

JISC Digest is a regular quarterly bulletin designed to provide an update on the latest JISC activities, news and policy developments.

1. Updates

1.1 JISC's updated Strategy

Innovation, integration, sustainability and working in partnership continue to be the cornerstones of JISC's strategy, published in March, part of a longer term ambition to support the enhancement of the UK's competitiveness and the contribution of HE and FE to society and the economy.

The strategy specifies a range of priority activities which JISC will be undertaking with partners in the coming years. These include: the continued development of the UK's e-infrastructure; the development of a freely available content layer of academic and scholarly resources; the support of the research community through e-science, the semantic grid and virtual research environments; encouraging the further use and take-up of e-resources; the support of the management, business and administrative processes of institutions; further exploration of the benefits of e-learning and its contribution to widening participation, and an investigation into the ICT skills and expertise capacity within institutions.

To read the JISC Strategy 2007-2009, please go to:
www.jisc.ac.uk/strategy0709

1.2. Capital programme

Over 80 projects, totalling more than £15m worth of funding, were successful in the latest calls under JISC's capital programme. The projects are being funded under e-learning, repositories and preservation, e-infrastructure, users and innovation and e-research strands of the overarching programme, which represents an investment of some £90m over three years. The call for proposals was issued in September of last year, the second of three under the programme.

The heaviest investment in the current round of funding is being made in support of the establishment and development of institutional repositories. Nearly £5m is being awarded to more than 40 projects, including start up and enhancement projects, preservation activities, projects to create software, metadata, retrieval and text-mining tools, and projects building national infrastructure services.

The current round of funding follows the award of £5.5m

last September and a range of other activities under the overarching capital programme, including: SuperJANET5, the upgrade to the JANET network (£27.6m); enhancements to the national e-infrastructure, including enhancements in the areas of access management, the National Grid Service and text mining (£3.6m); the establishment of 'The Depot', a repository which can host research outputs should institutions not have a repository in which to deposit (£0.5m – see 2.4), and collaborative activities with the Higher Education Academy in the area of e-learning (£2m). In addition, a further £12m was awarded to 16 new digitisation projects in January.

A third call for proposals was issued in April and focuses on e-learning, repositories and preservation and semantic services for e-infrastructure, alongside a cross-programme call to support institutional strategies. The calls will total £5.3m worth of funding for development across higher and further education in England and Wales.

Interested bidders are invited to attend a Briefing Day (previously known as Town Meetings) to learn about the calls, at Jury's Inn, Birmingham on 9 May. For further information, please go to:

www.jisc.ac.uk/events/2007/05/event_capital_apr07briefing

For details about all the newly-funded projects, please go to:
www.jisc.ac.uk/capital

1.3. e-Content Alliance

With a newly-appointed team in place (see *Digest* issue 4), the e-Content Alliance has begun its work to develop a framework to support the provision of public sector e-content in the UK. Its partners include JISC, the BBC, the NHS, the British Library, MLA (Museums, Libraries and Archives Council), the e-Science core programme and Becta. Its stated vision is 'to work across the public sector to fully realise the potential of e-content for all users through the greater integration of services and technologies and the removal of political and administrative barriers.'

Building on the work of the Common Information Environment (CIE), the Alliance has begun its work in various activity areas, including: e-content audience analysis; the development of policy and procedures; the creation of an audit and register; the promotion of standards and good practice; advocacy and dissemination; the development of business models and sustainability strategies, amongst others.

For further information, please go to:

www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/themes/eresources/sea

2. News

2.1. EThOSnet – transitioning to a national e-theses service

JISC and CURL (Consortium of Research Libraries), with the support of participating libraries, are funding a two-year project, called EThOSnet, to widen access to electronic theses. The project will lead to a full e-theses service, run by the British Library, which will make UK theses openly available for global use, providing an international showcase for some of the best of UK research.

