

University of Cambridge

Information Strategy and Services Syndicate

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 20 January 2011 in the Syndicate Room, the Old Schools.

Members present: Professor Littlewood (in the Chair), Dr Blackwell, Dr Carpenter, Mr. Du Quesnay, Professor Howe, Mr Matheson, Mr Norman, Professor Oliver, Mr Richardson, Dr Robertson, Dr Walker, Sir David Wallace, Mr. Warbrick.

In attendance: Director of Finance, Directors of MISD and UCS, University Librarian, Mr. Wilson and Mr Reavely for M 230.

Apologies for absence were received from: Dr Alexander, Dr Ellington, Mr Wood, Professor Young and the Registry

There were no declarations of interest relating to matters on the agenda.

The Chairman welcomed Dr Blackwell to his first meeting.

225. Membership

The Syndicate noted that the General Board had appointed Dr Alan Blackwell (Computer Laboratory) and they agreed to co-opt Mr Alex Wood who had been nominated to fill one of the two student vacancies.

226. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting of the ISSS held on 18 November 2010 were approved after correction of the record of attendance.

227. Matters arising and review of action points

Action points had been circulated with the annual cycle of business and the programme of work as ISSS 246. Some annual reports were outstanding.

M 206: Google Calendars

At the last meeting the Syndicate had noted that departments which had set up Google Apps for their own sub-domains of cam.ac.uk posed a Data Protection risk because they were covered by Google's standard contract terms and it had been agreed that it would be better if they were brought within the University's contract terms which dealt with that issue.

Members considered whether this raised a wider issue concerning the use of external services but agreed that a distinction could be made in this case because an approved application was available and the use of alternatives was discouraged. Some guidance would be sensible and the Syndicate asked that it be covered in the continuing review, on which they noted they were due for a report at the next meeting.

228. Business Committee minutes

The meeting of the Business Committee scheduled on 14 December 2010 had been cancelled.

229. Review of Information Strategy

The Syndicate noted that the working groups had begun to meet, and that a report from the group on research would be available shortly.

230. X5 project

Mr Du Quesnay reported on the first meeting of the Project Board on 19 January which he had chaired. Mr Dampier had responded to Board members' concerns about the purpose of the project. The Board reviewed the Project Guidelines and having been reminded that decisions to provide significant funding should be supported by a robust business case did not answer positively when asked if they thought firm commitment would be premature.

The Board decided that usability was the key requirement: the application should be widely accessible and easily used by unpractised and irregular users, whether PIs or PAs; it would be highly devolved and should not rely on cells of experts.

The Board approved the allocation of £650k; a separate £500k was needed within MISD to develop the interfaces as part of the implementation project, also under the supervision of the Board. The contract with Unit 4 would follow the standard form. The Pro-Vice Chancellor for Planning and Resources had approved the next stage of negotiation provided exposure at this stage was limited to £100k. The Board would meet again in mid February.

Mr Reavley explained that he hoped the user group would also meet in February to be introduced to the Unit 4 team and that some screenshots would be available.

Dr Blackwell agreed at the suggestion of the Syndicate to join the Board and the Syndicate approved the membership as follows:

Members

Steve Oliver	Chairman – School of Biological Sciences
Henning Sirringhaus	School of Physical Sciences
Philip Guildford	Engineering – School of Technology
Alan Blackwell	Computer Laboratory
David Carter	School of Humanities and Social Science
Ian du Quesnay	Bursar – Newnham College
Martin Reavley	Director – CRO
Paul Dampier	Director - MISD
Ian Lewis	Director - UCS
Steve Hutson	Assistant Director - Finance Division

In attendance

Denise Conway	Oxford University
Dawn Edwards	CRO
Chris Edwards	Deputy Director MISD – Secretary to Board

Mr Dampier added that the Deloitte's report on governance had now been received; they had complimented the universities' joint approach. A Cambridge project manager had not yet been appointed but a 12 month appointment would be made shortly. It was hoped to sign the contract at the end of January and Unit 4 now had the functional specification. There would be four blocks of work, with the aim of testing in 12 months and use in about 16 months, for 2012-13. Support for the first months would be guaranteed by a three month embargo on sales.

231. Review of IT

The Syndicate were informed that the PRC at their meeting on 24 November 2010 received a report from the working groups they had established to look at efficiencies across institutions in a number of areas including pay, services, and academic activities. [<http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/cam-only/committee/prc/minutes/20101124.pdf>]

The PRC had agreed (M1287) that it should establish a review of IT infrastructure and support, in co-operation with the Information Strategy and Services Syndicate noting that recent reviews in Schools might help with the approach; Colleges would be consulted during the course of the review and the PRC would be asked at their next meeting how they wished to take this forward. Professor Littlewood agreed to discuss this with Professor Young.

