



Director's message

This is the first of an occasional series of updates for staff on developments across the wide range of services provided by ILS (Information and Library Services). Our aim is to continuously improve our services and facilities in the light of feedback and best practice across the sector.

This update is printed on recycled paper and is also available on the website.

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On the move

Over the summer the ILS executive and administration, together with Web Services, OSCARS and the Learning Services Development & Quality Manager, moved to the first floor of Queen Mary Court. Staff are welcome to come to the new ILS reception in room 145 to see us.

These moves have enabled ILS to increase and improve the study space and facilities for students within the Dreadnought Library and make space for Bibliographical Services, which manages the acquisition and cataloguing of all new stock. New

provision includes the creation of a bookable group study room in room 160 for students to work on group assignments and practice their presentation skills, a quiet zone for laptop use, and more locations for silent workstation clusters away from teaching and circulation areas.

Education stock has moved to Avery Hill with PCET, and we have been able to bring back "in-demand" Humanities & Social Sciences stock from store to open access in Dreadnought.

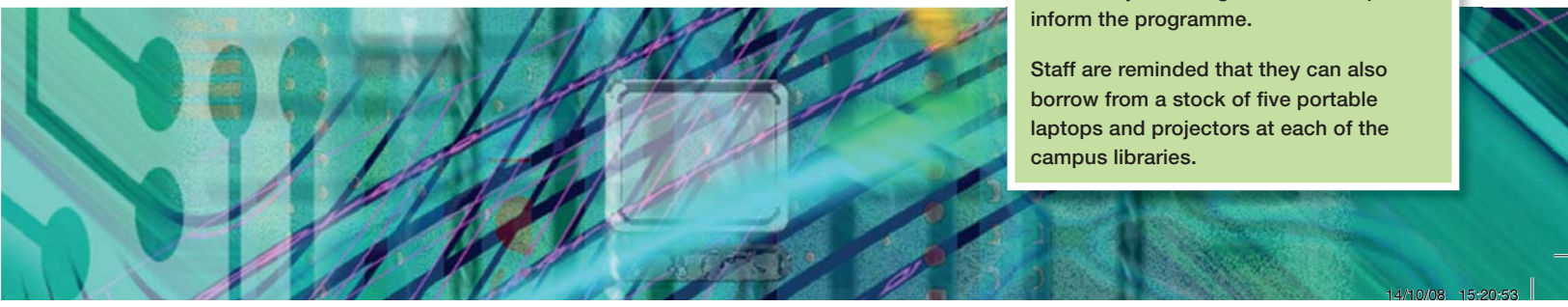
The video conferencing suite in Dreadnought has relocated to room 019 and is bookable via the ILS Administration Office on x8190 or 8770.

Better classrooms

Over the summer we have installed new equipment at all sites, including new switching control units in four lecture rooms at Greenwich (rooms 180 and 280 in Queen Anne Court, and rooms 002 and 302 in King William Court). At Avery Hill we have significantly upgraded three rooms in Grey Building (rooms 105, 106 and 107) and completely refurbished three rooms in Mansion Main Building (rooms 131, 132 and 133). At Medway we have installed new equipment in the Wardroom and new data projectors within the redecorated and equipped IT suite in Nelson Building. All teaching rooms in Jellicoe Building now have control panels for ease of use.

We wish to ensure that there is a uniformly excellent and flexible range of teaching facilities and meeting rooms across the whole estate and are working on a transformation project to achieve this over the next two years. Any staff wishing to nominate a particular room for urgent attention should e-mail Julie Collins at j.collins@gre.ac.uk to help to inform the programme.

Staff are reminded that they can also borrow from a stock of five portable laptops and projectors at each of the campus libraries.





ILS responds to student surveys

Sunday opening

A demand for longer opening hours for libraries and student IT labs was highlighted by the recent national and University of Greenwich student satisfaction surveys. Last year we provided Sunday opening as a standard service in the Drill Hall Library. We also piloted Sunday opening at Avery Hill and Greenwich for a 12-week period in the lead-up to the summer examinations. Take-up was encouraging and we had some excellent feedback from students.

