

2011 Report of the Information Strategy and Services Syndicate

Introduction

This is the third annual report of the Information Strategy and Services Syndicate (ISSS) which meets six times each year.

Members are listed in Appendix A. Professor Littlewood was succeeded by Professor Oliver as the Vice-Chancellor's deputy as Chairman, in April 2011. Dr Hand will succeed Professor Oliver as Chair of the ISWG in October 2011.

Operation

The Syndicate's annual cycle of business is shown in appendix B.

The ISSS has three subcommittees: the Business Committee (BC) prepares the agenda for the ISSS and ensures proper preparation and presentation of issues; the Information Strategy Working Group (ISWG) which is tasked to anticipate and gather future information needs, provide a sounding board for new proposals, advise on allocations from the Technology Development Fund (TDF), and to work with the BC in drawing up papers for formal discussion at the ISSS; and the Joint Network Management Committee which oversees the management of the University Telephone Network (UTN), the Cambridge University Data Network (CUDN), and the Granta Backbone Network (GBN).

Various other committees, Project Boards and System Management Committees report to the ISSS (some also reporting to committees in the business area they serve): the Joint Network Management Committee (JNMC), University Card Management Committee, CamSIS Project Board, Financial Systems Management Committee, HR Systems Management Committee, X5 Project Board.

The information systems activities of the Library and CARET are included within the ISSS's remit.

The ISSS's last annual report stated its support of the internal auditor's conclusion that the ISSS be encouraged to shift from project governance to setting a strategic focus. As part of this, the ISSS has instituted a major review of the Information Strategy, setting up working groups to cover different uses (see below under (a)).

Although the ISSS in 2008 approved the establishment of a Project Office to assist it with the setting up and subsequent governance of major projects, budgetary constraints have prevented the creation of the associated officer post. Fortunately the need for the Project Office has not been acute as there have been relatively few new major projects, but they have not been assisted by the lack of the Project Office. That said, the ISSS has established (see (f) below) guidelines for the governance of IT/IS projects and will update these from time to time. Since IT/IS projects make significant budgetary demands and effective and user-friendly IT systems are essential to all the University's activities, good governance of such projects is of crucial importance and the University should consider how best to monitor the

implementation of the guidelines produced by ISSS. Discussion between the ISSS and the Audit Committee may be beneficial in developing this further.

Reporting under Terms of Reference

(a) to establish and keep under review, subject to the approval of the Council and the General Board and in consultation with the Senior Tutors' Committee and the Bursars' Committee where appropriate, an information strategy in support of the aims and objectives of the University and the Colleges;

The working parties the ISSS had established to advise it on the further development of the Information Strategy (for details see annex C to the 2010 Report) reported during the year on:

- campus experience and outreach
- management systems
- support for research

The General Board's Teaching and Learning Support Services Steering Committee (on which the ISSS is represented) advised on the fourth area:

- teaching and learning

The Chair convened a meeting of the four chairs to discuss coverage of the reviews. The ISSS subsequently discussed the reports in depth and, having suggested some changes, asked the ISWG to develop a summary for further discussion, circulation and eventual adoption as the revised Information Strategy (IS). Two key themes already being addressed were reinforced by these studies: usability; and the need for Identity Management. The balance between business process change and the cost of customisation is another important theme.

(b) to promote the adoption of the information strategy where appropriate throughout the University and the Colleges, and advise on developments in information technology and its implementation;

A strategic implementation plan has been developed (Appendix D), but will require review when the new IS has been agreed.

The ISSS provided funding enabling UCS to complete the identity management project, which will enable an individual to be identified across systems. The next phase is to review other types of identity that span systems.

(c) to keep under review the information requirements of the University and the Colleges, and advise the Council and the General Board on priorities for and other matters relating to the development and application of appropriate information policies, facilities, and services in support of those requirements;

The ISSS maintains a rolling five-year list of developments requiring funding in excess of the regular Service Allocations. It recommends annually to the PRC which developments should be funded in the next year and the provision that should be earmarked for future years. The ISSS requests an annual allocation to the Technology Development Fund from which it can provide limited development funds. These allow small projects to be completed, and larger projects to be evaluated and brought to a stage at which support may reasonably be requested from PRC.

Approved Allocations for 2011-12 are for Research Grants Financial Management; Records Management; Documents Management; CamTools production services (at a reduced level); Institutional Repository Development and for investigation of the appropriate strategy for development of the Finance and HR Systems. This last is expected to be a major project and was registered under the Capital Projects Process. A joint HR and Finance Systems Review Steering Group was established.

