Welcome to IT Services

IT Services would like to welcome all new students and staff as well as welcoming back all those returning for the new academic year.

As usual over the summer vacation we have been at work on making a number of changes and introducing new facilities, all of which will enhance and improve the services we offer to members of the University.

Lapsafe
A service whereby 20 Chromebook laptops are available for loan to students in the Library 24/7 has just been introduced for the Autumn.

The Chromebook laptops are fast, simple laptops designed to be used on the web and ideal for reading and research. Students can use their Library card to borrow these laptops from an automated locker system for up to six hours. The lockers are located just around the corner from the ITS help point in the Library (see photo above).

sussex.ac.uk/its/services/clusterrooms/chromebooks

E-submission
The new e-submission and e-feedback project enhances the assessment process for first year students from the start of the 2014-15 academic year. Online submission frees up resources, speeds up feedback, reduces costs to students and allows focus on more face-to-face contact at busy periods when assessment deadlines approach.

Students will be able to submit suitable text-based assessments directly in to Study direct. The assessment will be submitted to Turnitin where their work will be automatically checked by the Turnitin text-matching service. Turnitin GradeMark will be used to mark and provide enriched feedback using inline and general comments. Students will then be able to access the marks and feedback online.

The plan is to implement this project in stages, to learn from the experience and keep improving the service as its scope is widened.

New HR system
The first phase of a new Human Resources and Payroll system - ResourceLink Aurora (RLA) – was introduced in August. The system has a self-service web portal (MyView) that University staff can use to view payslips and amend address and contact details.

Improvements to wi-fi
Following the installation of new access points in some campus locations in May, the new model of wi-fi base station was been rolled out across campus replacing all older models and allowing for greater coverage, higher speed and higher capacity.

Sussex Mobile
Sussex Mobile, the university’s smartphone app, had an Induction timetable added for Freshers Week 2014. Further modules will be introduced in the near future including one for Sussexsport and one which will allow students to search for a free study space.
Student desktop 2014-15

All IT Services computers in open access and General Teaching Space cluster rooms plus seminar rooms and lecture theatres were cleaned, refreshed and updated with the new Student desktop.

This desktop includes the following new applications:

- Microsoft Office 2013 (replaces Office 2010)
- Wordsmith
- OpenRefine
- ACD Labs ChemSketch
- Adobe DNG Converter
- PollEverywhere
- Corel Education Suite

Microsoft Office 2013 includes a new feature allowing students to open and edit PDFs, a facility that is often requested.

All software has been transferred to a new licence server so that the old XP based server can be decommissioned. Software packages available through Exceed on Demand, Linux and the Software Centre have been set to the same version across these platforms.

Working with images

If you need to edit, create or manipulate images as part of your work, there are a number of software packages installed on both student and staff IT Services computers which will help you do so. Which one you use depends upon your requirements and whether you want to use Raster Graphics (images based on pixels) or Vector Graphics (images based on geometrical shapes).

Corel Education Suite

Recently added to IT Services PCs, Corel Education Suite contains a number of different components:

- CorelDRAW X7: a vector-based illustration and page-layout application.
- Corel PHOTO-PAINT X7: a raster-based image editing application.
- Corel CAPTURE: a utility that allows you to capture images from your computer screen.
- Corel Painter: a raster-based digital art application created to simulate as accurately as possible the appearance and behavior of traditional media associated with drawing and painting.
- Corel Paintshop Pro: Raster-based graphics editor.

Corel Education Suite is available on all student PCs and for self-installation via the Software Centre on staff PCs.

Adobe Master Collection

Considered by many as the industry standard, Adobe Master Collection is a powerful suite of software for creative use of which image editing and production is just one facet. Image related components include:

- Photoshop CS6 Extended: Raster-based graphics editor plus many advanced features.
- Illustrator CS6: Vector graphics editor.
- Fireworks CS6: Raster and vector graphics editor with a focus on design for the web.

Adobe Master Collection is available on all student PCs and Macs. Staff who wish to use Adobe Master Collection or one of its individual programs as a significant part of their role can purchase a separate licence with a departmental cost code.

Paint.NET

Paint.NET is a freeware raster-based graphics editor for Windows with support for layers, blending, transparency, and plugins.

Paint.NET is available on all student PCs and for self-installation via the Software Centre on staff PCs.

Available free for your own PC from getpaint.net.

GIMP

GIMP (GNU Image Manipulation Program) is an open source raster-based graphics editor including tools for image retouching and editing, free-form drawing, resizing, cropping, photo-montages and converting between different image formats, and more specialised tasks.

GIMP is compatible with Windows, Mac and Linux and is available for self-installation via the Software Centre on staff PCs.

Available free for your own computer from gimp.org.
New devices
This year over 5,000 new students arrived on campus on the weekend of 13 and 14 September with the result that thousands of new computers and mobile devices joined the Sussex networks in a busy couple of days for IT Services.

Staff were available in Shawcross and Kings Road to help new arrivals but the majority of students were able to get online themselves using the How to connect guides delivered throughout campus residences.