This year libraries on all campuses will be open throughout the weekend during term time. The hours are 11am to 5pm on both Saturday and Sunday. This includes access to the IT facilities within Dreadnought and the mezzanine floor of the Avery Hill library. We urge all academic staff to remind and encourage students to take full advantage of these facilities.

Noise reduction

Student complaints about noise have been addressed at the Drill Hall Library by extending the silent study zone and relocating the law material into this area. An ongoing programme of zoning is also taking place within the Dreadnought Library when opportunities occur (see "On the move", page 1).

On the shelves – more and faster

The demand for more books comes up in every survey. In the wake of a "value for money" study on its libraries in 2005, the university has significantly increased book budgets. The university's corporate plan includes a new performance indicator for spend on library materials which is aligned to national benchmark data. We are now spending 35 per cent more on new books than we did in 2004–05 and putting 39 per cent more books a year into stock. We have also started to acquire a range of e-books. Readers can access these around-the-clock, of particular importance for our heavily used texts.

We have continued to work with our suppliers to improve book delivery times; last year 57 per cent of all orders were on the shelves within 10 days of order, 82 per cent within 15 days and 93 per cent within 20 days.

Online reading lists – more needed

Students want their reading lists to be easily accessible and linked to the online catalogue and their course information. We have introduced a new reading list icon next to the relevant course reference in the "My Courses" channel on the portal. Students can now simply click on this to go direct to their reading list, assuming one has been set up for that particular course.

Currently, however, we only have online reading lists for approximately 1 in 5 of the some 5,000 live courses. We urge all programme leaders and course tutors to check their courses and update their academic services librarian, who will ensure that the correct list is available. We have made it easier for staff to submit reading lists for checking. You can input your lists directly on to the reading list form available from the "Library and IT" tab of the portal. We also accept Word documents.

The co-operation of academic staff will improve the accessibility of key information for students and help the library to purchase the required books. Please remember to indicate to students and us which books they are expected to buy – we cannot purchase enough copies of essential texts to supply each and every student.

Better student IT

In response to student comments, we have steadily improved the number and quality of student PCs across the university. We now provide 1,198 student PCs and a further 874 are available through Schools. No ILS student PC is more than three years old. This year, for the first time, open-access networked PCs will be available in the student cafés in the Dome at Avery Hill and in Pembroke Building at Medway.

The most recent machines have large flat screens (19" or bigger), take up less bench space, produce less heat and use less power. Additional high-speed laser printers have also been purchased for every campus. Large format plotters are available at Avery Hill and Medway and a photo-processing kiosk is available at Avery Hill.

Student and staff IT accounts and passwords

Problems with both staff and student IT accounts and passwords are the single largest source of complaints and problems for most IT departments. We have been working hard over the past year on a number of interrelated projects to design out the most common problems. This year we are introducing a new self-service system for assigning accounts to "affiliates" of the University. Affiliates include partner college staff, associate and visiting lecturers and conference delegates. This will allow Schools and Offices to verify the affiliate online and trigger automatic account set-up.

We have also been working closely with Student Affairs to improve the business process for assigning new student accounts as part of the online registration process. As a result, a significant number of first-year students who completed registration prior to induction were able to access services immediately (see "Online registration for new students", page 4).

In October we will also be introducing a self-service password re-set facility for users who have forgotten their password.

Specialist teaching facilities

The TV studio at Avery Hill has been completely refurbished, including redecoration and a new green screen, lighting rig and video edit workstations. The majority of funding for this has been provided to support the film courses run by Computing & Mathematical Sciences, who have pre-booked sessions in the studio. However, other Schools are welcome to book the studio outside these times. Contact Garry Bodenham, x9437, for further details.



Staff IT

New staff training suites

We have installed new PCs in the small IT-equipped staff training suites at Avery Hill (located at the far end of the student computing suite on the first floor of Fry Building) and at Greenwich in room 158, Queen Mary Court. These will help to support the growing range of IT-related training activities for small groups of staff, including e-learning initiatives.

