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ICTF News

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Welcome

I hope many of you will remember me from the shop at OUCS, which I was involved with almost from the outset. I really enjoyed my time there, the aspect I enjoyed most was meeting lively, kind and friendly University members with the odd grumpy one mixed in. All sorts passed through the shop door. A special time was the frantic rush at the beginning of Michaelmas term, trying to keep up with stocks of ethernet cards and cables for all the freshers. Hard work but great fun!

I got to know quite a few of you IT Officers and prided myself on knowing most of your names. Of course that was a while ago, a lot I knew have gone and new faces taken over. Everything changes, we now have the online shop, which I still help to run. The biggest change for me is my role as ITS3 Administrator, seeing IT from a different angle. It has been a learning experience, there was a lot to learn and it took a while to settle in. Tony and Katherine have both been brilliant, their help and encouragement invaluable. I feel now that I have got into my stride and look forward to the future with confidence. And it's great to remain in touch with many of you IT officers.

Elsa Smith
IT Support Staff Services Administrator



I could crush a hard disk!

On Friday 19th February eDR Europe visited OUCS from their Basingstoke Office with the eDR disk crusher. OUCS had well over 100 disks to crush and lots of ITSS from around the University brought theirs along too. The cost was only £2.50 per disk and eDR scans the barcodes of all disks crushed and issues a certificate of destruction and weee-compliant disposal for every disk crushed.



The device is essentially an hydraulic ram (the pump is on the floor under the table) with a pointed end that destroys the disk's motor and ripples and tears the platters. Current data recovery techniques focus on platter swapping, head swapping or controller board swapping. With a physically damaged platter it is practically impossible therefore to recover data using current technology.

Prior to the event OUCS had added eDR to the Oracle Financials System so that departments were able to raise purchase orders for their disk destruction.

eDR were at OUCS for around 5 hours and in that time crushed well over 500 disks. If further ITSS are interested in this service it could become a regular event at OUCS.

The advantage of this method is that the disk crusher is entirely portable so can be brought to us.

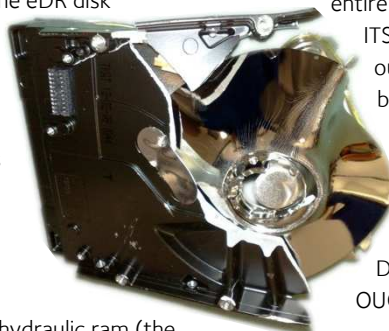
ITSS therefore do not have to let disks out of their control, or even sight, before crushing and are entirely welcome to watch the disk being crushed to provide visual confirmation that it has been done.

Dominic Hargreaves of The Systems Development and Support team at OUCS reports:

"we had around 140 disks stored which were either obsolete or faulty, all of which had been used to store potentially sensitive University data on ranging from Kerberos databases to mail store data and material uploaded to Weblearn.

"The range of condition the disks were in (some of them couldn't be spun up), combined with the variety of disk interfaces and caddies, meant that any activity to verifiably wipe the disks to make them available for reuse outside OUCS would have been extremely time consuming and impractical.

"The eDR disk destruction service allowed us to simply prepare an accurate count of the disks, count them out to eDR, and observe the whole crushing process to verify that data would not be recoverable, without having to rely on paper statements of destruction typical of other data disposal services."



Oxford acquires new supercomputing platform

Oxford Supercomputing Centre (OSC) has taken delivery of its latest high performance computing system "SAL". The new machine is adjoined to an existing system, "HAL", allowing both to operate either independently or together on larger problems. Both systems are so-called "clusters", comprised of smaller machines ("nodes") which are interconnected with specialist hardware and software. This allows many nodes to cooperate to solve problems in parallel in a much more economic way than would be the case with many processors in a single, very large system.



