Diversification" Project:** The HFS Service is currently engaged in a user-requirements gathering exercise as part of a project to look at current and future backup and long-term filestore provision across the University. The project is scoped to engage both users and current non-users, and to investigate current use-cases and non-use-cases of the HFS service in an effort to capture, in as neutral language as possible, some defining features of future service provision. The Project is undertaking a series of semi-structured interviews to capture what staff and students need now and in the foreseeable future from a University backup service. The exercise

is being conducted to reach all corners of the University. To participate please email ian.smith@it.ox.ac.uk with the subject 'Backup/Archive requirements'. #MIKE FRASER TO UPDATE

- **Weblearn:** A number of improvements have been made including an upgrade (2.8-ox10) and bug fixes; the work to move WebLearn from version 2.8 to version 10 of Sakai is ongoing. For more information: https://blogs.it.ox.ac.uk/adamweblearn/ . The WebLearn team are exploring how to better engage users and get feedback on the current service, the WebLearn User Voice feedback service is available from the Welcome page: "Suggest an Improvement". Gabriel Hanganu will manage a new project, beginning on June 1st, to improve the resilience of WebLearn with Sydev, which should offer greater service stability and quicker recovery times in the event of an outage. Also Nick Wilson has joined the WebLearn team as a Java developer.

    To enter this year's OxTALENT awards in the category: "Use of WebLearn to support teaching, learning, or outreach" see http://blogs.it.ox.ac.uk/oxtalent/oxtalent-competition-2014/ .

    Trinity term's programme of training in WebLearn and Turnitin has been announced: http://wp.me/p1K8WQ-SZ .

    A presentation about the Apereo OAE - a new platform that aims to support academic collaboration and networking - is available at https://weblearn.ox.ac.uk/info/wlug/page/recorded_talks

- **Lecture Capture Project:** Automated lecture capture is a new and evolving technology that allows students to review lectures online, and provides an archive for revision and exam preparation. The Lecture Capture project is carrying out around 7 live trials in order to meet existing demand from departments and schools that have requested such a service.

    Lecture capture refers to automated (as opposed to manual) digital capture during a lecture, of audio; or audio and slides; and (optionally) video. The software being trialled is Panopto, widely used by higher education institutions for this purpose. All recordings are currently being stored in the Panopto 'cloud'. The team is liaising with Legal Services and the Disability Advisory Services; project deliverables will include guidance on issues of intellectual property, copyright, allowable use of the recordings, and meeting the needs of students with disabilities, particularly in the light of the envisaged cutback on personal note-takers.

    The main output from the project will be recommendations as to possible ways forward for a scaled and widespread use of this technology, if appropriate, including the possibility of a locally hosted solution in IT Services.

- **Turnitin:** The international TurnItIn Academic service suffered from poor performance throughout the whole of the last week of April; by the end of the week the problems appear to have been solved. The problem resulted in a backlog in processing student papers, but the UK service was back to normal within two days. This time the Turnitin providers sent out frequent status updates, and we fed the information to status.ox.ac.uk.

- **Service Desk Consolidation Project:** The project milestones and timescales have now been reviewed and, in view of our existing change schedule, staff capacity, and risk of impact the start of term, the Project Board has agreed that the transition will take place in November 2014. The

transition will move staff in IT Services onto consistent processes and a single shared toolset for Incident Management, Change Management, Problem Management and Service Requests. The new toolset – FrontRange HEAT Cloud – is a significant change, and we anticipate some 300 staff will use the Frontrange system in one form or another.

The nascent Student Systems Support Centre will act as early adopters, transitioning in September'14 to the new process and toolset for Incident Management (only).

The self-service facility for all members of the university is planned to be available from January 2015.

The project team is currently working with our toolset supplier to configure HEAT for the IT Services environment. Training – including classroom sessions and online training – is being prepared for IT Services and Support Centre staff. There will also be briefing/roadshow sessions, an online FAQ, and we hope to demonstrate the FrontRange HEAT system to ITSS at the pre-term round up in September.

For more information: sdcp@it.ox.ac.uk

- **Windows 7:** At the time of writing we have successfully migrated over 2,700 desktops and laptops. Our records show just 54 outstanding XP systems needing attention, with at least 30 of these expected to be completed under the project. The main issues we are dealing with now are business critical software applications that do not run easily, or at all, on Windows 7, and older peripherals such as specialist scanners and printers where vendors have not provided Windows 7 drivers. Solutions are being designed on a case-by-case basis.

  The remaining (c. 24) devices have specific reasons for not being migrated at this time, such as dependencies on peripherals or software that cannot be supported under Windows 7; For each of these systems we have already deployed a range of technical and behavioural mitigations, and a plan to move off Windows XP – e.g. as part of a broader upgrade to a system or service – will be developed, agreed, and handed over to the relevant business owner.

  As part of the overall mitigation for University IT, we have taken out a Custom Support Agreement with Microsoft under the Crown Office's arrangement for UK public sector organisations which provides access to any further security hotfixes for XP that Microsoft releases. The terms and practicalities of this arrangement are very particular, and we are currently working out what we are permitted to do in terms of ensuring that hotfixes can be deployed across the University's (dwindling) XP estate. ITS3 will be in touch in due course.

- **Whole Disk Encryption service:** The Whole Disk Encryption Service was handed over to business-as-usual on 23rd June. All units of the university can now use the WDE service to provide at-rest encryption of data, and the project has overseen extensive deployment within UAS to protect staff laptops. The project will now be formally closed.

- **Exam PCs in Colleges:** The perennial issue of providing "compliant" computing facilities for students taking examinations with IT support has been raised by the Conference of Colleges IT Managers Group and within IT Services. There appears to be potential to share existing expertise and development to our mutual benefit – initially by sharing information on how to

build a suitable system, but hopefully in future to take the form of a standard offering that is maintained by IT Services and available to all colleges (whether this is in the form of an installation image for current desktop models, pre-installed systems that can be hired at short notice, or a combination of these and other ideas).

John Ireland, 2014-06-23