The project builds on earlier exploratory work, also funded by JISC and CURL, which between 2004 and 2006 developed a prototype for the service. Independent evaluation has since given the prototype strong backing and suggested further developments, while a recent consultation resulted in expressions of interest from over 70 HE institutions to participate in the emerging e-theses service.

For further information, please go to:

www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/programmes/programme_rep_pres/ethosnet_announcement_mar07

2.2. JISC and UCAS sign partnership agreement

JISC and UCAS (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service) have signed an agreement which will help exploit the potential of ICT to support admissions procedures to higher education and research.

The agreement means the setting up of various projects which will inform future developments and provide evidence of best practice from other sectors. Current projects include a scoping study on how the methods used by employers in providing feedback to unsuccessful job applicants could be translated into feedback for university applicants and the development of e-portfolios which allow users to build a record of achievement and personal development goals.

For further information, please go to:

www.jisc.ac.uk/aboutus/partnerships/ucas

2.3. JISC and Research Councils strengthen cooperation

JISC and the Research Councils have signed an agreement that will strengthen cooperation and ensure that the research community has access to improved services, such as increased network bandwidth. The move will also ensure that thousands of scientists in Research Council Institutes will have the same access to JISC services as their university-based counterparts.

JISC and the Research Councils already cooperate closely across a wide range of areas, including e-infrastructure, e-Science, the National Grid Service, data curation and access to research outputs. The new agreement cements the existing relationship, but provides formal representation of the Research Councils on the JISC Board and its networking and research committees.

Among the new areas of cooperation covered by the agreement will be support for the network bandwidth needs of the Research Councils. In addition, JISC will now provide the Research Councils with access to all its non-chargeable

services, subject to further agreement, while a dedicated relationship manager to be based within the JISC Executive will provide a point of contact to help ensure that the Research Councils continue to receive the services they require.

The agreement was signed by JISC and Research Councils UK (RCUK), the strategic partnership of the Research Councils.

2.4. The Depot – ‘a keepsafe repository’

The general strategy being adopted in the UK is that every university should develop and establish its own institutional repository (IR), as part of a comprehensive ‘JISC Repository Net’. Many researchers can already make use of the IRs set up in their institution, but that is not yet the case for all. A key purpose for The Depot is to bridge that gap during the period before all have such provision, and to provide a deposit facility that will enable all UK researchers to expose their publications to readers under terms of Open Access.

The Depot will also have a re-direct function to link researchers to the appropriate home pages of their own institutional repositories. The end result should be more content in repositories, making it easier for researchers and policy makers to have peer-reviewed research results exposed to wider readership under Open Access.

The Depot will act as a ‘keepsafe’ until a repository of choice becomes available for deposited scholarly content. In this way, The Depot will avoid competing with extant and emerging IRs while bridging gaps in the overall repository landscape and encouraging more open access deposits.

For further information, please go to:

<http://depot.edina.ac.uk/>

2.5. JISC and the Higher Education Academy

The Academy/JISC partnership is supporting a collaborative initiative, ultimately aiming to improve sector use of ICT in learning and teaching, in active support of HEFCE’s ten year e-learning strategy. The initiative involves JISC Services, Academy Subject Centres, units and project teams, together with members from the executive bodies of the partners.

Building on a successful history of working in partnership, this initiative will focus upon improving access to the wealth of resources and support available from both the Academy and JISC, whilst seeking to enhance partner responsiveness to sectoral needs.

For further information, please go to:

www.jisc.ac.uk/aboutus/partnerships/he_academy

2.6. e-Books Observatory

JISC is calling on the publishers of e-books to help develop an e-book observatory which for the first time will gather much-needed evidence on the use of a greatly under-used but potentially enormously important resource.

JISC’s call to publishers invites proposals for making a critical mass of e-books available for a period of two years in order to analyse in depth the use of those resources in key subject areas. Funding to publishers will mitigate the risk of revenue loss caused by the possible impact on print sales. In return JISC is to fund a deep-log analysis study to discover the precise ways in which the core e-books made available by publishers are used.

