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ICTF News

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UNIVERSITY OF
OXFORD



MICHAELMAS 2008

Welcome!

Welcome to the very first edition of the new ICT Forum newsletter.

We intend to publish this newsletter every term. The idea behind it is to give an opportunity for IT staff around the University in departments

or colleges, to write articles on projects, work or other general areas of interest. It will provide an opportunity for members of the forum to raise matters of interest or highlight projects, or other work going on within units, to the wider IT body.

To start the newsletter off, I am grateful to the members of the ICTF Steering Group who have written articles for this first edition. My thanks to Sarah, Rob, Katherine, Jonathan and IT Support Staff Services.

I hope some of you will be willing to write an article for the next edition. The articles do not have to be technical and can be on anything that you think may be of interest to the members of the forum. If you are interested then do get in touch with either myself or a member of the steering group. We hope you enjoy reading this edition.

Jeremy Worth
ICTF Chair



Jeremy Worth, Rob Devereux, Jonathan Ashton, Gerard Robinson
Janet McKnight, Ashley Woltering (on PC), Sarah Lawson, Jon Lockley

Oxbridge Colleges Conference another success!

After the success of last year's Oxbridge College IT Officers Conference at the home of Computing, Bletchley Park, this year's event at the Williams F1 Conference Centre, Grove had a lot to live up to.

There were good sponsor displays and presentations: 3com, HP, Sharp, Blackberry/Vodafone and Khipu/Bradford Networks amongst them and the freebies provided were of the highest quality!

Disaster nearly struck when the speaker from Google decided that

Cambridge was on the way to Grove from London but after the jokes about Google Maps the keynote speech was actually interesting and inspiring.

If you think that the day is just about fun, food and freebies, that would be selling it a long way short. Just as the ICTF conference provides a summer opportunity for Oxford IT staff to network with others, discuss about new technologies and a thinking space, so this autumn event provides another useful space for considering strategic College ICT matters

with like-minded professionals.

In case those paying for the conference might be tempted to think this was just a "jolly" for IT Managers, there were very useful seminars (four for each delegate) on subjects as diverse as Green IT, Identity Management, Virtualization, Project Management, Open Source Tricks and Ideas, Identity Management, high availability home working and How to Manage your Management and each of these were given or led by IT staff from Oxford or Cambridge in addition to the five seminars given by sponsors.

For anyone not there, I can only encourage you next year to take a day out of your busy schedule to meet with like-minded fellow College IT staff and give yourself space to think strategically and without distraction about our role in the University, the best ways we can help our user communities and to share common issues. I would like to hope that I speak on behalf of all those attending from Oxford in thanking the organizers who once again put on a fantastic day for us.

Rob Devereux
Linacre College



Enjoying lunch with
colleagues and
sponsors

SOLO: Search Oxford Libraries Online



At the start of this academic year Oxford University Library Services (OULS) launched SOLO: Search Oxford Libraries Online (<http://solo.ouls.ox.ac.uk/>) and OxLIP+ (<http://oxlip-plus.ouls.ox.ac.uk/>). Underlying these are the Primo, MetaLib and SFX products from Ex Libris, and EZproxy. Together these provide a new user interface to many of Oxford's library resources, including OLIS and ORA, and enable remote access to restricted resources such as datasets and ejournals via the Oxford SSO and Shibboleth see http://www.ouls.ox.ac.uk/eresources/remote_access.

Great Collaboration: Getting my College out of the dark ages

Last week I finished (well nearly) a year's project to renovate and rejuvenate an ageing, and in some places very poorly, College network. I have been able to liberate the College servers from their dingy existence in the towers and dusty cellars and place them in a bright and purpose built Comms room. The antique (yet surprisingly trustworthy) 3com hubs and switches have been replaced by faster and altogether more sophisticated Cisco devices. New fibres have been laid to ensure the future generations of computer users at the College will be able to enjoy fast speeds and great service and a first phase of VoIP phone lines have been installed.

Having the opportunity to recreate a new network has been a great experience but the most amazing thing, looking back, is just how many people, both within the University and externally, have helped to make the change smooth and successful. A lot of what has made the work easier has been because of being part of the University of Oxford and I wonder whether we all realise quite how useful that network of IT excellence is to us in our daily work.

Brief conversations to other professionals from the University in the early planning days pointed me in the right direction for experienced and trustworthy contractors and suppliers. ITSS-discuss threads over the last year have helped clear up silly problems which would otherwise have taken hours to solve. Direct help from Telecoms, OUCS and other ITSS ensured that the College was able to put in the solutions most suited to the project. Several individuals from the University ITSS, not directly involved in the project, took time and trouble to think about the project and offer advice that may or may not have been taken but was none the less very valuable to the final outcomes. The external contractors /suppliers were welcomed by the internal IT professionals making it easier for everyone to work together and complete the tasks they were assigned to do.

Without the group effort and support of the IT structure we have in Oxford this task would have been a lot harder to achieve.

I would like to thank all who helped on the project and who gave their time, expertise or ideas. Being able to collaborate in this way is perhaps one of the most powerful resources Oxford ICTF has.

