

University of Cambridge

Information Strategy and Services Syndicate

Minutes of the First Meeting held on Thursday, 7<sup>th</sup> February, 2008

Members present: Professor Steve Young (Chairman); Professor Nolan, Professor Littlewood, Professor Wallace, Dr. Carpenter, Dr. Wallach, Mr. Du Quesnay, Mr. Matheson, Mr. Norman, Mr. Richardson, Mr. Warbrick.

Apologies were received from Professor Walsham.

In attendance with the Registry: the Directors of Finance, MISD and UCS; the Librarian; the Secretary *pro tem* and the Secretary *designate*.

*The Chairman* welcomed Members to the first meeting of the new Syndicate, which has now subsumed, *inter alia*, the responsibilities of the previous Information Strategy Group (ISG) and Information Technology Syndicate (ITS).

Item 1a. Minutes of the Twenty Third Meeting of the Information Strategy Group  
Min/ISG 23

Item 1b. Minutes of the 93<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the IT Syndicate  
ITS(07)39 ITS Report

2. *The Chairman* introduced the Minutes of the final meetings of the IS Group and the IT Syndicate. They had been tabled as a matter of record. There were two Actions from the ISG which required noting:

i) In the case of the CAF/UCAS interface (*IS G Minutes para. 2.8 iv*) *Mr. Dampier* reported that the CamSIS Board were due to take a paper shortly on the issue. This paper would bring forward proposals for a method of implementation; there were no changes in principle or to the preferred timetable;

ii) The Action at *ISG para 6.1* required the Chairman (Professor Young) to raise the matter of appointment of a University Records Manager with the Registry. *The Registry* reported that he and the Librarian had discussed the matter. They intended to invest jointly in a scoping study undertaken by a qualified individual external to the University. They agreed to seek out a qualified individual to scope the size and to define the nature of a project on the management of records in the University. This would result in a paper being brought forward to the ISSS in due course for discussion on whether and how such a project might be embarked upon. A costed proposal would be brought

forward to the ISSS in due course. It was thought likely that a senior person with a significant records background would be required. The *Syndicate* noted that the project would include consideration of the archiving of born-digital and digitised records and material.

**Action:** The Registry and The Librarian.

The *Syndicate* further agreed that these Minutes should remain as a point of reference for matters arising for the Syndicate at future meetings, as appropriate.

Item 2. Duties of the Syndicate, Subordinate Syndicates and Committees and  
and *Modus Operandi*  
(*Memorandum by the Chairman*) ISSS Paper **01/08**

3. Introducing his memorandum, *the Chairman* reminded the Syndicate that the IS Group had come to take responsibility for major projects in its role as “guardian” of the University’s Information Strategy; the IT Syndicate had continued with its original role of providing a focus for academic computing and supervising the provision of networked services. However, as the commitment of resources to financing and maintenance of major projects and services had expanded rapidly in recent years, the Planning and Resources Committee felt that it had become important to be able to assess major projects in the context of resource allocation to information systems as a whole, and should not be invited to approve major expenditures piecemeal, without the opportunity to assess priorities.

4. In the light of this, the Council had proposed an amalgamation of the IS Group and IT Syndicate into a single body, charged with taking a strategic view of the investment in information systems generally and to advise accordingly. In view of the weight of work likely to fall upon the shoulders of new Syndicate, suggestions had been made later that the Syndicates could possibly benefit from the support of two sub-committees or sub-Syndicates. However, resolution of the precise terms of reference of these sub-Syndicates had proved difficult to achieve and the Council had accepted the view of the University that the matter of sub-Syndicates should be delegated to the Syndicate itself. This development supported the Chairman’s own view that the Syndicate should be actively involved in information strategy issues and not operate simply as a “rubber stamp”, allowing substantive matters to be decided by sub-Syndicates. Furthermore, since the objective was to shorten the bureaucratic decision process and not to extend it, the establishment of sub-Syndicates should be treated with caution. The Chairman therefore proposed that the formation of sub-Syndicates should be held-in abeyance for at least 6 months pending experience of ISSS operation.

5. The effect of this would be that the existing Project Boards would, for the time being, report directly to the Syndicate, as would those responsible for the operation of the Granta Backbone Network, Telecomms management and aspects of the operations of the

Management Information Services Division (MISD) and the University Computing Service. In parenthesis, it should be noted that the information systems activities of the Library, CARET<sup>1</sup> and the Language Centre were not included in the Syndicate's remit; however, the results of Professor Cliff's review would illuminate further deliberations on the governance of these activities.

6. In order to facilitate the conduct of business, and to provide a sounding board for the introduction of new proposals and information requirements, the *Chairman proposed* that two supporting bodies should be created *viz:* a small *Business Committee*, to be chaired by himself, to operate along the lines of the Business Committee of the Council and an *Information Strategy Working Group* to advise on the early development of new proposals for the consideration of the Syndicate proper. Possibly, a technical working group or sub-committee may be instituted in due course, not least to provide an avenue for comment and the involvement of the community of College and departmental computer officers, at large. (para. 17 of the memorandum refers.)