The ISSS received a request from three of the Schools to support the purchase of a site-wide licence for Matlab. The Syndicate viewed this as an appropriate University-wide purchase and has asked the UCS to add it to its annual request to PRC. The Syndicate is now considering the more general issue of site-wide licensing for software which is widely used in teaching and research.

The ISSS has asked for a review of the advantages of co-ordinating the purchase of niche and specialist software to give wider benefit where needed and to avoid multiple purchases.

The planning guidance now asks institutions for early notice of local IT/IS projects to assist the Services in developing their plans. The ISSS received a summary compiled from the 2010 returns, which it referred to the ISWG to see if assistance could be provided. The ISSS has asked that it should be kept informed of all plans with a bearing on IT/IS strategy and of examples of best practice in IT/IS that it may promulgate across the university. By means of these report, and otherwise, the University should be made more generally aware of the role of ISSS and contribute to both IT/IS planning and the spread of best practice..

(d) to ensure that any such information policies, facilities, and services provided are operating effectively and are fit for purpose;

Project reports are made to every meeting. Streamlined “exception” reporting has been introduced for Service Directors enabling them to bring specific matters to the attention of the Syndicate, but whether or not there is a need for report on a specific matter the Syndicate receives activity reports at every meeting. These show the high levels of availability and use, the prompt dealing with requests and generally the very large volume of regular work delivered efficiently by each Service. The Syndicate puts on record its appreciation of the work of Service staff in delivering their vital services so efficiently and effectively.

(e) to oversee the direction and planning of the University Computing Service and Management Information Services Division and to approve general principles for the allocation of resources and priorities in the use of their facilities;

The Directors of the UCS and MISD provide service reports to each meeting. As input to the annual planning round, the ISSS reviews the Services' strategies in July and drafts of their submissions in October.

The UCS' revised approach to network charging gives greater certainty to capital requirements and will reduce reliance on CIF.

Arising from their review of efficiencies, the PRC in co-operation with the ISSS established a review of IT infrastructure and support to meet later in 2011. The Chair of the ISSS is a member of the Review Panel and the ISSS will contribute to the review process.

(f) to be responsible for ensuring that appropriate project and budgetary management and control mechanisms are in place for such major information systems and technology projects as the Council or the General Board may from time to time determine; and to be accountable for the funds allocated for such projects;

The ISSS has developed project governance guidelines for major projects.

The current systems are overseen by the HR Systems Committee, the Financial Systems Committee and the new Student Systems Committee, all of which report to the ISSS, as well as to – respectively - the HR Committee, the Finance Committee and the Education Committee.

A Cambridge project board was established to oversee the Cambridge interest in the “X5” project, being promoted jointly with Oxford and a Project Manager has been appointed. The satisfactory arrangements for governance of the project had been confirmed by an independent review.

The ISSS manages the Technology Development Fund (TDF). Projects that have been deemed suitable for TDF funding by the ISWG during 11/12 (although funding has not yet been committed in every case pending full business plans) include the development costs of:

REF support system; "Search"; Identity Management; Records Management; timetabling/room booking; exam paper distribution; alumni system replacement; the University map; developments and implementation protocols associated with web content management systems; institutional repository; internal communications.

(g) to make, or amend, and publish rules, subject to approval by the competent authority, for the regulation and security of the use of information technology facilities within the University, and of such computing facilities in College institutions as may be designated for this purpose from time to time by the appropriate College authorities concerned, and to impose on a person infringing one or more of those rules either or both of the following penalties:

(i) the suspension of authorization to use computing resources for such a period as the Information Strategy and Services Syndicate shall determine;

(ii) a fine not exceeding maximum the prescribed by Ordinance.

Review of the rules and guidelines is an annual item of business and the ISSS is assisted in this by staff in the UCS; some changes will be needed this year following new legislation. The ISSS gave particular attention during the year to managing the risks associated with the growing use of cloud computing, in particular the security of data. Syndics' attention was drawn by the Proctors to a complaint concerning the possible misuse of staff e-mailing lists but agreed it did not constitute misuse as defined by the Rules.

(h) to make an annual report to the Council and the General Board and to the Senior Tutors' and Bursars' Committees.

This report is sent to all these bodies.

