



Information Services NEWS



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November 2008

This printed version of IS News contains only a few full news items with a number of brief introductory passages to others that may be found in their entirety in the on-line version. Past issues and other recent news items and articles that are not contained in this printed version may also be seen there.

Vista Now Available on Public Desktop

Microsoft Windows Vista has been installed on all of our 550 computers in student workstation labs and centrally-timetabled teaching rooms across campus. The new-look desktop seems to have gone down well, with positive feedback from staff and students. Information Services is also replacing 80 ageing Citrix machines (mainly situated in the libraries) with brand-new computers running Vista. This will greatly improve the desktop provision in the Hugh Owen, Thomas Parry, Physical Sciences and Old College libraries.



Windows Vista™

As usual we'd welcome feedback on these developments. Please contact Tim Davies, Desktop Systems Manager (tim.davies@aber.ac.uk)

Spear Phishing

Over the past few months, Aberystwyth University has been subject to regular "Spear Phishing" attacks. As you may know, "Phishing" involves sending people e-mail which tries to fool them into divulging personal details (credit card numbers, bank details etc) which are then abused for criminal purposes. Spear Phishing is a relatively new variant which targets users at specific organisations with very realistic requests.

The attacks on Aberystwyth University have followed the same pattern as those on most other institutions within the UK (and indeed the US) academic community. E-mails are sent claiming that you need to re-register your account details (password, account name, date of birth) by replying to the mail, and warning of dire consequences if you don't. Those people who've fallen for this have invariably had their e-mail account compromised and used for sending further Phishing e-mails to other institutions, along with spam. Needless to say, abuse of your account in this way can do terrible damage to your reputation and cause you to receive a lot of hate mail!

Aberystwyth University staff will never ask you to divulge your password via e-mail or verbally.

Alun Jones, Systems Support Team Leader
(auj@aber.ac.uk)

National Student Survey

Aberystwyth University (AU) has again done extremely well in the National Student Survey, recording an overall satisfaction rate of 90%, the highest in Wales, and in the top dozen general universities across the UK as a whole. Two questions in the survey relate specifically to Information Services – one asks students to agree or not with the statement 'the library resources and services are good enough for my needs', and another, 'I have been able to access general IT resources when I needed to'. In respect of library provision, the Wales average was 79% satisfaction (respondents who 'definitely' or 'mostly' agreed with the statement) and the AU score was 85%. On the IT side the Wales average was 89% and the AU score was 93%. These two scores are amongst the highest recorded in Aberystwyth for the 20 or so questions asked.

Dr Mike Hopkins, Director of Information Services
(mhh@aber.ac.uk)

Access and Authentication

As of 1st August, we have discontinued the use of the Athens system for accessing and authenticating our electronic resources.

The preferred method, to enable easier access, is to use a VPN connection. Alternatively, many resources can now be accessed via a new authentication system, variously referred to as e.g. 'UK Access Management Federation', 'Shibboleth', 'Institutional login'; for this, you will continue to use your AU login and password.

More details regarding this change and an easy install button for VPN can be found at:
<http://www.inf.aber.ac.uk/elecinfo/access.asp>

Julie Ainsley, Library Resources Manager
(ujh@aber.ac.uk)

Blackboard – the users' view

I teach four Part II modules on early Welsh poetry, poems of the twelfth- and thirteenth-century royal courts, and women and medieval literature before c.1500. Part I modules include an introduction to linguistics (from dialectology and work on place-names to the discovery of the Indo-European family of languages). I first heard about the regenerative powers of BlackBoard from a shuffling professor in the United States, well-on in his sixties and hardly noted for his technical expertise. So when Bb arrived in Aberystwyth I thought I could probably get by. After thirty years on the job, I wanted to refresh my courses with more than just new material. I formatted units to include simple skeleton outlines on the one hand, but also more advanced treatments of topics taking things a good way beyond what our groups could do in lectures and classes. This seems to have worked well across the whole ability range. And students who have learned Welsh report that they find it reassuring to be able to check their lecture notes against fuller and more literary versions; some claim to be reading far more than they would do otherwise. Part of the beauty of the BlackBoard matrix is that it can accommodate so much extra material for those who want it. It can signpost paths to reliable sites, linking straight to the digitised Red Book of Hergest in the Bodley Library, or the Llanbadarn Psalter in Trinity College Dublin, and to any number of medieval treasures in the National Library of Wales. In Part I, BlackBoard provides links to the Welsh Language Board documents, to the latest census figures, to David Crystal in Holyhead and the cult phonetician John Wells in UCL. The BBC Voices project is a great resource for audio clips, and we have also built up several years' worth of class archives relating to place- and field-names in Wales.