The OSC's twin ICE clusters, "HAL" and "SAL"

SAL is an Altix ICE cluster from SGI and comprised of 80 nodes, each with two quad core processors (640 cores in total compared to HAL's 528). Each processor is of the new Intel "Nehalem" generation which delivers greatly increased performance over previous Intel offerings by removing the performance bottleneck between the processor and main memory: it is not unknown to see performance double for the same clock speed processor as a result.

SAL is expected to build on the success of HAL in supporting researchers from fields as diverse as Astrophysics, Social Sciences, Engineering and Statistics. All OSC systems open to all research staff at the University and an account can be applied for by visiting the OSC web site:

<http://www.osc.ox.ac.uk/> and for further information, please contact the centre manager: jon.lockley@oerc.ox.ac.uk.

Jon Lockley

Manager

Oxford Supercomputing Centre

"it is not unknown to see performance double for the same clock-speed processor"

Meet the Nexus team (and temporary members)

Nexus required a huge development effort and to enable that lots of new staff have been recruited.

First Srilak Wickramaratne joined from the Citizens Advice Bureau in London working with our contractor Jill Pearson. Next Daryl Theobalds was recruited as senior Systems Administrator, coming down the Banbury Road from Thames Valley Police. For a while they soldiered on as we went looking for a Sharepoint expert (such people seem to be incredibly scarce) with the

range and depth of skills we needed. We added first Thomas Mill from OUP, and then Matthew Gaskin from Elsevier as additional administrators for Exchange who fortuitously both also have BlackBerry experience. This allowed Daryl to develop his career and focus on getting Sharepoint up and running.

To a large extent that's the team that will be servicing Nexus on a technical basis as we move from the project to production phase – they will be joined by Mark Norman who is coming back initially part-time from his adoption leave as Service Manager, and Paul Davis who will be concentrating on communications, training and SharePoint.

Many others have been involved with the project and from 1st April will be returning to their "day jobs". Pete Jones has been the technical lead and done lots of magic programming for the migrations from Herald. He will return to HFS (DFS are the sofa people, HFS is central backup). Ian Senior joined the project to sort out the look and feel of Sharepoint and produce some documentation. Rob Eadie was our tame trainer from the IT Learning Programme – Rob will continue to run Nexus courses.

A big thank you goes also to the Sysdev Team where Dominic Hargreaves has pushed lots of users across to us, ably assisted by the rest of sysdev. Beth Crutch and Dave Hastings have been stalwarts in getting the registration database and Nexus linked, along with the new facilities for self-service spam setting etc. Ylva Berglund Prytz has been a rock in providing documentation support; the Courses Team in finding us suitable rooms; Tony and ITS3 for liaising with ITSS; all in the Helpcentre – the list goes on and really encompasses most of OUCS.

Paul Davis
OUCS



(l to r) Matthew, Srilak, Daryl, Tom, Paul, Mark

Profile: Chris Akinola

I am Chris Akinola, one of four of IT Support staff in Department of Materials, Parks road. I work as the front line support officer, and also the person-in-charge of our audio-visual unit, including the newly created digital photographic unit.

Well, back in those days, Equinox Computer maintenance was my employer, whilst I was living in North Oxford. Equinox Computer is currently the University's preferred computer maintenance contractor. They are based in Tewksbury, Gloucestershire a rough distance of about 55 miles from Oxford.

I used to clock about 200 miles daily, commuting to Tewksbury twice a day. This was not the best-of-life thing for me, or anyone else, except your middle name is Courier-man.

I was so glad to join the Department of Biochemistry in December 1999, after an exhaustive five years with Equinox. I was fortunate to know

a lot of my ITSS colleagues due to my Equinox days background, as a field service engineer. Well, one of the benefits of endless call out throughout the University.

For me, settling in Oxford ITSS was probably a lot easier as compared to someone who may have just come from outside into ITSS Oxford confederation. I have already established the advantage of being able to match faces to some names on the ITSS



Chris: always ready to help his customers

lists. I worked at the old Biochemistry Department till March 2008, before moving on to the Department of Materials due to organisational restructure.

