2013 Report of the Information Strategy and Services Syndicate

Introduction

This is the fifth annual report of the Information Strategy and Services Syndicate (ISSS), which normally meets six times each year. Members are listed in Appendix A.

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): University Card Management Committee, Student Information Systems Committee, Financial Systems Management Committee, HR Systems Management Committee, X5 Project Board (until stood down).

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

The ISSS's last annual report described the progress of the Council's review of IT infrastructure and support and the consultation with the Syndicate through its Business Committee.   The Syndicate was given the opportunity to comment on the conclusions of the review and convened a special meeting in order to agree a response. The Review Group amended the report to take account of these and many other comments. The Regent House subsequently approved the structural changes and associated regulations to implement the principal recommendations including the replacement of the Syndicate with an Information Systems Committee on or after 31 March 2014, depending on the date of appointment of the new Director of Information Services.

The Syndicate was concerned that, despite being under notice, it should continue with business as usual. As it was no longer appropriate to publish the new Information Strategy in the way originally intended, as a Notice, it was instead published on the Syndicate's website with the intention that it should be a guide to the planning of new developments.

The Syndicate has published guidelines for the governance of IT/IS projects and agreed that a Project Office would assist it with the setting up and subsequent governance of major projects. Budgetary constraints have prevented the creation of the associated post, and the need has receded because there have been fewer new major projects. This will now be a matter for the new Director and the successor body.

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 Information Strategy was finalised and sets out a number of principles and aims under the headings of each of the four area studies. Two key themes emerged: usability, and the need for identity management; and six top-level principles:

> (a) *Ubiquitous and seamless access to the network;*
> (b) *Migration of all materials on-line;*
> (c) *Data-driven interoperation between all systems, whoever provides them;*
> (d) *Good design and functional suitability for every user, simplicity of access, ease of use and security*
> (e) *Value for money*
> (f) *Increased "self-service" both for students (in terms of on-line learning) and researchers (in terms of grant & personnel management).*

The Information Strategy Working Group has been asked to work with the Directors of the Services to embed these principles in their plans.

(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;*

While the Syndicate believes that the aims and principles set out in its Information Strategy are relevant and appropriate, the further development of this strategy and of IT/IS in general is now guided by the terms of the IT Review which confers a different set of responsibilities on the Information Systems Committee. The new agenda is wider than the ISSS can pursue but it has continued to encourage new developments and to allocate or recommend funding for projects and new developments that further its aims.

(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. That process was again followed for 2013-14, and will be followed for 2014-15.

Allocations were approved on the recommendation of ISSS for further years of funding for documents management; for implementation of the strategy for development of the Finance and HR Systems and, in particular, the CUFS upgrade and for the start-up phase of Voyager replacement. The Research Grants Management System was moving out of the

project phase and would require recurrent funding through MISD. Additional funding was also recommended for the software co-ordination scheme and central funding for Lapwing in order to remove the disincentive to its further co-ordinated development if funding has to be provided locally. The Syndicate monitored wireless coverage across the University and noted its extension during the year but it was not yet universal or seamless.

The planning guidance asks institutions for early notice of local IT/IS projects to assist the Services in developing their plans and the ISWG received a useful summary early in 2013. The ISSS has asked that it should be kept informed of all plans with a bearing on IT/IS strategy; the 2013 Guidance asked institutions to show how any proposals were consistent with or in furtherance of the ISSS Strategic Aims, and to identify completed developments that were examples of good practice that might be adopted more widely.

The Syndicate received a second report on Information Compliance from the Information Compliance Officer.

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

This is ensured by regular "exception" reports of Project Boards and Service Directors and through the minutes of the system management committees and project boards.

The Syndicate had concerns about data security on cloud-based and other externally hosted systems and asked for some guidelines to be prepared covering this very complicated area. At the opposite end of the spectrum, the Syndicate were also kept informed of the cost and policy implications of open access to research outputs.

The Syndicate noted the need for a new platform to anticipate the eventual demise of CamTools and that new services would be developed on Moodle. Funding was provided for first year development costs.

