Computer Laboratory IT Strategy Group

Chairman: Prof. Peter Robinson                                                             Secretary: Ms Lise Gough

Minutes of the meeting convened on October 23rd 2006 in GC22 at the William Gates Building.

Present:
Prof. P. Robinson  Dr R.J. Gibbens  Dr M.A. Johnson
Dr S.W. Moore  Dr G. Titmus  Ms L.M. Gough
Mr D. Cottingham

1. Apologies for absence
Apologies were received from Prof. L.C. Paulson.

2. Personnel
It was noted that Jasmine Hou has been recruited to provide cover for Jiang He who is on maternity leave. The field of applicants was strong, so the opportunity has been taken to employ Lisa Chapman on a temporary contract to provide general administrative support for the Laboratory's Computer Officers and computer support for the administrative officers.
It was agreed that there should be a review in six months’ time (March) to determine whether a case can be made for an additional need.

3. Budget
Capital projects for report
(a) Intel donation
It was noted that Intel Research Laboratory has made a donation of €45k to encourage the development of multi-core curricula. A further €20k has been donated in order to develop course material for professional training courses. Much of course material is covered by the CS Tripos; part of the donation could be used to develop the Lecture Theatre 1 recording facilities and personnel, and provide the material online. The larger donation could be used to provide for the replacement of 50 new dual-core or multi-core workstations, the set-up of which would be designated to the Computing Service. The machines to be replaced are fairly recent and could be used in other areas of the Laboratory. It was noted that the schedule of replacements would need to take place after examinations in June but before the July Open Days. Two thirds of the machines would be replaced leaving a third for Diploma and intern use during July. It was agreed that a subgroup should be established to manage the changes.

(b) Machine room GN09
It was noted that power requirements in the GN09 machine room are rising, and that the existing power supplies and cooling systems are inadequate for the purpose. It was also noted that flexibility in the physical space was a problem. From the latest round of capital funding, SRIF4/PC5, the CL will seek £300k to replace the system though it was noted that accurate figures are required. It was also noted that there is a plan to include use the heat exchanger to heat the WGB and that this would meet some of the requirements that new University buildings obtain 10% of its energy requirements from local sources. The vacation of Intel from the second floor will make available the SE18 machine room which may be used by research groups (including SN machine room equipment) and may be used in the interim to reduce the pressure on GN09. It was also noted that it would be useful to have a list of items Intel will be taking and leaving.

(c) Access Control
It was noted that the access control system in the William Gates Building is not compatible with University Cards, and the control system is unsatisfactory. MAJ explained that he and the Building Services Manager had conducted three site visits. It was noted that a trial period
would be required to test an alternative system. It was also noted that the CL may have to put in place a system before it is known if the SRIF4/PC5 money will cover a new system.

(d) MPhil machines
It was noted that the MPhil Course Director, Prof. EJ Briscoe, has asked the CL to consider replacing most of the machines used in SW02. It was also noted that the machines to be replaced in the Intel Teaching Laboratory (Item 3a) could be used to provide replacements in SW02 as they meet the current specification.

It was also noted that MPhil Organisers had not been enthusiastic about changing machines to the PWF platform and that the PWF would not be useful for the proposed generic MPhil. Current machines are at the tightly managed end rather than self-run machines. Students currently tend to attach themselves to one single machine. It was agreed that MPhil Course Directors for both the existing and new MPhil courses will need to sort the use of machines in SW02 to enable multiple users arriving in 2008-09.

It was also noted that MAJ has little effective access to budget information and would like more reporting information.

4. Website
PR said there was little report on website development. It was noted that Lisa Chapman is keen on providing documentation.

5. Wireless access
MAJ presented his paper on Wireless networking in which it was explained that though the CL is enthusiastic about wireless, and particularly Lapwing, there are technical problems. It was suggested that the CS might like to consider offering a wireless service at “West” café.

6. Matters to report
(a) Staff development
It was noted that Computer Officers are still encouraged to attend staff development courses. Assistant staff members are also encouraged to attend relevant Computing Service courses.
(b) Unified password system
PR reported that a number of users have ignored that the message that their passwords are about to change to the unified password system. MAJ reported that all those affected had been sent individual email messages that new passwords were available in Reception but few have been collected.
It was agreed that MAJ should be encouraged to take the hard line.
(c) Induction process
It was noted that some people missed the induction process at the beginning of the academic year including research fellows and late arrivals. It was suggested that Lisa Chapman keep a diary covering problems encountered.
A new induction form is required which would include a section relating to whether a new user’s machine was set up to their satisfaction.

7. Minutes of last meeting
The minutes of the last meeting were approved.

8. Date of next meeting
The next meeting will be held on January 15th 2007 at 11.15 in GC22.