Office 2007

Microsoft Office 2007 is replacing Office 2003 this year. Office 2007 has been on student desktops since the beginning of the academic session, and staff will transfer to it in a managed phased programme as agreed with each area. Each School and Office has identified a number of key individuals who have been given early training over the summer and who will assist in determining the roll-out schedule. Self-service guides are available via the "Staff Training" tab on the portal.

Office 2007 provides a number of new useful features and is now the standard version provided for new machines. This is also a good time to make the switch as Microsoft is withdrawing active support for Office 2003. We have installed converters so users should be able to deal with documents in either version. To order Office 2007 for your home machine, e-mail helpdesk@gre.ac.uk for the "MS Work at Home" order form.

Outlook for staff

Following the roll-out of Office 2007, we will be introducing Outlook as the common university-wide e-mail system. This will replace the various systems currently in use and provide a range of new features.

Benefits include:

- ◆ a better user interface;
- ◆ better security (compliance issues, backups, reliability);
- ◆ better productivity (through shared calendars and files, ease of sending attachments);
- ◆ easier off-site working (web access, ease of integration with handheld devices);

- ◆ compatibility with future trends (unified messaging, e.g. faxing directly to the desktop, desktop video conferencing).

Implementation will be phased using the approach we have adopted for Office 2007. Training will be via advertised courses, the portal "Staff Development" tab, and online. Staff will be advised not to transfer existing mail to the new system. We will maintain access to your stored e-mail for a period of time, after which it should either be archived or deleted.

For further information on e-mail management and associated guidance, see the Records Management Good Practice Notes, Note 14. These can be accessed at www.gre.ac.uk/offices/rmo/introduction.

Webmail

The current webmail system used by staff and students has been upgraded to enable self-service out-of-office messages and forwarding to a personal e-mail address. As staff transfer to Outlook they will no longer require webmail. We are also beginning to look for a replacement for student webmail.

Improved wireless access

We are continuing to improve wireless access to the university data network across the estate. Honeycombe Building at Avery Hill now has full wireless access, which is particularly important for the teaching in this building. The rolling programme to increase coverage will continue, with the focus on student common areas.

Campus	Current wireless access
Avery Hill (M) enabled	More than 90% wireless
Avery Hill (S)	David Fussey and Mary Seacole Buildings, the Dome and Sparrows Farm wireless enabled
Greenwich	50% wireless enabled
Medway	More than 90% of buildings, including the new Pembroke café, wireless enabled.

The introduction of further access points at Greenwich depends upon the outcome of discussions with English Heritage. New signage is to be introduced this term to indicate if there is a local access "hotspot" near you.

Eduroam for worldwide access

We subscribe to the national and international "eduroam" service. This enables a visitor from another participating university to link to their own university's systems from our network using their normal user name and password. It also enables our own staff to access the Greenwich network from other participating universities. We know from feedback that some staff are using this, but many are not. Go to the "Accessing Wi-Fi" channel on the "Library and IT" tab of the portal for further information.

Increased storage

For some time the availability of sufficient secure central storage for staff and students has been a problem, but no more! ICT has invested in 120 terabytes (TB) of storage for each campus, with high-speed data lines linking the sites and ensuring reliability and ease of access for users. This investment is allowing us to significantly increase the size of individual e-mail and storage areas.

Corporate Information Systems has also implemented a new 22TB storage area network that brings together the database storage of the majority of corporate systems (including Banner, payroll, WebCT and the portal). The advantages of these two developments are numerous: less complexity, better resilience, industry standard backup practice, extensibility for adding new systems and increased allocation for existing systems.

By bringing together the storage in this way we will now be able to take advantage of the increase in bandwidth in the Wide Area Network to implement a "fail-over" environment at Medway. This will enable us to continue to operate its key business systems in the event of a disaster at Greenwich.

High-speed networks

We have upgraded the speed, security and resilience of the university's data network. New routers with new switches at every site have enabled us to upgrade the backbone to 10GB (previously 1GB) and supply 1GB to the desktop (previously 10MB). This increased capacity is in response to the growing use of e-learning, large research data sets and video conferencing.

