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Welcome from Sarah

Merry Christmas and a Prosperous New Year from all on the ICTF Steering Committee.

With so much doom and gloom on the news these days it is difficult to remember the positives but remember them we must. This has been a great year for the ICTF with many successful events, including another great ICTF conference (I hope those oven gloves may be helping with the Christmas Turkey), the IT Managers' meetings, numerous courses, some very interesting lunch and learns, the Exhibition and not forgetting the delicious late summer BBQ and recent Christmas dinner.

Next year is one with lots of opportunity for innovation, development and change not only because of the fast changing world of ICT but with the creation of the new

look combined Central IT provision. It is a very exciting time to be in IT at the moment as the pace of change and growth in the ways IT is used gets more and more adventurous. With all the changes: mobile IT, Cloud, information security, virtualisation etc. there is a greater need than ever for IT folk to share ideas and collaborate. The new year will see lots of projects that will hopefully help all IT support staff in Oxford to make the most of their time and their expertise. Watch this space.

Wishing you all a very Happy Christmas.

Sarah Lawson

IT Coordinator, NPEU and ICTF Secretary



ICTF goes karting!

A cool November Sunday evening saw the first race meeting for the ICTF amateur racing group - a night of high drama, high spirits and high-ish speeds. The open invitation to a two race session at Oxford Karting saw a range of enthusiastic geeks don overalls, helmets and gloves to chase round the 400m track situated at the Oxford Greyhound racing track. A floodlit circuit with a hint of damp ground made the track conditions interesting, and our first practice laps saw one of our number jump the tyre barrier, driving across the grass, much to the bemusement of the race marshals.

Those present agreed two races of 25 laps and from practice, it was clear that our levels of enthusiasm did not equate to rates of speed. Race one started with a random grid ordering and the pecking order quickly started to emerge just a few laps in. A delay in the pits cost Stephen Usher 5 laps whilst his kart suffered from a sliding seat, but there was only a couple of laps separating folk after a tiring and exciting 13 minutes of race time. Stamina needed - these karts don't have power steering! - so that seemingly short period was exhausting to the geeks who were more accustomed to lighter daily workloads, and the break between the races was greatly appreciated.

Collisions and spins added to the thrills, with Carl "Rubbing-is-racing" Marshall narrowly missing, and sometimes not quite missing, some of the tail markers in his bid to recover from his own spins to chase down Ben "smooth-as-Button" Bridle and Rob "Iceman" Zachlod who were playing tag over first and second place throughout both races.

No lap records were broken (or remotely challenged) but the level of friendly ribbing and camaraderie was evident both before (as we watched an earlier group, looking for tips), between ("was it you that ran into the side of me?!") and afterwards ("we're going to have to do this again... I'll get you next time!"). For those wanting stats, the photo from the end of race two shows joint-first for Ben B and Rob Z who split the top positions in both races, and Carl M who managed a consistent third even with the various racing incidents. 4th and 5th were shared between Chris Flux and Jim Heden, with Jeremy Rowntree holding onto 6th in both sessions. Steve U (suffering from mechanical issues in the first race) brought up joint 7th. Nick Daisley who's attempt to avoid trouble at the start of the second race saw him take the damper and less used outside line at corner 1, only to spin into the barrier and collect Carl in the process.

We all enjoyed it so much, and there were several more who missed out through timing, that we're looking to repeat this again in early 2012, when we're looking for a larger group session for ITSS and friends, potentially at MK's Daytona circuit - watch this space and ITSS-D in the New Year for more details!

Carl Marshall, OUCS



IT Managers' Meeting 23 November

IT Managers Meeting held on 23rd November in the Wolfson Seminar room, at the Chemistry Research Lab.

This was an Information Sharing meeting to keep the university's IT managers informed of developments and allow a forum for questions.

Michael Sibley, Deputy Registrar, presented developments regarding the ICT Central Coordination Project. This project will bring together BSP, OUCS and UAS as a single unit and is currently focussed on appointing a Chief Information Officer to take the process forward.

Paul Jeffreys, Director of IT, presented on the Information Security Best Practice work and announced that a new Information Security (InfoSec) project has been funded by the PRAC ICT Sub-committee (PICT) and by the PRAC Budget Sub-committee.

Ben Bridle, IT manager at Lady Margaret Hall, presented an ICTF proposal for a data gathering exercise, the aim being to help create an awareness of the complexity of the work and to help advertise the quality of work that is currently done at a local level. It also will try to create an awareness of what others are achieving and highlight strengths around the Collegiate University.

Around 75 IT Managers attended and there was much useful discussion and networking among them during the coffee and pastries break that punctuated the two talks.