Blackboard is extremely easy to use and organize and archive. I like the tracking facility to see who's looking at what. An important feature of Blackboard is its platform facility for the Heron document service. For each of the Part II modules, nine or ten key journal articles are uploaded: about half of these are chosen with an eye to the essay assignment, and the others are required reading for group discussions. Costs are met from the departmental IS allocation. The occasional non-UK item has proved to be too expensive to process, but otherwise there have been no problems and the IS staff (Rhiannon Owen and Siân Saunders especially) have been very helpful — even when I have been (very) late in making my requests. Three weeks is the usual time required.

Prof. Marged Haycock, Department of Welsh
(mah@aber.ac.uk)

Tweek replacement

During AY 2008-09, Information Services will be implementing new systems to replace Tweek: QuestionMark Perception (QMP) for online assessment, and Student Attendance Monitoring System (SAMS) for Tweek Attendance. We aim to complete the move by semester 1 exams in 2009-10 and then turn off the Tweek system during the summer of 2010.

QuestionMark Perception is a leading online assessment system which is used in a number of HE institutions across the UK, as well as internationally. It is capable of delivering both summative and formative assessment and has a wide-range of question types including multiple choice, multiple selection, drag-and-drop and essay questions. QMP can also be used to deliver surveys.

Once QMP has been installed, staff from the E-learning Team will be providing training and support for departments already using online assessment. Following a successful deployment of QMP with these staff, the Team will be providing training and awareness-raising sessions for other staff interested in using online assessment.

Tweek attendance is to be replaced by an in-house

development, Student Attendance Monitoring System (SAMS). SAMS has been developed by the Management Information Systems division of Information Services. Currently in pilot testing with two departments, we intend to make the system available for general testing and familiarisation during semester 2 AY2008-09, and then roll it out fully for AY2009-10. If you have any questions about either QMP or SAMS, please contact the E-learning Team on: is-alto@aber.ac.uk

Kate Wright, E-Learning Development Officer
(kaw@aber.ac.uk)

New Student Induction

For the first time, we opened the Hugh Owen Library for the weekend before Student Induction for new students to activate their computer accounts and pick up their library cards. We also provided help on connecting to Halls networks and solving any other computing problems encountered by our users. Over the weekend more than 1000 students collected their library cards, over 1800 computer accounts were activated and hundreds of students were given assistance with connecting to their halls network. This was a great opportunity to gauge the popularity of opening Hugh Owen Library for the weekend before Student Induction and will help IS develop services for next year's intake.



Nia Ellis, Customer Services Manager
(nrj@aber.ac.uk)

New Wireless Service for Short-term Visitors

Usually when a department has a visitor or guest for a while it is convenient to register them as a user of the full AU computer and library facilities. We have however been aware for some time that this takes an amount of departmental form-signing and a delay in setting up, so we have now introduced a simpler service where you have a visitor for only a short period, who only wants the sort of basic access you now get in coffee bars and hotels.

We have set up a feed from an outside Internet Service Provider that is available via all the wireless points on all the AU campuses. To use the service the person concerned needs to have their own laptop and then just to visit any Information Services Help Desk with it and fill in a short form. The laptop is set up while they wait to be able to use this campus wireless service for the duration of their stay. The department needs to do nothing themselves.

We hope departments find this service useful. It is not intended to replace full network and library access where this is most suitable, but to give an added service where none existed before.