For the invitation to tender and further information on the national e-books observatory project, please go to:

www.jiscebooksproject.org

2.7. Digitisation of Parliamentary papers

A project which has applied 21st Century technology to the digitisation of rare and delicate 18th Century parliamentary papers was launched on 23 March at an event at the House of Commons.

The 18th Century Parliamentary Papers project, funded by JISC and led by the University of Southampton, makes openly available for the first time a complete run of all the parliamentary papers, bills and journals of the eighteenth century.

The project is the latest stage in the BOPCRIS (British Official Publications Collaborative Reader Information Service) project to digitise British Official Publications over the period 1688-1995.

For further information, please go to:

www.bopcris.ac.uk

2.8 The Users and Innovation programme

The Users and Innovation programme's 'Community of Practice' has been launched. A brand new concept in programme development for JISC, the Community, which runs in its first phase from now until October 2007, will be integral to the further development of the programme, with the Community's ideas and findings leading directly into future calls.

Over 150 individuals across more than 50 institutions are involved in the Community; UK HEIs form the lead institutions but this number includes a wide degree of international interest with institutions such as the University of Prince Edward Island, University of Southern Queensland, University of Brisbane, University of Western Australia, and University of Auckland.

For further information, please go to:

www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/programmes/programme_users_and_innovation

3. Reports

3.1. Freedom of Information

Higher Education institutions are providing information openly and freely under a raft of information governance legislation, a survey published in March has shown.

The survey, carried out between January and February, reflects HEIs' responses during 2006 to requests for information under the Freedom of Information Act, the Data Protection Act, and the Environmental Information Regulations. The survey was conducted by JISC, in association with Universities UK and GuildHE, and builds on information gathered in 2005.

Key findings include:

- Institutions received an average of approximately three requests a month, a level similar to that in 2005
- The overwhelming majority of requests were answered in full within 20 working days and without a fee being levied

- Journalists still account for nearly half the number of requests where the identity of the requestor is known
- University management, administration and finance are the most requested areas, in line with 2005 findings
- 59% of FOI requests took more than ten days to complete

For further information, please go to:

www.jiscinfonet.ac.uk/foi-survey/2006/results

3.2. Open source software – questions of sustainability

With open source software increasingly being seen as a viable and desirable option across education, strategic funders need to know how best to direct limited resources. Questions of sustainability are key to this, says a report commissioned by JISC's Learning and Teaching committee (JLT) through its Distributed e-Learning programme.

The study brings together seven case histories of successful open source development projects, from big inter-institutional projects that involve a variety of stakeholders and funding bodies, to small developments with no formal funding structures.

For further information, please go to:

www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/programmes/programme_edistributed

3.3. IPR in student work

A new report by JISC Legal explores the intellectual property rights (IPR) issues associated with student created work in UK higher and further education. Initial research showed that the majority of UK HEIs have relevant policies, but many of these lack detail in dealing with the variety of situations which may arise. The research showed no evidence of relevant policies within the FE sector as yet.

Increased IPR awareness may assist in raising levels of compliance in the institution, the report suggests, and may encourage thinking about better opportunities afforded by good use of intellectual property.

The report is available at:

www.jisclegal.ac.uk/publications/studentipr.htm

3.4. Forthcoming reports from the JISC IPR consultancy

Rightscom have been commissioned to produce a research study on the applicability of a range of creative commons style licences to the requirements of UK further and higher education. This research will inform JISC's work in the future.

The consultancy is also producing a report on the IPR issues around Web 2.0/social software which presents interesting challenges for IPR and the associated proprietary framework in which they operate.

The IPR Consultancy is also completing a report on IPR and Derived Data (i.e. data that already exists which is used to do something new).

4. International

4.1 Multi-national licensing

The Knowledge Exchange – an umbrella organisation of four national ICT bodies – has begun a multinational tender

process to explore with publishers the possibility of cross-border licensing arrangements.

With national licensing agreements for online resources well established in the four countries – the UK, Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands – the aim of the initiative is to explore whether further economies of scale can be secured and new and innovative business models developed through an international approach.