In addition, we have installed a separate high-speed connection for research needs – one of only six universities in the London area to be allocated this facility. Behind the scenes we are now able to use real-time visual indicators of our traffic flows to engineer better performance.

CIS projects

Corporate Information Systems (CIS) continues to work closely with Schools and Offices on a variety of development projects. Below are a few examples of projects going live in 2008–09.

Online registration for new students

Working with Student Affairs, we have further developed the existing online system for registering continuing students so that it can work with new students. New students can now complete the majority of their registration online before they come on to campus to complete their final identity checks. This includes uploading their photos for their ID card. By the end of the second week in September some 2,599 first-year students (a third) had completed online registration and 873 of these had completed the whole process. This is a considerable achievement and should considerably reduce queues and release staff time to deal with more complex queries.

New student ID card

In response to student comments, new and continuing student are being issued with new-style ID cards when they register. These are durable plastic and replace the previous laminated cards. Most of the work for this was done by Student Affairs, with CIS ensuring that the systems support the new processes.

Students are first issued with temporary cards so they can complete the registration process and access the library while their cards are being printed. The new card can be used to store printing and photocopying credits for use in the campus libraries.

Paperless admissions project

We are working on a new system to enable the admissions process to be managed fully online. This project, which is led by Steve Wallis, is a collaboration between CIS, Student Affairs, Recruitment & Admissions and Schools. The first phase is due to go live in November. The online application system, supported by document management and workflow processes, should avoid the need for printed forms to be posted around the university and speed up responses to applicants.

Enrolment management project

CIS is working with Development & Communications, alongside Recruitment & Admissions, Student Affairs and an external supplier, on a system to better manage the enquiry, recruitment and marketing processes for potential applicants. The system will incorporate a customer relationship management facility that will track all communications with an individual and help to ensure that they receive information relevant to them. Prospective students will also be able to register on our website and interact online with the university at a personal level. The first part of this multiphase project goes live in October.

Portal

Recent developments

- ◆ The login page has been redesigned, enabling users to more easily locate the information they have indicated they want. Staff and student groups were used to test a number of possible versions.
- ◆ The layout on the “Home” tab has been reorganised to give more prominence to university news.
- ◆ A “What’s On” channel is due to go live in October. This will enable staff to promote School events to staff and students alongside corporate events.
- ◆ A “Classified Ads” channel will be available to allow staff to publicise items that they want to sell or give away.
- ◆ Google Scholar has been added to the search options in the “Google Search” channel.
- ◆ The “My Learning” tab has been renamed “My Students” in the staff layout of the portal. This better reflects the role of the tab to provide staff with access to the information and services that they need to manage their interactions with students.

Ongoing developments

- ◆ A new channel with the working title of “Academic Conduct” is being developed. This will point staff and students to the resources related to university policies on, for example, plagiarism.
- ◆ A new “Research and Enterprise” tab is being designed. This will provide users with better access to information in this area.
- ◆ A new version of the portal is scheduled to be introduced in the first quarter of 2009. This will enable all staff to access Outlook for e-mail and their calendar and will introduce a number of new channels (including a new search channel). The new version will also support a self-service facility for Schools and Offices to put up highly targeted announcements to selected groups of students.



E-learning

A number of local e-learning projects funded through the recent “Dragons’ Den” initiative and the former e-learning and student enhancement funds have started to become university-wide services.

Plagiarism and Turnitin

Schools are now able to use Turnitin, an Internet-based plagiarism-detection service, via WebCT. Staff can submit assignments to the service more easily, and, where course leaders have set up an assignment in Turnitin, students can check their work for possible plagiarism before their final submission. The technology also enables individual Schools to decide whether they wish to make the facility available to students to check their work.

The adoption of Turnitin via WebCT follows a project led by Richard Jones in CMS which examined the use of Turnitin to combat plagiarism. His report examined different approaches to the use of the tool across the sector.

WebCT – new flexibility

It is now possible to set up a teaching package on WebCT that is available to a

wider group of students than those taking a prescribed course or unit. Packages could cover, for example, entire programmes, year cohorts or School-level courses. The progression information study skills initiative piloted in Humanities & Social Sciences two years ago, and now more generally available, highlighted the need for this development.