Jeremy Perkins, Assistant Director, Central IT Services
(jwp@aber.ac.uk)

Alternative Inductions for Coleg Ceredigion students

Information Services provides a library facility to the Aberystwyth campus of Coleg Ceredigion. The College students and staff have access to a wide range of materials in the Thomas Parry Library, as well as access to other Aberystwyth University Libraries.

Every year library inductions are offered during the College's induction week for all students. The challenge is to engage the students that range in age from 16 years upwards.

An alternative idea for September 2008 saw the introduction of the interactive quiz. The use of the University voting handsets allowed a brief talk to the students followed by multiple choice questions and an opportunity to discuss the answers. The students enjoyed using the handsets and the ability to 'vote' for their correct answer.

The second part of the library induction would normally have been a tour of the Thomas Parry Library. As an alternative, a 10 minute subject specific quiz had been designed for each group. This involved the students locating key items, some of which involved searching the library catalogue to locate journals, reference material, books and newspapers all relating to their subject. Once the correct items were located a 'famous name' would be revealed and then recorded by the students. A few minutes were spent at the end of the session evaluating the answers and filling in any knowledge gaps.

This 'alternative tour' proved more enjoyable and interactive than the original tour format and allowed the students to discover the library for themselves in a more relaxed and interactive environment.

If you want to explore this and other ideas for introducing library and information skills to AU students, please contact: Lillian Stevenson, Academic Services Manager, Hugh Owen Library, lis@aber.ac.uk

Anita Saycell, Subject Support and E-Library Team
(aiv@aber.ac.uk)

Public Printing & Photocopying

In the summer of 2007 we replaced all the our public printers and photocopiers with combined multi-functional devices or MFDs. With a year's experience we can say that this move has been a great success. Users find it much more convenient now that they can go to any printer at any time and swipe in their library card to get their output, and the wider availability of colour has been appreciated. Coin collection boxes that take both notes and coins have been a great help.

On the Green front, the opportunity was taken to make duplex (double-sided) printing the default and this taken together with no need for an identifying banner page any more has reduced paper consumption markedly. We had hoped for a saving of half-a-million sheets a year, and in the event this has turned out to be about three-quarters-of-a-million – a very satisfactory 33%.

Jeremy Perkins, Assistant Director, Central IT Services
(jwp@aber.ac.uk)



Revised Library Opening Hours

We will be introducing some small changes to library opening hours from the start of the 2008/9 session. Students often express a desire for longer weekend opening hours in our annual User Survey, and in response to these requests we will be keeping Hugh Owen Library open to 2130 on Fridays, and it will be open from 1000-1800 on Saturdays and Sundays during term time.

Unfortunately, evening usage of Thomas Parry Library on Llanbadarn campus has fallen markedly since the local halls were closed, and as a result we will be closing in future at 1900 from Monday to Thursday and at 1730 on Friday. We will be providing duplicate copies of core student texts relating to subjects taught on Llanbadarn campus in the Short Loan Collection in Hugh Owen Library to mitigate the effects of these reduced hours, and users also have access to our increasing range of electronic resources from any networked terminal.

Bill Hines, Assistant Director, Library Services Division
(whh@aber.ac.uk)

Welsh Journals Online

As a part of their National Library of Wales roadshow to publicise the launch of Welsh Journals Online in March 2009, we have arranged for them to demonstrate the resource to members of staff and research postgraduates in the Hugh Owen Committee Room between 2.00pm and 3.00pm on Monday 12 January 2009. To book for the session see: www.inf.aber.ac.uk/courses/newstaff.asp. For more details on the Welsh Journal Online Project See: <http://www.llgc.org.uk/index.php?id=2244>

SMS Texting Service Available to Departments

A number of universities now use mobile phone texting to contact students. JANET, the organisation that provides Higher Education with Internet connection, is now offering a txt service to universities for this purpose. On behalf of AU, Information Services are subscribing to this on a trial basis, and we have set up a Web page to allow members of staff to send secure SMS messages. This allows, for example, individual student user IDs or whole course modules to be contacted.

