Minutes of the Computer Committee meeting held on 14th March 2022 at 13:00pm via Teams

Present: Jason Randall, Ian Elliott, Allison Lewis, Phil Ward, Charlie Weiss, Catherine Reid, Jason Carroll, Larry Paulson, Saul Samuels Moselle (UCS), Bjarne Bergh (MCR)

Apologies: Aylmer Johnson, Qi Guo, David Ball

1. Declarations of Interest

None

2. MMA

The planned network maintenance at WCDC successfully took place around a month ago and we now have greater network resilience as a result of this.

Last week we attempted to perform a software upgrade on the Old Court network switch but hit an issue where the switch rebooted but the software didn't install. Our suppliers are looking to see if they can tell us what went wrong and this work will hopefully be rescheduled for the Easter vacation.

At the last meeting JR mentioned that it was AL's last one before retiring but actually this meeting is her last. Her successor is Phil Ward and AL is currently handing over to PW.

The issue with automatic Raven registration has now been resolved.

3. IT Dept Update

MCS Rooms

Since the recent announcement about closing the MCS JR has seen the minutes from the CITMG and has also been in communication with the UIS rep who gave the original briefing. They have since apologised for the extremely poor method of dissemination of information and the lack of facts. As a result of this they are now booking meetings with all institutions affected by this change of service and we are to have ours in the next few weeks. JR hopes to have more information at the next meeting.

One of the key things to note is that the service is not going to disappear completely in June which is obviously a good thing. It has now been explained that for unknown technical reasons UIS will be unable to deploy images to new hardware so although our existing hardware can be maintained we won't be able to provision new equipment after June. There were no plans to do that anyway but if we had a hardware fault and needed to swap something out we wouldn't be able to reimage it. JR expects the service to still be in place in October.

UIS are looking to replace the MCS with something called the University Managed Desktop (UMD) which is a service that is currently advertised on the UIS website but doesn't actually exist yet. It will be a managed Windows desktop using current tools to keep it up to date but is aimed at staff. This means that it wouldn't come with the full suite of software packages currently deployed by UIS but as a compromise they would look to provide the most popular packages. UIS are currently in discussion with University departments about this.

As our MCS usage is low but the numbers of machines is high we haven't been replacing older equipment. There are 9 machines which are getting quite old now so we will look to take these out of circulation over the summer which would leave us with 18 PCs and 8 macs. This would represent quite a healthy provision considering usage is still very low.

We appear to have a solution for the iDiscover kiosks in the library. Darwin College has recommended a free kiosk package which would enable us to repurpose the existing hardware and keep it running.

JR gave an update on the flooding issue we are experiencing in the Colony computer room. The Maintenance Department has told JR that we are still waiting for a contractor to excavate the area outside to discover the source of the problem. We are also now aware of some flooring issues in the room where the ducting under the carpet has become waterlogged causing the floor to bow. This isn't currently a major trip hazard but it could become so if people keep rolling chairs over it. As a temporary solution we have moved the three PCs on that side of the room to the bench on the other side.

CR said that she had spoken to other college librarians who were unaware of the changes to MCS provision and they are now talking to their own IT departments.

CR also said that they have reinstated one PC in the FML downstairs computer room which had been taken out of use due to COVID. There is still concern about reinstating further machines in the upstairs computer room due to the lack of ventilation there.

CR then raised concerns about students who utilise assistive software on the MCS machines and the impact its removal would have on them. JR asked which packages were being used so CR said she would find out. SM said he could also help to find out this information.

DS-PRINT MFDs

At the last meeting JR mentioned that we are looking to replace our old hardware with new MFDs. Pricing has now been obtained from both Konica Minolta and UIS which JR has entered into a spreadsheet to come up with a viable proposition. We will be looking to purchase 5 MFDs in total which doesn't include the existing one in the FML We plan to install one in the St Regis common room, one in the upstairs room in the library (A4 colour copying + scanning), one in the Colony computer room (which will provide A3 copying) and two more in Lerner Court and Clare Court (both of which will provide A4 colour copying + scanning).

These would all be rented on a 5 year lease and as we need to cover the fairly sizeable costs we would unfortunately have to increase printing cost per side from 4p/14p to 5p/20p. Even this increase would leave us with an annual loss of £820 but we do not want to raise costs any more than this so as not to increase hardship for the students. Printing costs haven't actually increased for around 10 years but the proposed increases will put us in line with the average costs at other colleges.

JR asked SM to review the proposals for comments at the next meeting or sooner. Although costs will increase the facilities provided will be much better and this will improve usage of the DS-Print Universal Print driver tool which currently doesn't support our current hardware. UIS are talking about getting it to support older hardware which would be useful for new users of DS-Print although existing student setups would remain unaffected.

Budget Update

At the last meeting JR said that the budget would probably remain steady but it now looks as though we may actually require a smaller budget due to a reduction in IT infrastructure software costs. All of our old servers have now been migrated to new hardware so with all of the old hardware now switched off this will also provide an £800 per annum reduction in energy costs

We are heavily focused on cyber security and not just because of the current climate. UIS are moving to MFA and we are trying to mirror that inside the staff environment where we hope to introduce it for staff logins.

Funding has been approved to replace all 17 of the remaining older network switches on college. This is planned to take place in 2022/23.

We are looking to replace the old photocopiers in college with MFDs as they are worn out and also pose a security risk.

4. UCS Report

JR thanked SM for his report on MCS provision which he had passed on to the Bursar and the Senior Tutor both of whom were very supportive of maintaining whatever we can. They also felt very strongly that there should be provision for those students with broken laptops where we could hopefully lend them something to keep them going. Hardship issues also need to be provided for.

SM felt it was important that the provision should be focused on laptops rather than desktops as students would need these to attend lectures or supervisions.

5. **MCR Report**

BB also had feedback regarding the MCS but slightly less than the undergraduates. He had around 20 responses which said they used these facilities on a weekly basis for a variety of reasons but mainly printing. He felt that printing facilities were very important due to the complex nature of setting up DS-Print.

BB also agreed with the need to provide for those students whose laptops break down. He also hoped that the departments could help to maintain the software packages for those who need them.

6. **AOB**

SM mentioned that the spreadsheet which is sent to students for the room ballot causes privacy issues because it displays information that shouldn't be there e.g. current room location or existing rent. He wondered if we could help the Accommodation office hide other people's personal information so it only shows their own. JR said we would contact them.

CR asked if the book recommendation form was no longer Raven protected. JR said that it is but she probably gained direct access due to having authenticated with Raven elsewhere. Her PC will have stored the cookie enabling the direct access.

Date of next meeting

Monday 16th May 2022