(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 asks to be informed of major changes of plan in good time before reviewing Services' strategies during the Michaelmas Term and, with input from the ISWG, producing a combined IT submission. Given the imminent merger of IT provision, Directors of Services were asked to exchange draft plans with one another and identify areas of overlap and common interest.

Noting progress on the CUFS R12 project, the ISSS began to consider how the very long-term strategy for the major systems, considered together, should be developed.

(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 Information Systems Committee, all of which report to the

ISSS, as well as to – respectively - the HR Committee, the Finance Committee and the Education Committee.

The ISSS received reports from the project board established to oversee the Cambridge interest in the "X5" project, being promoted jointly with Oxford, and proposed that central funding be provided to support wireless coverage across the University. That proposal has now been approved by the Resource Management Committee.

The ISSS manages the Technology Development Fund (TDF). Projects that have been recommended for TDF funding by the ISWG during 2012-13 have been a project at the Institute of Continuing Education to develop an application for taking course bookings, following a failure by a supplier; development of Moodle for the reason noted above; developments in connection with the monitoring of the use of space as part of a larger project to improve the utilisation of teaching space.

The Syndicate receives reports at the end of each funded project, and will in future require annual reports for projects of extended length.

(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 the maximum 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 of the rules and guidelines reflect legislative requirements. There has been new legislation, which needs to be reflected but there have been delays in implementation by government and so the impact is not clear. Further revision is therefore pending until there is greater clarity of the requirements. The Syndicate was reassured that the authority for its rules and guidelines would pass automatically to the new Information Systems Committee and that no transitional arrangement was needed.

(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 - Glossary

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

1.	The Information Strategy and Services Syndicate shall consist of:		*Appointment to*
(a)	The Vice-Chancellor (or a duly appointed deputy) as Chairman	Professor Steve Oliver	31 December 2013
(b)	Three persons appointed by the Council	Mr. James Matheson, Engineering	31 December 2015
▪		Mr. John Norman, CARET	31 December 2015
▪		Professor Christine Howe (Education) Mr David Carter (Education)	To 31 December 2012 To 31 December 2016
(c)	Three persons appointed by the General Board of the Faculties	SAH/SHSS: Dr Gavin Alexander, Faculty of English	31 December 2015
		SPS/ST: Dr Alan Blackwell, Computer Laboratory	31 December 2015
		SBS/SCM: Dr. A T Carpenter, Clinical Neurosciences	31 December 2015
(d)	Three persons appointed by the Colleges' Committee	Sir David Wallace, Master of Churchill College	31 December 2015
▪		Dr Matthias Dörrzapf (Senior Tutor St John's College)	31 December 2014
▪		Mr. Ian du Quesnay, Bursar, Newnham College	31 December 2015
(e)	one person elected from among their own number by the officers of the University Computing Service;	Mr Julian King	31 December 2014
(f)	one person elected from their own number by the officers of the Management Information Services Division of the University Offices	Dr Stephen Smith	31 December 2014
(g) ▪	two members of the University in *statu pupillari*, co-opted by the Syndicate, at least one of whom shall be a graduate student *	Mr Dom Weldon	
		Vacancy	
(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	31 December 2015
		Dr Steve Hand	31 December 2015

2.	The Registrary, 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 Registrary, Academic Division	

Dr Sandra Fulton (College Teaching Officer and Admissions Tutor at Girton College and Assistant Director of Teaching at the Department of Biochemistry) was the Syndicate's representative on the Student Information Systems Committee.

Sir David Wallace represented the Syndicate on the Oversight Committee of the High Performance Computing Service

Dr Dörrzapf served as the Panel Convenor required by the Syndicate's Disciplinary Procedure at http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/committee/isss/rules/discproc.html

B - Annual Cycle of Business

Meeting	Date	Business
1	Early October	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 5. Review of sub-committees
2	Late November	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	1. Initial annual review of guidelines 2. Annual Reports on Information Compliance and from MISD, UCS, and the Library (including CARET)
4	Late March/Early April	1. Initial planning discussions
5	Mid to Late May	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	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 - 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**