Possible uses could be contacting all members of a course if a seminar is being cancelled, or contacting a student who is otherwise difficult to get hold of. It should however be viewed as a secondary way to get hold of people quickly - email remains the official way to contact students, and they have a responsibility to check their University email regularly.

Information Services have funded the start-up cost of the service but individual message costs will have to be met by departments. The system has been set up so that only members of staff sanctioned by their department can use it.

Anyone who would like further information can contact me.

Jeremy Perkins, Assistant Director, Central IT Services
(jwp@aber.ac.uk) ext 2479



e-Library

Coming soon is the new metasearch engine powered by MetaLib known as eLibrary. eLibrary allows cross searching of multiple electronic resources simultaneously in one user interface and returns the results in a de-duplicated list in the same interface, making searching several electronic resources quick and efficient.

Easy and integrated access to Electronic journals is also available within eLibrary. The 'find e-journal' tab takes you to an A to Z list of e-journals and includes a link resolver taking you seamlessly from a reference to an article in one database, and if we have a subscription, to the full text of that article in another database. This replaces the JoEy A to Z list, is available now and can be located at:

<http://www.aber.ac.uk/is/ejournals/>

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Starts with Contains

Echo360 Lecture Capture System

Information services in collaboration with Admissions and Recruitment Office and The Centre for the Development of Staff and Academic Practice have recently purchased Echo360 lecture capture system.

A pilot study has been started which is looking at the best methods of using Echo360 considering pedagogy, resource and financial issues as well as monitoring HE trends in this area.

Aimed mainly at video capture of lectures and presentations it has other uses which the pilot will investigate.

Further details of Echo360 can be found here <http://www.echo360.com/> or contact Nigel Thomas on Int@aber.ac.uk

Web 2.0 tools in Blackboard

Campus Pack Web 2.0 tools have been added to Blackboard to allow staff and students to use blogs, Wikis and podcasts in their learning and teaching. The new tools are Journal LX (for blogs), Teams LX (for Wikis) and Podcast LX, and can be used in any Blackboard module. Training materials are available on the ALTO Web site: http://alto.aber.ac.uk/en/bb/helpsheets/2008_update.php

To support the new tools, the new Web 2.0 Series running through the CDSAP Continuing Professional Development Programme focuses on good practice in teaching with the Campus Pack products. Sessions running in the series include Podcasting for Learning Extended Beyond Lectures, Blogs for Active Learning, and Wikis for Collective Knowledge Building. These courses can be booked through CDSAP: https://secure.mis.aber.ac.uk/staffdev/sd/list_courses.php

If you have any queries or would like to find out more about the new Web 2.0 tools, please contact the Blackboard Team – bb-team@aber.ac.uk

Kate Wright (kaw@aber.ac.uk)

Apple Mac Support

Information Services has recently decided to provide support for Apple Mac computer systems.

In keeping with its approach to providing a professional service, Desktop Services Technical Support Team currently has two technicians studying the Apple Care Technician Training course which will lead to Apple Mac Certification. When qualified we will be able to carry out repairs of all Apple Mac systems owned by

the University. Until then we will support out of warranty Apple Macs on a best endeavours basis.

For further details contact Nigel Thomas, Technical Support Team Leader (Int@aber.ac.uk)

Large Format Printing

Media & Printing now has a new Canon iPF8100, 12 colour pigment 44" wide large format printer.

We now can print up to A0, ideal for banners and posters, with the option of borderless printing.

Designed specifically to give the finest results for Fine Art and Photography applications, Canon's incredible 12-colour LUCIA pigment ink system produces the full spectrum of colours with unnerving accuracy.

Black and white photography work has never looked so good. A combination of black, matt black, grey and photo grey inks allow for incredibly smooth graduation without graininess for incredibly lifelike photography.

We carry 3 different types of media: Matt coated paper, Photographic paper and Canvas.

For further details contact: is-printing@aber.ac.uk

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