

Minutes of the Computer Committee meeting held on 11th October 2021 at 13:00pm via Teams

Present: Jason Randall, Allison Lewis, Ian Elliott, Charlie Weiss, Catherine Reid, Ignas Budvytis, Saul Samuels Moselle (UCS), Will Wood (MCR)

Apologies: Aylmer Johnson, Qi Guo, Jason Carroll, Larry Paulson

1. Declarations of Interest

None

2. MMA

None

3. IT Dept Update

Start of Term

JR said that the start of term had been very busy as always but went smoothly. We have had reports of potential wi-fi coverage issues which we will investigate.

There has been another flood in the Castle House computer room. The Maintenance department are fully aware of the issue and will be doing some remedial work outside the emergency exit of Castle House to work out how and where the water is coming in.

Summer Update

AL has completed Phase 2 of our network hardware replacement and we are now approaching the final stage namely the replacement of our core switches. The 10 GB backbone is the same speed as before but with newer equipment and this will be installed over the next six months.

We have undertaken a lot of work on the security of our internal network as we prepared for penetration testing by UIS. All colleges have signed up for this and receive an annual security test using methods such as targeted phishing, port scanning and even attempting to gain access to college grounds. Whilst we haven't received an official report yet we have been told that our security is good and we were commended for our response to an attempted 'fake' phishing attack where somebody pretended to be the Master of Pembroke College inviting people to a garden party. A few clicks were detected taking people to a fake Raven site but nobody went any further and instead they contacted ourselves which was exactly the right course of action.

We carried out a rewire at WCDC where we removed cabling from redundant equipment in preparation for removal. Some unexpected issues occurred which lengthened the planned downtime by an extra hour but it was a good learning experience. Some further work is planned for this week which should only affect the internal staff network.

We have had a reorganization in the office as we look to return to working there more frequently. We have removed the three desks in the main office which were cramped and close together and replaced them with two larger desks which are further apart. JR is currently working in our back room which is really a storage area and is neither ideal nor safe due to the amount of equipment currently in there. We are hoping to secure next door (O4) as the College Nurse has moved to X staircase and JR has put this suggestion forward through Emma Easterbrook. It has also been mentioned to the new Master. The situation is further exacerbated by the imminent removal of all storage from both N & O attics where we also have items that would need rehousing.

JR and the HR Manager have co-authored an updated draft use of computer policy. The old policy needed updating to reflect social media usage to make people more aware of the potential consequences of writing about their college/working environment. It is suggested that disclaimers are used to reflect that the views are their own and not those of their employers. JR has also updated some webpages and links and if there are no issues with the policy he recommended it gets sent to the Finance Committee for ratification.

We have put our website redevelopment plan out to tender and have had four responses including one from Network Design who designed our current website. Some candidates have worked with other colleges before so their designs tend to be of the “cut and paste” variety which can be used for multiple websites but this isn’t a problem. All of the responses have been sent to the website working group for discussion and hopefully a decision on who we go with will be made soon so work can start in November/December. A timescale of three months is hoped for but it may take longer.

4. UCS Report

SM reported that the Freshers workshops went well and he spent about 10 hours in the FML teaching them how to print.

He also asked if the IT department puts together any resources for students as the UIS website is a little tortuous and there appears to be quite a lot of second years without Eduroam or knowledge of how to print from their own devices. There was no UCS rep last year which may explain this but SM felt that this is why relying too much on the UCS rep is not the best way forward.

JR replied saying that the Freshers get mailings in August explaining the various facilities SM felt it would be a good idea for the IT department to actually get involved with the workshops.

CR thanked SM for all the assistance given in the FML but she has a similar concern that we may not get the same level of assistance from future UCS reps. JR said that we are more than happy for FML staff to create tickets on behalf of the students so we can take some of the load and also mentioned that some years ago there was a budget line for UCS support which reps could claim against for carrying out various tasks such as workshops. The department would be happier to go down this avenue as we are also extremely busy at the start of term with room connections etc. and would need more resources to carry out anything extra.

AL suggested liaising with the UCS reps in advance to give them a better idea of topics to cover and information to give out.

SM reiterated that he felt it would be best for IT to do this so we will review arrangements for next year to see if something could be possible.

SM asked if the Colony Computer Room was now open and JR confirmed that it was having received assurances it was now dry.

SM then asked about the undergraduate mailing lists of which there seem to be two. There is the official @lists email and a separate list which is run and maintained by the UCS themselves but over the course of the year they have no way of determining how to keep it updated with starters and leavers. He asked if there was any way of getting this information to keep their lists updated or preferably be able to use the @lists DL. JR explained that they are kept separate as the @lists is moderated by Tutorial and it is possible they would be stricter with their moderation for content sent out to the students by the UCS.

At this point CR mentioned the postgraduate mailing list which is causing her concern. She recently sent an email to the list which was not received by everyone due to incomplete data on the two mailing lists (clare-mcr and clare-mcr-freshers) which are both moderated by the MCR. JR said he is in conversation with Tutorial about an independent college-run list.

SM said during Freshers week they were running talks in the Riley auditorium some of which were live streamed for the benefit of Freshers in isolation but they weren't allowed to use the "in house" audio systems which caused issues. He asked if this could be allowed next year but JR stated that the Conference office runs these systems and are nothing to do with us. He recommended contacting them well in advance next year but saw no reason why they couldn't be utilised by the UCS. We could also provide a decent internet connection using the dedicated data ports there if required.

SM asked what is being done to ensure that the new website is accessible. JR said that this is being actively pursued and whilst Level 3 accreditation is unattainable Level 2 is realistic.

SM raised a concern regarding the website migration potentially happening during application season which may cause lost content. JR explained that it would not be disruptive as we would be running the live and test sites in parallel and although it would make sense for the actual migration to take place in the summer months the decision ultimately rests with Jonathan Goodman.

5. MCR Report

WW told the committee that the MCR website had been handed over by the King's College team and he was currently tweaking it before going live. He sent a link to the committee for those interested in taking a look in advance.

There have been complaints about wi-fi signal strength in the MCR where some areas appear to have good coverage with other areas quite poor. This is happening despite the room being surrounded by access points so we will look into this issue.

6. AOB

JR asked if people still preferred online meetings and the consensus was that they continue to be the best way to attend as it prevents some people having to travel longer distances to attend a face to face meeting.

Date of next meeting

Monday 22nd November 2021