The proposal was published under European Union competition rules as a 'Request for Information' which invites publishers to submit initial proposals concerning possible business models. Following this stage, representatives of the four organisations – JISC, Denmark's Electronic Research Library (DEFF), the German Research Foundation (DFG) and the SURF Foundation in the Netherlands – will meet with chosen publishers to develop proposals further.

For further information, please go to:

www.knowledge-exchange.info/Default.aspx?ID=97

4.2. EU petition on open access

More than 500 delegates from nearly 50 countries attended a major European Commission conference in February to discuss the future of scientific publishing in the European Research Area. Held in Brussels, the conference attracted researchers, publishers, policy makers, research funders, librarians and administrators drawn to debate the issues of open access of research outputs, dissemination of research and preservation in the digital age.

Opening the two-day conference, the EU Commissioner for Science and Research Janez Potocnik stressed the importance of raising the profile and standing of European research and of having a European science infrastructure to drive forward innovation and competitiveness. Earlier the Commissioner had received a petition, sponsored by JISC and European partners, which was signed by more than 20,000 individuals and nearly 750 organisations, indicating the level of public support for the principle of open access.

The event was closed by Viviane Reading, EU Commissioner for Information Society and Media, who announced that scientific publishing will be one of the highlights of the upcoming Portuguese presidency of the European Commission.

5. Other

5.1. JISC Conference

JISC's annual conference took place on 13 March at the ICC in Birmingham, attracting more than 600 delegates. Keynote presentations were given by: Professor Sir Ron Cooke who outlined JISC's achievements over the last year, including the launch of the UK Access Management Federation, the launch of JISC Collections as a mutual trading company and the launch of SuperJANET5; Professor David Eastwood, CEO of HEFCE who talked of new student approaches to learning which had changed ways of accessing and using information, suggesting that 'investment in information resources should be at the top of priority lists for universities'; and Tom Loosemore, project director of BBC2.0, who spoke of the BBC's online plans and the principles governing its ongoing development.

For further information about these and other presentations

given during the day, please go to:

www.jisc.ac.uk/events/2007/03/event_conf_0307

5.2. JISC/British Library/DPC e-Journals event

The uncertainty surrounding long-term access to scholarly journals is a major issue for libraries, publishers and other cultural organisations. Not only does it bring into question continuing access to a vital scholarly resource but it is also seen as a major barrier preventing libraries from moving to electronic-only subscriptions.

A major event held on 27 March at the British Library attracted an international audience to discuss the issue of e-journal archiving and preservation, to look at key initiatives in the field and to explore ways forward.

For the full report, please go to:

www.jisc.ac.uk/news/ories/2007/03/news_ejournals

5.3. Next generation environments conference

More than 100 invited delegates gathered at Aston University on 27 April to hear how emerging technologies are set to transform the ways in which learning, teaching and research are undertaken.

The conference, organised by JISC's Users and Innovation programme, looked at the impact of the new participatory technologies – known as 'Web 2.0' – as well as some of the challenges faced by institutions in harnessing these and other new technologies in the classroom and beyond.

For a report on the event, please go to:

www.jisc.ac.uk/news/stories/2007/04/news_nextgen

5.4. JISC sponsors ICT Award

JISC is sponsoring an award this year which will showcase the most innovative and potentially far-reaching ICT initiatives across the UK. The award, one of the Times Higher's Awards 2007, will 'recognise and reward an institutional ICT initiative which has demonstrated an innovative and strategic use of ICT in support of the goals of that institution.'

The award, for which all higher education institutions, teams or departments in the UK are eligible, is now open for entries until 29 June. The award will be presented at an event on 29 November.

For further information on the Outstanding ICT Initiative of the Year Award, and to enter, please go to:

www.thes.co.uk/Awards/2007/

www.jisc.ac.uk/THESAwards

The items included in this digest are selective.

A more comprehensive view of JISC's activities is available from other regular JISC publications, including the monthly JISC Headlines.

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