

Information Systems Planning Group
10:00am, 26 October 2007
Lord Clerk Register's Room, General Register House

Present: Dave Brownlee (chair); David Brown; Keith Dargie; Rob Mildren; Jenny Cutts (secretary).

Apologies: Grayham Mount

1. Staffing issues

It was reported that Aileen Gardiner, Applications Developer, had begun work on 24th October 2007. It was noted that Gordon Dickson, B1, will join the Digital Access Team on 29 October 2007 and a full induction has been prepared by his line manager. The vacant A2 posts have been awarded to two successful candidates and interviews are in progress to fill vacant A3 posts. The Assessment Centre for the B1 Digital Information Unit Services Manager is being held on 26 October 2007. Grayham Mount is involved in this Assessment Centre and therefore not in attendance at the meeting.

2. Progress reports

2.1 IT Infrastructure and Web & Applications Development Team

2.1.1 Keith Dargie reported on the forthcoming inter building communications links upgrade, which will be made free of charge by THUS to acknowledge business issues raised by Keith with this supplier previously. An onsite survey has taken place and a cable structure agreed. The upgrade will be from 2-8 megabytes with an additional 2 megabytes set aside for any future upgrade of the NAS telephony system. The new and existing networks will run in parallel until testing is complete and a managed switch over is arranged. Work will commence from November 2007.

2.1.2 Upgraded Internet connections and printer facilities are also part of a package of scheduled enhancements to the NASnet infrastructure. The new printers and their capabilities were described. Each desktop printer will be quicker, more environmentally friendly and will be able to perform duplex printing. In addition, four multifunctional network printers will be also be installed in January 2008 for shared use by staff (2 printers will be deployed in GRH, with 1 each in TTH and WRH respectively).

2.1.3 USB management software will be deployed that will allow ICTB staff to remotely enable/disable USB ports for the PCs used by search room customers (following a request to the Helpdesk). Software to ensure all computers are shut off after hours is undergoing final testing as part of the NAS commitment to improve its efficient use of energy

2.1.4 The remote checking of key ICT systems by ICTB Infrastructure team volunteers continues to prove successful and is making an important contribution to the availability of NASnet IT services. Since its introduction in June 2007, there has been only two instances of loss of service, both of which were significantly minimised by the early morning check procedures. One of these occurrences was unfortunate as

a server froze at around 7:40am, only 30 minutes or so after the ICT Infrastructure team member had carried out the early morning checks.. There was positive feedback regarding the availability of NASnet services at the recent ICT user forum held on 10th October 2007. It was noted that new mobile phones will be provided ICTB Infrastructure support staff that will further assist with the support of the IT systems. All early mornings 'incidents' are logged to facilitate problem management and statistical analysis.

2.1.5 It was noted that Keith's request for staff to housekeep their personal U:\ drives had resulted in the release of around 100 gigabytes (44% of available space). Any members of staff yet to respond to this request will be contacted directly.

2.1.6 It was reported that two print file servers will be implemented (in each of the buildings) instead of one as is the case currently, providing enhanced capacity and fail over provision.

2.1.7 In the past, causes of early morning network disruption were attributed to Internet proxy server overload. The proxy server software will therefore be upgraded to the latest version, again with two servers being made available to improve capacity and failover capability. It was noted however that 100% availability during core business hours has been attained over the last few weeks. Keith explained that this upgrade of the Internet proxy server was one of the first NASnet enhancements that will benefit from the work already implemented by the ICT Infrastructure team for the SFHS IT infrastructure, with Keith's eventual aim to standardise and align the system across both networks.

2.1.8 It was noted that remote access to NASnet would be extended to allow NASnet users to remotely manage their passwords and provide access to the U:, G: and O: drives.

2.1.9 It was reported that the ICT Infrastructure team had completed the implementation of the SFHS infrastructure on schedule. GROS have, however, not finished producing the SFHS applications yet and development difficulties remain.. Further work will be required once the applications are available for installation.. Keith is producing a Work Schedule that will detail all remaining SFHS work tasks through to completion, including the outstanding GROS applications development tasks, and will liaise directly with the Executive Board on this matter.

2.1.10 It was explained that the NAS Helpdesk will also deliver similar services to the SFHS. Dave Brownlee stated that a demonstration will be provided to tour guides in November in order to publicise the SFHS to the tourist industry. The robustness of the SFHS applications was discussed. It was noted that it was essential that the SFHS applications were robust and did not require disproportionate levels of support. It was also clarified that the project continues to be named the Scottish Family History Service (SFHS) Project but that ScotlandsPeople is the brand name. The centre will be known as the ScotlandsPeople Centre once opened.

2.1.11 Keith explained that the ICT User Forum held on 10th October 2007 had proved to be an extremely useful meeting with a range of issues and topics discussed. There was also a good level of participation from the branch representatives, with all branches represented.. It was noted that the branch ICT Business Activity Reviews

would commence from 29th October 2007 facilitating discussion of ICT strategies and issues, which would complement the User Forum, ISPG and Corporate Planning processes

2.1.12 Development work towards the Register of Tartans is now at the initial analysis stage. It was clarified that it would take the form of an electronic web-based register. Keith has organised a stakeholders requirements analysis workshop at the end of November 2007 to further gather and define requirements. It was also noted that Alison Diamond will begin work in developing expertise in the registration of tartans from January 2008. She has been briefed and invited to attend the next steering group in preparation for this role.