The Syndicate agreed that it was not the right moment to conduct a survey of the type that proposed in a tabled draft but there might be questions to address to institutions as part of the review; a similar exercise conducted by the Finance Division might be a guide.

232. Planning return mentions of IT projects

The annual Planning Guidance reminded contributors that the Syndicate had asked for early notice of proposals for new IT/IS projects so that it might give guidance on their inclusion in Service plans. ISSS 247 summarised the replies to the questions from the planning returns submitted in the 2010 round.

Syndics agreed that this was interesting and valuable and could identify some common themes. The paper would be referred to the ISWG for further consideration and with the suggestion that the TDF might be used for projects with broader application or which would be examples of best practice.

Syndics expressed concern that the Syndicate seemed not to be being appraised of some developments that might not be for them to approve, but which were all part of the IT/IS context and on which they might want to express a view or be able to assist. That was also true of working parties and sub-committees which would need to consider IT/IS issues.

The Syndicate agreed that PVCs and the central bodies could be reminded of the Syndicate's existence and role.

233. Room Management

The Syndicate received for information a report (ISSS 248) on a review of current processes and technology for the booking and utilisation of space for lectures, seminars etc.

The PRC at their next meeting would be invited to consider a recommendation that "following assessment of the current business processes that support the management of rooms and the utilisation of space in the University's estatethe University proceeds to a first phase that implements a fully online and active room booking system, by enhancing and adopting a new, consolidated, and consistent business process model for room management" (S4).

Syndics were not enthusiastic, noting that departments already had systems of their own. Shared systems – whether for room booking or any other purpose - were adopted by consensus when individual organisations perceived value in them. The benefits of a University wide room booking system were less clear not least because the filter required for most outside bookings would simply add to administration. It appeared that a solution

had been found for the wrong problem. The issue was not that there was too little space requiring better management, but there was too much of it. The mere ability to book rooms would not increase activity to the extent that occupancy rates would rise. A reduction in the number of rooms could have that effect, but that might require a financial incentive and was not a problem within the remit of the Syndicate.

There were two other points: that the proposal did not go as far as a timetabling system, and that Colleges might be interested in offering space through a coordinated (but possibly distributed) booking system.

234. BIS: e-infrastructure advisory group

Professor Oliver reported that the Vice-Chancellor had received a letter from Prof Sir Adrian Smith inviting the University to contribute information to the recently formed e-infrastructure Advisory Group composed of representatives from RCUK, the Wellcome Trust, Universities UK and the Funding Councils. Its aim was to develop a clear vision for the development of the UK's e-Infrastructure and to produce a corresponding multi-year framework for delivery. The letter invited information on: current and future e-infrastructure need; organisational strategy and external interfaces and dependencies.

The deadline for responses was 21 January. The ISWG had given initial consideration to the terms of a reply, to which a number of Syndics had contributed but given the constraints on time it was not possible to put a draft to this meeting for approval. The reply had now been sent, and the exchange would be included in the minutes as ISSS 252.

235. Joint Network Management Committee

The Syndicate received as document ISSS 249 the minutes of the JNMC for their meeting on 7 January 2007 with a note on implementation issues, and agreed to refer to the Data Protection Officer the proposals for outbound "Caller ID" for advice before any changes were made.

236. Service reports

Received: reports on:

- (1) UCS (ISSS 250)
- (2) MISD (ISSS 251)

Mr Lewis added to his report by saying that the training booking system had been well received and its scope had widened as other providers joined in; there had been a seamless upgrade in the telephone system; and give the prospect of some further retirements of UCS staff he would be seeking permission in this planning round to fill some vacancies. The Syndicate noted that there were now 130,000 devices connected to the network.

237. Capital developments

In reply to a question the Director of MISD informed the Syndicate that for reasons of resiliency MISD were planning a second server room; the ISSS had not been consulted as this was a sub-strategic minor work dealt with in the usual way by EMBS and the RMC.

The Syndicate noted at their meeting on 18 November 2010 (M212) that the PRC would be asked to register under the capital projects process the proposal for a data centre at West Cambridge, and the PRC at their meeting on 24 November had done so (PRC M1289). The proposal included a feasibility study and the ISSS would be invited to consider the conclusions in due course. An application may be made to the TDF to fund the study.

238. Meeting dates

Noted: the schedule of meetings for the remainder of 2010-11. Changed dates and times were highlighted.

BC	Monday 21 February 2011	11.00am	Treasurer's Room
ISSS	Thursday 17 March 2011	2.15pm	Syndicate Room
BC	Monday 18 April 2011	11.00am	Treasurer's Room
ISSS	Thursday 19 May 2011	2.15pm	Syndicate Room
BC	Monday 13 June 2011	11.00am	Treasurer's Room
ISSS	Tuesday 5 July 2011	2.15pm	Syndicate Room

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PRAO,
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