A considerable amount of planning went into preparing the networks and services for the expected increase in numbers of new devices and the redesigned setup systems were able to handle the sudden spike in activity relatively comfortably.

As expected, there was a significant growth in the volume of new devices in the first two days with 5,797 computers and mobiles joining the network over the weekend compared to 2,766 devices connecting during the same period in 2013.

There has also been a substantial change in the type of computers going online. Nearly half of the new devices were phones or tablets compared to only a quarter in 2013.

The number of new devices being registered continued to grow after arrivals weekend and by the end of the second week over 12,500 had been registered.

Office 2013 for academic staff
Microsoft Office 2013 is now available on Academic Staff PCs. Academic Staff who wish to upgrade to this new version of Office on their University PCs may do so themselves by following the instructions online at:

sussex.ac.uk/its/help/faq2682

Microsoft Visio and Project may also be installed.

To find out what’s new in an Office product open the application, click on the Help button and choose What’s New.

Braille embosser
The University has recently purchased a braille embosser to assist blind students with the production of reading materials in braille. Word documents can be loaded and converted before being produced on braille paper.

The embosser is located in the Library and is currently being tested, after which a number of key staff will be trained in its use. Whilst conversion to braille will not be offered as a service, it is hoped that those who require it will be able to produce their own braille with the assistance of their support workers.

Microsoft Student Advantage
Microsoft recently launched the Student Advantage scheme to provide students using Windows PCs with a free subscription of Office 365 ProPlus to use on their own computer for the duration of their course.

Office 2011 for Mac is also available under this scheme.

This opportunity will be available to Sussex students from December 2014. For further information please see:

sussex.ac.uk/its/studentsadvantage

Clickers
The Technology Enhanced Learning team offer comprehensive advice to staff at Sussex on Polling and Response systems for use in teaching:

sussex.ac.uk/tel/learningtechnologies/prs

Staff can choose to use mobile response systems or hand held TurningPoint ‘clickers’ which can be borrowed, free of charge, from the IT Service Desk in Shawcross.

Requests need to be submitted in advance by emailing voting-clickers@sussex.ac.uk and should include details of the day and number of units required.

For help and advice on the use of ‘clickers’ please contact the Technology Enhanced Learning team.
Staff news
Since the last newsletter there have been a number of staffing changes.

We said farewell to Stuart Keir and Gill Powell who retired in June, to Rob Brownsell who left in June to take up a post at American Express and to Chris Limb who left in November to work freelance.

In June Tom Stanton joined the Client Support team as Service Desk Adviser, Jim Turner joined the Desktop Systems team as Computer Officer - Packaging and Ian Sanders joined the Business Applications team as Business Applications Developer.

In August Chandra Sharma started work in the Business Applications team and Garry Legate joined the Project Delivery team as a Project Manager.

At the beginning of October Mike Buckingham joined the Telephony team and Nicole Ingerson joined the Project Delivery team as a Project Manager. Also in October Bernie Broughton (IT support for GDSC) joined IT Services and Adrian Chorlton joined Client Services as Training Manager.

Webdrive
WebDrive is a software package for which the University of Sussex has an “unlimited use” site licence. This means that you can install it on your personal computer whilst you are a member of the University. Software download and licence codes are available online at: sussex.ac.uk/its/services/software/owncomputer/webdrive

WebDrive is a tool for remotely accessing your files (for example files on your university N:drive) by making it available as any other drive, thus avoiding the more long winded procedure of having to upload and download using FTP.

Configuration instructions are available online at: sussex.ac.uk/its/helpdesk/faq1561

Staff and researchers with University PCs can use WebDrive to connect to Dropbox files more easily. Once connected, your Dropbox account will be available like other drives on the PC.

Instructions are available online at: sussex.ac.uk/its/help/guide?id=160

Paul’s news
It’s certainly been a very busy summer for IT Services. We updated and upgraded some of our infrastructure including wi-fi. A lot of work also took place on the new electronic submission and feedback project, which has gone very well – I want to thank the team for the effort they put into that.

Clearing was very successful again and the feedback we received was very positive. Some very sound planning paid dividends in the service we were able to deliver for Welcome Weekend and Induction – I was very pleased with that too.

With all this work (a lot of which goes on invisibly in the background) people have returned for the new academic year with no major issues and an improved level of service.

With regard to organisation I’ve been deliberately taking my time to review and assess how IT Services are set up and I have been working with the management team to set targets and an agenda for the future. The next step is to promote the services we provide to all students and staff in a way that allows them to recognise the value of the services we provide, and that we understand their needs so they know that we are there to support them.

We will shortly conduct interviews for the Head of IT Service Delivery which will allow us to bring the team back up to full strength after an extended period. I have appreciated Sandy Radford’s work and all of her input while she has been standing in – she’s done a great job.

I’m completing some reviews of strategic principles and objectives with the Vice-Chancellor’s Group to help shape the future. More details of this work will be shared soon.

Paul Davies, Director of IT Services