University of Cambridge

Information Strategy and Services Syndicate

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 22 January 2009.

Members present: Professor Young (Chairman); Dr. Carpenter; Mr. Du Quesnay; Mr Fletcher; Mr Fox; Professor Littlewood; Mr. Matheson; Professor Nolan; Mr. Norman; Mr. Richardson; Dr Walker; Sir David Wallace; Dr. Wallach; and Mr. Warbrick.

In attendance: The Directors of Finance, MISD and UCS; Mr. Wilson; and Mrs Stevens for M65.

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

60.   Minutes

The Minutes of the fifth meeting of the ISSS held on 27 November 2008 had been approved by circulation. Members asked that the former arrangements for comment, circulation, approval and publication on the ISSS website be reinstated as soon as possible.

61.   Matters arising and review of action points

Action points arising from the last meeting of the Syndicate, including the annual cycle of business, were circulated as ISSS 80. Since the last meeting, Syndics had been sent (ISSS 77-79):

(a) ISSS comments submitted to the review of teaching and learning support services
(b) The revised annual cycle of business
(c) The list of telephone replacement parallel projects

and the ISSS website now included a revised strategy plan.

The Business Committee would consider Syndics' suggestions that the cycle of business include a timetable for applications to the Technology Development Fund and that a list of TDF allocations and commitments would be helpful.

Action: Secretary

62.   Business Committee minutes

Received: the Minutes of the Business Committee for the meetings held on 3 December 2008 and 9 January 2009 (ISSS 81 & 82).

63.   Appointment of Chairman for the Easter Term 2009

The Chairman reported that the Vice-Chancellor had appointed Professor Littlewood as Chairman for the Easter Term.

64.   Information Strategy Working Group

The Syndicate received the minutes of the meeting of the Information Strategy Working Group held on 18 December 2009 (ISSS 83) and noted (M 3.1) that the Working Group had accepted the revised Information Strategy (circulated to the Syndicate as ISSS 84) having agreed that the various contingencies surrounding data access were now satisfactorily covered.

The Syndicate approved the revised Information Strategy for publication on the ISSS website and that subject to the approval of the Council and General Board it be published as a Notice.

Action: Secretary

The training management systems noted at M 4.2 were examples of potential projects for the Business Committee's list; the CamRIS project (M 6.1) was being redefined.

The Syndicate noted the discussions on internal communications (M 7), and agreed that the issue was wider than the ISWG. Consultation would be needed on standard templates (M 7.1.1 (iii)). The New Media Review (M 8) was being scoped.

65. Research Excellence Framework (REF) Project - start-up

The Syndicate considered paper ISSS 85 and the invitation to agree that the REF project should proceed as set out in that paper.

The Syndicate noted the imperatives on the University from the introduction of the REF, and that funds available within the Academic Division were enabling a pilot project to proceed. No decision by the Syndicate was therefore required at this meeting but approval would be required when the pilot ended in July 2009 before the main project could proceed.

The project would have two components of which the second was the major part: (a) software to compile and maintain a University-wide record of publications and (b) interface to existing databases (CUFS, CAMSIS and CHRIS) to extract and process the data required for REF.

In an extensive discussion, the Syndicate asked that a more complete proposal in line with the Guidelines address the following issues:

- Clarity between pilot and full project.

- The extent to which Symplectic would require customisation, how the University would be involved in its development and whether a locally developed solution might offer better value for money in the longer term.

- Whether interfaces developed during the main project phase could be made sufficiently generic to make them useful for alternative solutions.

- How the project would be governed; who would be the Senior Responsible Officer (SRO), who would be project manager and whether a project board was required.

- More detail was requested on the business processes that would be needed to ensure that the required bibliographic data would be obtained in a timely and efficient manner. There was particular concern about the additional costs that might fall on departments to ensure that publications discovered automatically by the Symplectic system were properly checked and that missing publications were supplied.

- How would departments who already had a central bibliographic database fit into the proposal? (An assurance was given that an interface to the Eprints system in use in Engineering and planned for other institutions in the School of Technology would be provided and work on these should continue.)

- Updated costs, ensuring in particular that the resource needed from MISD to assist in the interface work was properly costed.

- Measurable criteria of success.

Action: RAE/REF Manager; Director MISD

66. CamTools

The Syndicate received an updated paper on CamTools (circulated as ISSS 86) noting that they had already reached a decision on support for 2009-10 from the Technology Development Fund and that no further decisions were currently required.

The Report of the Teaching and Learning Review had been followed by the creation of an Implementation Group which would be considering plans for CARET, in which CamTools would be an element. The Syndicate understood that the Group – which

included the Chairman as a member - would be seeking to clarify in conjunction with the new Librarian how IT support for Teaching and Learning would be managed in the new structure and how CARET would fit into that structure. From this, it was expected that a specific plan for support for CamTools would emerge, hopefully, in time for the next planning round.

67. Records management in the University

The Syndicate was invited to approve expenditure in the current year of £65,000 from the Technology Development Fund for the project described in ISSS 87.

The Syndicate were informed that the project was to fund a consultancy of which one deliverable would be a proposed strategy. The consultants' brief would be developed by Mr Fox's successor as University Librarian, the Registrary and the Keeper of the Archives and considered by the ISWG. Strategy implementation, if it fell within the remit of the ISSS, would be a matter for the Syndicate in due course. The risk was noted that the proposed expenditure could represent the tip of the tip of an iceberg, and it was agreed that the brief would have to make clear that any proposal must be practicable and cost-effective.

The Syndicate recommended expenditure of up to £65,000 from the Technology Development Fund for the survey and analysis of current record keeping and for the deliverables as set out in ISSS 87.

Action: University Librarian

68. Project reports

Received for information: status reports from:

CHRIS (ISSS 88);

CamSIS (ISSS 89);

Telecomms (ISSS 90).

In reply to questions, Syndics were informed that any CHRIS upgrading issues and questions relating to the relationship with the supplier were being managed by the Project Board and that the ISSS would be notified if any of the issues became serious; the CHRIS 'self-service' interface had been trialled in MISD and the initial standard interface provided by the vendor (out of the box) had proved disappointing and would require further work.

Colleges were being consulted about their preferred interface with CamSIS for the use of alumnus records, and the CamSIS Project Board was reviewing user group memberships.

The telephone replacement project was ahead of schedule, and dismantling of the old system had begun.

69. Project Governance Guidelines

Revised Project Governance Guidelines had been circulated as ISSS 91. Two further amendments clarifying the method of establishment of Project Boards and of the roles of subsidiary committees were tabled and approved. The Guidelines would be circulated and published on the ISSS website.

Action: Secretary

The Syndicate noted that further discussion with the Registrary about the establishment of the Project Office required a job description which the Director of MISD had undertaken to prepare for the next meeting of the Syndicate.

Action: Director, MISD.

70. Guidelines for bulk external e-mail

A note was attached for information as ISSS 92

71. Service reports

Received: reports from the following:

MISD: ISSS 93

UCS: ISSS 94

72. Joint Network Management Committee

Received: the minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2008 (ISSS 96).

73. Meeting dates

To note the schedule of meetings in 2009

ISSS	19 March 2009	2.15pm	Syndicate Room
ISSS	21st May 2009	2.15pm	Syndicate Room
ISSS	9 July 2009	2.15pm	Syndicate Room

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