Sarah Lawson
IT Manager, Harris Manchester College



Snowy Harris Manchester



**Sarah at the OxBridge
College IT Conference 2008**

Phishing: don't make it easy for them!

E-crime is big business these days. As we become ever increasingly 'connected' and carry out more of our lives online, criminals are only too keen to cash in and Internet based crime is widely regarded as rivalling the international drug trade in scale. As networks and software become increasingly complicated, vulnerabilities increase as do the number of attacks. Malware is widely available to criminal organisations and as attacks become more sophisticated, they become harder to identify and deal with.

However, as with conventional crime, it is not all so clever and highly organised. Why bother with sophisticated attacks when simply asking users for their user name and password seems to work just fine! Over the past few months university users across the UK and the US seem to have been the recipients of a large number of targeted phishing attempts and, like all phishing attacks, they are

continuing because they work! Despite the broken English, fictitious support teams and gmail reply-to

addresses, these so called 'spear phishing' attacks are providing a high yield for the phishers. Typically compromised accounts have then been used to send out large amounts of spam, but there is also clearly a risk of privacy breaches and other illegitimate use. When the bad guys learn to speak English we might really be in trouble!

This problem seems to be indicative of the fact the the message is not getting through to all users. Information security is no longer the same as IT security and there is no single technological fix.



This is not where you want to end up!

Sure, technology can help, and the fact that the University has a full time CERT team (OxCERT) means that there are

people looking out

for attacks happening, detecting resulting incidents and trying to protect the end users. However we can all do more to instil best practice and educate ourselves and our users. Many users I come across still seem to think that malware will damage their hard drive as opposed to their bank balance. Yes attacks are on the increase, and yes, they are becoming more sophisticated. But lets not make it easy for them!

Jonathan Ashton
OUCS, OxCERT

"Why bother with sophisticated attacks when simply asking users for their user name and password seems to work just fine!"

IT Suppliers Exhibition 2008: 18th December

The IT Suppliers' Exhibition for 2008 is all set to be one of the best ever.

We have been advised that Brother will be giving away over 100 free Label printers worth around £90 each at the Innovation & Technology Exhibition on the 18th December at the Exam Schools, for all staff who register in advance on line with EML and visit their stand on the day, so please register now at <http://www.eml-events.co.uk/register/e/25> to be able to pick up a printer as well as your free gift.

The event will have a mixture of companies with the latest technology and services on offer so please visit the web site to find out more.

There will be almost 40 exhibitors and we hope to see several hundred ITSS in attendance. There will be free lunch for all and the bigger and better this event is the more money ICTF has for the main conference in summer 2009!

See you there! There will be an ITSS visit to the "Four Candles" pub on George Street that evening too.

Last year's event



Oxford University ICT Forum Steering Group

Chair:

Jeremy Worth (Archaeology)

Secretary:

Sarah Lawson (Harris Manchester)

Elected Members:

Jonathan Ashton (OUCS)

S. Ashley Woltering (Statistics)

Gerard Robinson (IMSU)

Janet McKnight (OUCS)

Rob Devereux (Linacre)

Natasha Heaton (Anthropology)

Co-opted members:

Jon Lockley (Oxford Supercomputing Centre)

Katherine Ferguson (Libraries)

**... representing all Oxford University's IT Staff
in top-level ICT decision-making and planning**



ICTF provides a framework that promotes and facilitates excellence incorporating the full involvement of ICT Staff in both the strategic development and day-to-day running of ICT in the Collegiate University. The ICTF Steering Committee (ICTFSC) will oversee the operation of the ICTF. The Steering Committee will be led by the Secretary of the ICTF and will meet at least once a term, usually just prior to the ICTF termly meeting.

Got an article or idea for an article?

Email it to its3@oucs.ox.ac.uk

<http://www.ictf.ox.ac.uk>

Pre-Advent dinner: Pembroke does us proud!

Twenty seven ITSS and friends/partners met at Pembroke College on Wednesday 26th November for what will have been the first festive meal of the year for many. Smart outfits were in abundance and everyone looked great!

Pembroke did us proud, starting the evening in their Fellows' Lounge with copious sherry and soft drinks from 7pm. We moved over the Forte Room at 7.30pm for a fantastic meal of Tomato & Mozzarella Salad; Barbary Duck; and the most amazing profiteroles. This was all washed down with a couple of fantastic wines and plenty of Pembroke mineral water.

Dinner finished with an extremely short speech from Tony and

those gathered wished Ian Miller (Ashmolean) and his wife Hilary well as they leave Oxford to go and spend three years in the Iona Community in Scotland in January 2009.

After the meal proceedings moved on to the "Living Room" on the Oxford Castle site. Most people stayed with the party and a pleasant and convivial evening was

had by all, with several putting the world to rights into the wee small hours of the morning.

Commenting on the event, Gerard Robinson from IMSU said, "Last night's ITSS dinner was an excellent way to start the Christmas Festivities, with sartorial elegance in abundance. I'm sure 'photos will follow soon'"

"Many thanks to Tony for organising it and for all those in attendance and of course to Pembroke for a delightful venue & meal."



Sharing a toast to the evening!