Tony Brett

Head of IT Support Staff Services, OUCS



Profile: Rory Edwards

After a brief career as a landscape gardener, in February 1998 I bought a one way ticket to Thailand with great uncertainty as to the future, to join a young local family. We decided to transport their self-built catamaran to France to sell it or maybe make a business in that location. We never made it all that way. Diving equipment was sold to finance the trip. My first day at sea was very exciting and unnerving heading out of Phuket island heading West above the Straits of Malacca, into the Andaman Sea....

It was at sea with time to think and learn that I became interested in electronics. We had a chunky laptop with a program for recognising star constellations and inputting data from noon sights to calculate our position. Of course this could be calculated manually, and we also had a Magellan GPS SATNAV the size of a carton of 200 cigarettes! We also had a depth sounder that was of little use for the next 37 days crossing the Indian Ocean's mighty deep.

In the course of avoiding pirates and accidentally entering countries illegally with contraband, we swapped the laptop for diesel fuel. The the depth sounder transceiver was lost one night to unknown sea demons. I got my first email address as a way to keep in touch with home, although fax was still more reliable and ubiquitous.

On my return to the UK 10 months later I enrolled in a 2 year city and guilds electronics course and completed it in a year. My first work experience was with a local electronics firm, fault finding and repairing electricity meters and card payment systems. It was there that a South African colleague told me of a software engineering course at the local technical college. I studied a DipHE in informatics from Sheffield University and converted this to an IT degree at

Loughborough in year 3.

Between years 1 and 2 I nursed a Safari Beige 3 series BMW loaded with PC's through Europe to setup the first internet café in Port Grimaud. That enabled me to do a bit more sailing and make enough money to fill the car up with gifts at Calais.

Meanwhile I did some database and website freelancing. It took me a year to find a permanent job at Central St. Martin's College, University of the Arts, London (UAL). UAL is most notable for fashion design, but

encompasses everything from acting to architecture. Throughout my 7 years there I developed an interest in 3d cad modeling and drawing after helping promote software training that saw many disciplines such as fine art, jewellery, ceramics and textile designers push the boundaries of this technology. My role was always about provisioning frontline services and hardware and software for specialist Art and Design applications, but I was also latterly involved in projects and business case analysis.

I have played golf for Northamptonshire County and am actively involved in promoting biodiversity awareness and protection through the club and the county.

We planted native English Oak and other species, most beneficial to wildlife, and encouraged management practices that allow for coexistence of golfer, fauna and flora.

I'm a very basic student of Mandarin Chinese (speech not script).

My first week initiation in Oxford was the ICTF Conference 2011, a whirlwind of activity and a great insight into the scale of IT activity in Oxford. I enjoyed greatly the chance to meet colleagues throughout the University.

My other memorable first impression of Oxford was an open invitation to inflate a hot air balloon in the University Parks with Geoff Lescott and others. With such a great way to meet some other work colleagues, I was truly enamoured with Oxford and am having a great time here.



Inaugural HPC-SIG-Oxford meeting

On the 24th November in the Oxford e-Research Centre, the first HPC-SIG-Oxford meeting was held. This inaugural meeting and lunch event was attended by over 30 people from across the University engaged in providing high performance computing (HPC) resources and supporting users of those resources. This special interest group has been established in recognition that there is wide variety of high performance computing and advanced research computing activity taking place throughout the university. The group aims to bring together all those involved in delivering these services in order to share best practice information and to raise overall awareness of these activities both internally and externally for the benefit of researchers in Oxford.

The meeting covered a range of topics from how HPC is provided in different divisions and departments, through to how the services are funded. Invited speakers from the Chemistry (Pete Biggs), the Wellcome Trust Centre for Human Genetics (Robert Esnouf) and the MRC Functional Genomics Unit (Duncan Tooke) gave input on their requirements for HPC, what they provide locally, and how the group could benefit them in the future. A key recognition from the day was the extent to which HPC or Advanced Research Computing Infrastructure underpin an ever increasing range of research areas and how collectively we can work together to improve the Oxford e-infrastructure ecosystem.

The group now plans to meet on a regular termly basis, and to have an annual main event at the ICTF conference. Anyone interested who did not attend the first meeting would be most welcome at future events. Each event will have a topic for discussion, and for the next meeting in February will be focussed on storage solutions and parallel file systems. A number of those present at the first meeting volunteered to talk about their own departments and service implementations.



Andrew Richards
Associate Director - Operations and Services
Oxford e-Research Centre



A key recognition from the day was the extent to which HPC or Advanced Research Computing Infrastructure underpin an ever increasing range of research areas

Next year's ICT Forum Conference will be at the Kassam Stadium again on Thursday 5th July 2012 . Please send workshop and plenary suggestions/offerings to the organising committee via sarah.lawson@npeu.ox.ac.uk. Get the date in your diary now!