Appendices

A – List of Members

B - Annual Cycle of Business

C – Implementation Plan and Glossary

A – List of Members The ISSS was constituted by Grace in November 2007

1.	The Information Strategy and Services Syndicate shall consist of:		<i>Appointment to</i>
(a)	The Vice-Chancellor (or a duly appointed deputy) as Chairman	Professor S Oliver (Professor P Littlewood until 31 March 2011)	
(b)	Three persons appointed by the Council	Mr. James Matheson, Engineering	31 December 2011
▪	▪	Mr. John Norman, CARET	31 December 2011
▪	▪	Professor Christine Howe	31 December 2012
(c)	Three persons appointed by the General Board of the Faculties	SAH/SHSS: Dr Gavin Alexander , Faculty of English	31 December 2013
		SPS/ST: Dr Alan Blackwell, Computer Laboratory	31 December 2011
		SBS/SCM: Dr. A T Carpenter, Clinical Neurosciences	31 December 2011
(d)	Three persons appointed by the Colleges' Committee	Sir David Wallace, Master of Churchill College	31 December 2011
▪	▪	Dr. Stephanie Ellington; Senior Tutor, Lucy Cavendish (Dr Rob Wallach until 31 July 2010)	31 December 2014
▪	▪	Mr. Ian du Quesnay, Bursar, Newnham College	31 December 2011
(e)	one person elected from among their own number by the officers of the University Computing Service;	Mr Jon Warbrick	31 December 2011
(f)	one person elected from their own number by the officers of the Management Information Services Division of the University Offices	Mr Andy Richardson	31 December 2011
(g)	two members of the University in <i>statu pupillari</i> , co-opted by the Syndicate, at least one of whom shall be a graduate student *	Alex Wood	31 December 2011
▪	▪	Vacancy	31 December 2010
(h)	not more than two persons co-opted by the Syndicate, provided that it shall not be obligatory for the Syndicate to co-opt any person or persons	Dr Robin Walker Vacancy (Professor Steve Oliver to 31 March 2011)	31 December 2011

2.	The Registry, the Librarian, and the Directors of the University Computing Service, and of the Management Information Services Division and the Finance Division of the University Offices, shall have the right to attend meetings of the Syndicate.	Respectively:	
		Dr Jonathan Nichols	
		Mrs Anne Jarvis	
		Dr Ian Lewis	
		Mr Paul Dampier	
		Mr Andrew Reid	
	To attend by right of Standing Invitation	Professor Steve Young, Pro-Vice Chancellor, Planning and Resources	
	Secretary:	Mr. Nick Wilson, Senior Assistant Registry, Academic Division	

B - Annual Cycle of Business

Meeting	Date	Business
1	Early October	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Preliminary planning round discussions about MISD, UCS, UL and Projects (taking account of financial outturn for previous year) 2. Discussion of Information Strategy and annual programme of work. 3. Annual Report 4. Appointment or election of Syndics
2	Late November	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Final planning round submissions for MISD, UCS and Projects (having received relevant financial outturn information) 2. ISSS covering paper on planning round submissions under 1 including recommendations/priorities for resources.
3	Late January/Early February	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Initial annual review of guidelines (in first year those inherited from ITS) 2. Annual Reports on Information Compliance and from MISD, UCS, Library (including CARET)
4	Late March/Early April	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Initial planning discussions
5	Mid to Late May	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Invite comments from Syndics on (a) operation of Syndicate (b) matters to be covered in annual report for consideration by BC in first instance 2. Approve published rules, guidelines and disciplinary procedures etc
6	July	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Outline ISSS Annual Report including review of effectiveness 2. In accordance with the Disciplinary Procedure (para v.) to appoint a Syndic to be the Panel Convenor of any Panel that needs to be convened in the next twelve months. 3. Strategic Plans – first look

C – Implementation Plan

The Syndicate's Implementation Plan is published at:

http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/cam-only/committee/iss/strategy_plan.pdf

Glossary

BC	See ISSS - BC
CamTools	an innovation unit focused on learning and research technologies helping the University's staff and students collaborate, communicate and interact online
CARET	Centre for Applied Research in Educational Technologies
CamSIS	Cambridge Student Information System
CHRIS	Cambridge Human Resources Information System
CUDN	Cambridge University Data Network
CUFS	Cambridge University Finance System
GBN	Granta Backbone Network
ISSS	Information Systems and Strategy Syndicate
ISSS- BC	The Business Committee of the ISSS
IS, IT	Information Systems; Information Technology
ISWG	Information Strategy Working Group (a sub-committee of the ISSS)
JNMC	Joint Network Management Committee (a sub-committee of the ISSS)
MISD	Management Information Systems Division
pFACT	Project Financial, Accounting and Costing Tool; used to calculate the Full Economic Cost (fEC) of a research project
PRC	Planning and Resources Committee
TDF	Technology Development Fund
UCMC	University Card Management Committee
UCS	University Computing Service
UTN	University Telephone Network
X5	The project for the replacement of pFACT (qv) grant costing system