E-portfolio trials

Year-long trials of the e-portfolio products provided by WebCT and PebblePad begin this month. These trials will help to decide which product the university will adopt.

Student experience of e-learning

The first year of the Student Experience of E-Learning Laboratory Project, led by Malcolm Ryan, has been successfully completed. This follows the award of funding from the Higher Education Academy last year.

A range of reports on the project are available to the wider community through the research section of the university website at www.gre.ac.uk/research/seel. The large-scale survey of Greenwich students’ experience of e-learning has produced a series of fascinating snapshots of how our students use ICT in their learning

Podcasting

Staff from across the university working on various podcasting projects came together in June to share their experiences. A number of recommendations will be discussed at the university E-learning Implementation Group in October, and a meeting has been held with Apple to look at the potential for using iTunes as a dissemination platform.

E-staff

Nadine Edwards has taken up the post of e-librarian, based in the Dreadnought Library. This is a new position (created from a vacancy) which reflects the increasing use of e-resources in learning and teaching, as well as the implications of this for our systems and services, and the growth of use of social networking tools by students and staff. We are also recruiting to the new post of e-technologist. Initially funded for two years, this position will co-ordinate the technical aspects of a growing range of new e-learning tools that are to be adopted by the university.

Getting greener

We are pursuing a number of initiatives as our contribution to the sustainability policy of the university. We have introduced automatic shutdown systems for our IT labs so that computers are not left on overnight. These include smart “wake-up” systems that give security updates in the early hours of the morning, and then go back to sleep again, before “waking up” at the start of the day.

Our current specifications for new machines include reduced power consumption and less heat output. Our new contracts require suppliers to unpack deliveries of PCs, so they can remove the packaging for efficient recycling, and take away old machines for disposal. This saves us staff time and space.

Following very successful trials at the University Centre Folkestone, we have fully embraced virtualisation technology. This allows fewer and more powerful servers to be shared between applications and reduces power consumption. All applications will be transferred to this new environment during the coming year.



Successful JISC bid to improve systems for flexible and part-time study

The University of Greenwich has won £400,000 from the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) to carry out a project to improve systems to support more flexible and part-time study. This is part of the JISC Programme for Institutional Approaches to Curriculum Design. JISC was looking for projects that could use technology to transform learning opportunities and address a challenge of strategic importance to the institution and the sector. Fifty-five universities submitted bids and we were one of only 12 successful universities.

The preparation of the bid was co-ordinated by the Director of ILS and Head of CIS. Staff from Schools and Offices across the university contributed, using the "Group" facilities within the portal to work collaboratively and at some speed. Funding will be spread over three and a half years and will enable the university to employ a project manager, a business analyst and a developer. The project will also require significant input from staff at all levels across the university.

The project will identify the inhibiting factors that get in the way of truly flexible curriculum delivery. We expect this to include curriculum design, quality assurance, process and administrative system issues. School-based pilots will inform the development of any new systems that are needed. The project sponsor is the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning & Quality), Margaret Noble.

Future plans

While 2007–08 was busy, we are not stopping there! Our plans include a new Service Desk, which will help us to manage better our extensive range of help and support services to staff and students. We want to extend the hours across which these are available. We will be working closely with academic staff to improve the availability of reading list material and stock in those areas where student feedback tells us there are problems. We will continue to build our e-resources and technical assistance to support learning and teaching. We will also be working closely across both Learning Services and Corporate Information Systems to develop new services and systems to support the research and enterprise agenda of the university, including the development of a digital repository for research publications.

A major priority is to improve communications with our users at every level using a variety of methods. ILS Update is part of that initiative. Please let us know what you think.

Training and staff development

Staff from ILS contribute to the University Staff and Educational Development Programme on a regular basis. We also run specific sessions for groups of staff from Schools and Offices. Topics include:

- ◆ the use of the portal and WebCT – contact Web Services
- ◆ digital scanning and associated copyright issues – contact Ann Murphy, Learning Services
- ◆ free online resources that support learning and teaching – contact your local academic services librarian.

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