Innovation and IT Suppliers' Exhibition 2011

This year's Innovation and Technology Suppliers exhibition was held in the University Examination Schools on Thursday 8th December, organized by Mondale events. There were four optional seminars throughout the day including document solutions from Right Group; Cloud issues from Microsoft; Ruckus Wireless from Comsol; and Eco Printing from Eko Printing!

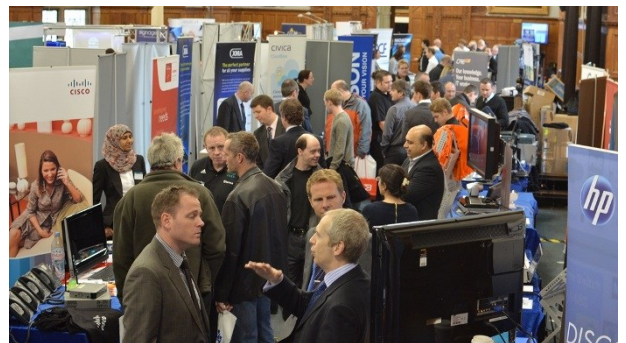
The Exhibition provides an excellent opportunity for both staff and exhibitors to meet and discuss any new developments in their respective areas and to review current requirements all in an informal and relaxed atmosphere. Many of the exhibitors also take advantage of Lunch and Learn opportunities at OUCS where specific technology can be demonstrated throughout the year. These sessions can be booked through the usual ITSS facilities at https://register.oucs.ox.ac.uk/its_booking.

Commenting on the exhibition, Tom King from OUCE said,

"I really enjoyed this exhibition! I had a very good talk with a number of vendors and was rather impressed by their technical knowledge, and I certainly came away with a greater understanding of projectors, interactive whiteboards and enterprise-level storage. I was also very pleased to have a good talk to the Dell product manager who was very receptive to the concerns I had about the current Optiplex line and promised to sign me up for an early-review scheme they have where you can offer thoughts on products that are currently in the design stage."

All in all another good day and huge thanks to all of you for attending and making it the success it was.

Rory Edwards
ITS3 Support Assistant, OUCS



For a Free Digital Society

It was a great honour for ICTF to be able to welcome Richard Stallman, better known simply as RMS, to Oxford to give a public lecture in issues around a free digital society. RMS is the



founding president of the Free Software Foundation and is an internationally-renowned figure. Big thanks to Dominic Hargreaves for the tip-off about RMS being in the UK! Around 350 people from all over the South East attended and we easily filled the Martin Wood Lecture Theatre, and more, in the Department of Physics.

Another Christmas Dinner

The 2011 Christmas dinner was another huge success with 47 people including 33 ITSS and 14 other halves. We started events with drinks in the Buttery Bar at Christ Church and then enjoyed a wonderful three course meal including seared salmon in the beautiful McKenna Room. After the event quite a few ICTF members went to "The Living Room" where there was an 80s DJ, and many danced into the small hours! If you've not yet been to this event it is definitely not one to miss and is great value at a subsidised £20 for ICTF members and only £35 for guests.



ITSS Volunteering Abroad

In 2006 Joe Talbot (OUCS, InfoDev team co-manager) went with his wife Heather to do a year's volunteering in Cameroon with the NGO called (Helps International) HINT.



While there, Joe got to know an orphanage called HOTPEC where he was really impressed with work going on there.

HOTPEC has been given a challenge by Global Giving and has to raise \$4000 in total from at least 50 donors by 31 December 2011 if it is to retain a permanent presence on Global Giving and thus a vital source of funds to make a huge difference to the lives of Cameroon's children. Anything you can give would make a huge difference so do be

generous this Christmas time if you can!

<http://tinyurl.com/hotpec>

Oxbridge Collaboration

The next OxBridge College IT Managers event will be at the National Space Centre in Leicester on the 23rd March

2012. Get the date in your diary now!

<http://www.citmg.group.cam.ac.uk/events.html>



ICTF provides a framework that promotes and facilitates excellence through collaboration 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.

ICTF Steering Committee

(Unit, elected until ICTF Conference in year)

ICTF Chair:

Jeremy Worth (Archaeology, 2014)

ICTF Secretary:

Sarah Lawson (NPEU, 2014)

Elected Members:

Jonathan Ashton (OUCS, 2014)

Ben Bridle (LMH and St. Hugh's, 2014)

James Dore (New College 2012)

Katherine Ferguson (Bodleian Libraries, 2013)

Natasha Heaton (Anthropology, 2013)

Greg Jennings (Hertford College, 2013)

Ex officio:

Tony Brett (OUCS)

Co-opted members:

Alan Hillyer (OUCS-OUTN, 2012)

David White (BSP, 2012)