

# IT Services annual highlights report 2010-2011

## 1. Research

IT Services has worked in partnership with the Research Office and the Library to replace the Publications Database, and integrate publication management, the institutional research repository and Personal Research Profile (PRP) on-line system into a seamless whole: LUPIN

(Loughborough University Publications Information) is now being rolled out to Schools, will empower academic staff to view, manage and track their own outputs, citations, etc., and will enhance the global visibility of Loughborough Research in the run up to REF 2014.



Authorised publications	Approved	Pending	Export
Books	Add new book	5	0
Chapters	Add new chapter	0	1
Conferences	Add new conference	0	0
Journal articles	Add new journal article	1	1
Patents	Add new patent	0	0
Reports	Add new report	0	0
Software	Add new software	0	0
Others		0	0
All		2	2

The University's flagship High Performance Computing (HPC) facility, hydra, has been upgraded to around 2000 CPU cores, including new Graphical Processing Unit (GPU) nodes potentially catering better for image processing applications. We have seen steady increase in use across the full academic spectrum, with some research areas (e.g. aeronautical and manufacturing engineering) now making markedly higher use of the central service.



## 2. Learning and Teaching

Type the word 'learn' into Google, and you will see Loughborough's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), built on the Moodle platform, right at the top of the list of 3.6 million search results. As many UK Universities follow our lead, and play catch-up by abandoning their former VLE platforms for Moodle, we continue our own advance, by enhancing our 'minimum presence' policy with wide academic support. We believe we are clearly 'ahead of the competition' as we move into the new higher education marketplace.



The creation of the 'FlexPage' system within Learn has helped areas such as WEDC and the School of Business & Economics (in association with the Health Protection Agency and the Department of Health) improve provision of on-line distance learning modules, for short courses and other niche areas. FlexPage allows creation of courses on Learn that look and feel just like 'normal' small Web sites, meaning that branding can be applied, and non-traditional students unfamiliar with the VLE paradigm immediately feel at home. It is expected this system will be extended to MBA students during 2012.



Building on the success of our 'triple boot student labs' in Haslegrave level 0 (working closely with the School of Science), we have commissioned a new high quality 24x7 PC teaching and open access facility for East Park, housed in the flagship Design School building.



### 3. Student Experience

The 'my.Lboro' student portal went fully live at the start of the academic year. Student usage currently stands at 3,000 users per day, and is growing fast. The Portal provides a single, personalised, convenient path through to the full range of academic, administrative and social systems and information a student needs, including Learn. A version that runs on a range of mobile phones will launch shortly.



Following clear student feedback, we have increased the number of Wi-Fi hotspots on campus to over 1100. This has also benefitted ad-hoc collaboration, mobility and the experience of academic visitors and those using imago facilities. A further 1000 hotspots will become operational during the next academic year, as part of the i2012 infrastructure project (see below).

### 4. Enterprise

It is now widely accepted that University assets such as halls of residence should be used to generate useful additional income (e.g. via conference hosting), provided this does not undermine core University mission and values.



A popular student portal is a University asset, albeit virtual, just as much as a hall of residence is a physical asset. Following full discussion with the student body, and other stakeholders, the University has agreed to support the piloting of targeted, appropriate advertising via the student portal landing page. We are working with Ji-Wire, a commercial partner with global expertise in 'captive portal advertising', to try to create a genuinely new UK channel for promotion to students for which advertisers will pay a premium.

### 5. Value for money

A rigorous tender process with full School input has led to our selection of Ricoh as our supplier of multi-function devices (MFDs). The following areas have now moved over to our MFD fleet service (plus Central Print Unit for print jobs over 100 pages), giving up all personal printers if they had not previously done so: Hazlerigg Building, Facilities Management, IT Services, Library, imago Ltd., Rutland Building, and Design School. Design is the first School wholly to embrace the MFD service, and we will look to build consensus for further use in academic areas. 20 new Ricoh MFDs have been commissioned for the student print service, in Library, PC labs, and student halls. A planned review of pricing this year will give the opportunity to merge staff and student services, and deliver further economies of scale.



A separate major tender process has led to the selection of HP as our supplier of desktop and laptop hardware, in line with University Desktop Policy. We are looking to improve service quality and break-fix times by introducing an on-site engineer.



The Online Store completed its first full year of trading, turning over £200K from 31,000 customers. While most trade is generated from UK, USA and China, customers from as far afield as Venezuela, the Cook Islands and Papua New Guinea prove that the Store really can indeed be accessed 'any time, any place, anywhere.' Improved on-line student pre-registration and re-registration has led to recurrent savings of around £20K being realised within admin areas



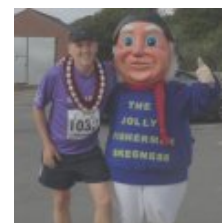
## 6. Central Timetabling and iTrent

The new CMIS timetabling system has successfully passed its first major milestone, with this semester's scheduled teaching having got underway smoothly. Personalised timetables have been generated for all staff, with programme-level timetables available for students. The project team is now working on options for exam scheduling, laboratories and small group teaching. Wider benefits of work will include higher room utilisation and clearer data for new Key Information Sets (KIS).

The new iTrent HR and payroll system has also gone through a smooth commissioning. Enhanced self-service functions around on-line recruitment, holiday booking etc. are now being built up, and will lead to further administrative savings.

## 7. Corporate and Social Responsibility

IT Services staff are supported in their efforts to play a role in the wider community, and many preform charity, environmental, council or school governor roles. There has been one stand-out effort over the last year that merits special mention. Richard Bebbington, ITS colleague and Mayor of Ashby is, at the time of writing, half way through his 'one marathon a month' challenge, raising money for 'Wishes 4 Kids'. Richard has attracted wide media coverage, including TV and a mention on the Chris Evans Radio 2 breakfast show. For more information please visit [www.12marathons.info](http://www.12marathons.info)



## 8. Infrastructure – the i2012 project

Like the model Victorian child, a good IT infrastructure should be 'seen but not heard'. As a result it is difficult to do it justice in a report of this nature. The i2012 infrastructure project represents a major, multi-million pound investment to see the University through 2016 and beyond. A robust new network and telephony platform is providing a foundation for a host of new services, such as security and building management, in addition to supporting research and teaching data needs. The upgrade of our JANET connection to 10GB maintains our position in the very top echelon of research universities in that regard. Our 'mini-pod' data centre has avoided £Ms building costs and will make a significant carbon savings contribution. Our innovative 'hybrid cloud' approach mitigates risks associated with cloud IT services, and is attracting wide attention in the HE sector and beyond. Our new Windows 7 desktop service is providing a stable, flexible platform for academics and support staff, on or off campus.