I am someone who enjoy helping and working with people greatly. I love the challenges of machines versus human being trouble shooting, as this often stretch me a bit. My background is mainly hardware support, but I have since developed a good understanding of the software side of things, as it is crucial to any success in hardware repairs.

I enjoy working with people more than machines. Especially the transition of a once-upon-a-time miserable face into a new cheerful-smiley face, usually gives me the satisfaction in my job.

Although, there were times, when I was not be able to achieve my objectives, they were regarded as props for my next challenge, rather than a defeat.

I have a good social life and in good health, very

friendly and keen to make new friend. I play a couple of instruments and a member of a church choir needless to say. I am happily married and blessed with three teenaged kids to contend with at home.

Chris Akinola
IT Support Officer
Department of Materials

Oxbridge ICT collaboration develops

With growing interest being shown by IT officers/research groups within the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, a new Oxford-Cambridge collaboration group has been set up, which held its first meeting in Exeter College Oxford in February 2010. It was found that there are quite a few units that have links with Cambridge



Riaz & the dreaming spires

working on various projects and procurement, we hope that the SIG will facilitate more of these in the future.

The date for the next SIG meeting is yet to be set, but it is intended to a joint one with Cambridge using a

video conference link.

Once the collaboration takes shape and gets a firm foundation the SIG plans to organise a day when both Universities will get together for a conference in London. The idea behind this is to bounce ideas and talks on future projects where both can benefit.

There will be some IT Officers who are not aware of the SIG but are involved in projects with Cambridge. We would love to hear your opinions of how successful they have been, the pitfalls and or benefits of collaborative working and any other words of wisdom. It would also be useful to know of projects and connections already in place.

Details of the new SIG will shortly be posted on the ICTF web pages, but to get onto the mailing list please send a blank email to ictf-oxbridge-subscribe@maillist.ox.ac.uk

Riaz Khimji
NSMS
OUCS

Oxford University ICT Forum Steering Committee

ICTF Chair:

Jeremy Worth (Archaeology)

ICTF Secretary:

Sarah Lawson (NPEU)

Elected Members:

Jonathan Ashton (OUCS)

Gerard Robinson (IMSU)

Janet McKnight (OUCS)

Natasha Heaton (Anthropology)

James Dore (New College)

Jon Lockley (OeRC)

Co-opted members:

Katherine Ferguson (SERS)

(2 more may be co-opted by the committee)

**... 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 (ICTF-SC) oversees the operation of the ICTF. The Steering Committee is led by the ICTF Secretary and meets at least once per 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>

Race Equality Network (REN)

The Race Equality Network was formally launched on Thursday 29th October 2009 at Wadham College. Dr David Mills, from the Department of Education delivered a presentation on "Learning Differently, Teaching inclusively" the key note speech was delivered by Karen Chouhan, Director of Equanomics and one of the Joseph Rowntree's visionaries. Podcasts of the talks are now available at <http://podcasts.ox.ac.uk/> (under Central Administration)

The aims of the network are as follows:

- To provide an opportunity to network and socialise
- To promote understanding between people of all races and cultures
- To provide a discussion forum for cultural issues/matters (this is not a forum to discuss grievances or disciplinary matters)
- To support each other and share ideas both face-to-face and online



Black History Month Celebrations

The network is open to all members of staff and students from all backgrounds, ethnicities and races. The next network event will take place in May 2010, where we hope to have two speakers talking about racial identity.

If you would like to be part of the on-line race equality network please email race.equality@admin.ox.ac.uk to join the mailing list. You will receive a weekly email on events around the University and city, relevant links to articles and upcoming news.

**ICT Forum Conference 2010 booked at the Kassam Stadium.
All Oxbridge IT Officers invited!**

Kassam is now booked for ICTFC 2010 on Weds 14th July. There will be transport from Oxford City Centre and emergency transport available all day for those who need to keep servers and networks and so on up and running. All Cambridge IT Officers have also been invited.