7. After further questions and discussion the *Syndicate agreed that:*

i) a *Business Committee* (BC) should be constituted, chaired by the Chairman and supported by the Secretary. Mr. Matheson and Dr. Wallach should represent the Syndicate in the first instance. Following the precedent of the Business Committee of the Council, the Business Committee would be empowered to handle minor issues on behalf of the Syndicate (e.g the levying of fines). All papers and minutes would be copied automatically in electronic form to the Syndicate allowing members of the Syndicate to comment or to call in business for discussion by the full Syndicate;

ii) an *Information Strategy Working Group* (ISWG) should be constituted to act as a sounding board for new information requirements and proposals. The *Syndicate agreed that* Mr Norman should be invited to take the Chair. Messrs du Quesnay and Matheson, Professor Nolan, the Directors of MIS and the UCS, and the Librarian were invited to join the Group; the Group would be supported by a Secretary;

Draft Terms of Reference for the BC and ISWG are attached at Annex to these Minutes.

iii) It was *agreed that* the BC and ISWG should be convened as soon as necessary in order to advise the next meeting of the Syndicate (see para. 9 of these Minutes, below)<sup>2</sup> and the ISWG should refine the ISWG TOR and bring a further draft of the TOR to the next meeting of the Syndicate;

**Action:** The Chairman and Mr. Norman

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<sup>1</sup> Centre for Applied Research in Educational Technologies

<sup>2</sup> Secretary's Note: the first meeting of the Business Committee will take place on 13<sup>th</sup> March, 2008.

iv) It was *agreed that* the Directors of the MISD and the UCS should consider the case for creating a *Technical Sub-Committee* and make a recommendation to the next meeting of the Syndicate with, if appropriate, a draft Terms of Reference;

**Action:** Mr. Dampier & Dr. Lewis

v) It was *further agreed that*, for continuity purposes, the Joint Telecommunications Management Committee should be invited to continue in operation pending any alternative arrangements the Syndicate might decide to make. The D/UCS would report;

**Action:** Dr. Lewis

vi) It was *further agreed that* the Director of the UCS should consider the future management of Granta Backbone Data Network report back to the ISSS with a proposal. One of the options that should be assessed is the merger of the GBNMC and the JTMC. The Cambridge Data Network would continue to fall under the supervision of the University Computing Service.

**Action:** Dr. Lewis

vii) It was *further agreed that* the Information Technology Purchasing Group should be invited to continue under chairmanship of Dr. Kearsley, Deputy Director of the UCS.

**Action:** Dr. Lewis

viii) It was *further agreed that* Financial Systems Management Committee (FSMC) should be invited to continue to report to the Finance Committee, as at present, although reports would be copied to the Syndicate and proposals for substantial extra expenditure on the supporting IT infrastructure should be submitted to the ISSS before transmission to the Planning and Resources Committee;

**Action:** Mr. Dampier & Mr. Reid

8. *The Syndicate also agreed the following;*

i) the Syndicate should develop a common approach to the provision of information systems across the University and that an appropriate set of the metrics should be developed to support this objective;

ii) the Syndicate would examine the possibility of constructing a broadly – based financial picture of investment and expenditure on information systems in the University and to prepare a spreadsheet showing the principal lines of expenditure in this area over a 5-year period;

**Action:** *The Business Committee*

iii) all papers and Minutes of the Syndicate will be published on the “Web” save those explicitly Reserved for reasons of confidentiality;

iv) to review the operation of the Syndicate and its supporting sub-structure during *Lent Term 2009*;

9. Finally the *Syndicate noted* the need to ensure that the Syndicate and its subordinate committees should have adequate support, bearing in mind the technical nature of much of the source material.

**Action:** The Chairman and Registry.

### **Dates of Meetings**

*The Syndicate agreed*

- i) to meet *six times per year* and
- ii) to instruct the *Secretariat* to organise meetings in

the *W/b Monday 14<sup>th</sup> April*  
*W/b Monday June 2<sup>nd</sup>*  
*W/b Monday October 7<sup>th</sup>*  
*W/b Monday November 24<sup>th</sup>*

**Action:** The Secretariat

Annex to **Min/ISSS 01/08**University of CambridgeInformation Strategy and Services Syndicate**Proposed TOR & Memberships of the Business Committee  
& Information Strategy Working Group****a.** *Business Committee*

The Business Committee will

- i) to review all forthcoming agenda items;
- ii) ensure that papers are properly prepared and issues are sufficiently examined before presentation to the Syndicate.

*Membership*

The Chair; the Secretary; two Members of the Syndicate.

**b.** *Information Strategy Working Group*

The Information Strategy Working Group will

- i) anticipate future information needs;
- ii) provide a sounding board for new proposals; and
- iii) assist the Business Committee in drawing up papers for formal discussion at the Syndicate proper.

*Membership*

Chair: A Member of the Syndicate;  
 The Director of the Management Information Services Division;  
 The Director of the University Computing Services;  
 The Librarian;  
 Three Members of the Syndicate (one from the Business Committee);  
 The Secretary.