2.1.13 Keith explained that a meeting had been scheduled with Microsoft Research Division concerning collaborative opportunities with NAS and recognition of NAS as a 'centre of excellence' in terms of its IT Infrastructure. Other areas of potential collaboration includes data preservation, storage and e-delivery. Keith will also be collaborating with Dell regarding investigating the introduction of a large scale data storage solution to NASnet. A paper will be presented to the ISPG in due course.

2.1.14 It was reported that Rob Mildren and Keith Dargie are ensuring that project management principles are instilled into the Joint Telephony Services (JTS) project being undertaken in collaboration with GROS, which will help to ensure that NAS interests and requirements are being considered effectively with any new shared service. It was noted that no progress by GROS has been made since February 2007.

2.1.15 It was explained that the Managing Our Digital Records project manager, James McCormack had proposed withdrawal of the NAS G: drive by the end of 2007. Attendees noted that the G: drive provides a useful sharing mechanism between branches and its withdrawal could necessitate emailing documents to colleagues instead. Keith asserted that proper transition arrangements must be in place to minimise requests for restoring files and documents 'lost' during changeover.

2.2 Online Resources Team

2.2.1 Rob Mildren reported that website feedback week held 6-10 November 2006 was very useful, for instance with regard to the current redevelopment of the OPAC. It was noted that a meeting of the SCAN Participating Archives was planned to discuss the future development of the SCAN website and whether SCAN information might best be transferred to the NAS website, the Scottish Council on Archives website or continue to operate as a gateway for documents held across Scotland.

2.2.2 It was reported that Chris Dunne was actively developing a browser based replacement to the Virtual Volumes system in order to provide volume level access to Church records. Facilities to provide equivalent Virtual Volumes capabilities have been identified. It was explained that the images may already be accessed via the browser based system but that further work to provide navigation tools is ongoing. Rob Mildren added that this application will be available on all NASnet desktops as well as in the search rooms so all NAS staff may access it from their desks.

2.2.3 The VR project is currently at the procurement stage. It was reported that frustration at this lengthy process had been discussed at the Branch Heads meeting on 23 October 2007. Much curatorial and technical preparation has been delivered and the EU procurement process timetable will leave little time for the work to actually be undertaken. A smaller volume of data will be contributed to ScotlandsPeople in consequence. Continuation of the VR funding into 2008-2009 is not guaranteed.

2.2.4 Problems with the imaging and indexing Catholic registers were described. NAS has offered to undertake this work free of charge in return for use of the images and index but the volumes themselves have not been forthcoming. It is unlikely they will be delivered before Christmas 2007 and will therefore not be in time for inclusion in ScotlandsPeople as desired. A meeting with Andrew Nicol, Scottish Catholic Archivist, will be held to determine the future involvement of Scottish Catholic Archives in ScotlandsPeople.

2.3 Digital Access Team

2.3.1 Grayham Mount submitted a written report for consideration. Work on the RAC project is continuing. Some downtime as the result of 'silly searches' has been experienced. Certain issues with BT such as the link to the Electronic Ordering System (EOS) as well as the script to resolve the one digit disparity in image naming conventions are still outstanding.

2.3.2 Copy orders for the Legal Search Room have been affected over the last quarter by 50% staff absences. The Service Level Agreement for Deeds copies is being met once more.

2.3.3 Progress is being made on the DDA comprehensive test script and the application has been rewritten to make the front-end more user friendly and intuitive. The application code now meets the 3-Tier (presentation/business logic/data) requirement enabling full technical support by ICTB. Official feedback from the HATII DRAMBORA investigation has not yet been received. Discussions with Keith Dargie have been held regarding an integrated approach to storage issues.

2.3.4 Suppliers evaluation for the ScotlandsImages Project is nearing completion. DIU staff absences impede the end of November 2007 deadline for imaging work for this project. It was suggested that organising this work as a weekend project would enable delivery of the required images.

2.3.5 A workshop to determine how best to copy sasine negative photostat registers was successfully held in August 2007 and it was agreed that the digital surrogates of these registers will be the authentic legal document, once the original photostat documents have faded to black. Procedures were agreed to ensure that the imaging processes will meet BP0008 requirements.

2.3.6 Rob Mildren invited strategic consideration of the NAS microfilm services. It was suggested that microfilm copying might be discontinued and that appropriate conversion of existing microfilm copies might be achieved. It was noted that the production of customer copies on microfilm from digital surrogates would remain possible but that creating digital copies of microfilm would be beneficial to customers

and to NAS. By digitising existing microfilm copies, additional surrogates would become available for consultation via Virtual Volumes. Image quality must be investigated as part of tendering for external suppliers. David Brown suggested that microfilm copies of State Papers and Exchequer records which were produced in the 1950's and are of poor quality would be useful for investigation image enhancement of microfilm images using digital technologies as part of a pilot relating to this proposal.

2.3.7 It was agreed that establishment of an evening digitisation shift at GRH would enable smaller imaging projects to be undertaken, such as particular cataloguing branch led requirements, plans copying, Unfit for Production imaging, as well as achieving the digitisation work required by the ScotlandsImages Project. It was agreed that a supervisor for this shift be recruited along the same model as the successful imaging unit operating at TTH. It was noted that having an NAS officer supervising Pertemps is essential for ensuring continuity.

2.4 Calm and OPAC

Keith Dargie noted that the ICT User Forum meeting held on 10 October 2007 demonstrated that users were experiencing daily OPAC failure. David Brown reiterated replacement OPAC planning and development. Rob Mildren reported that complaints about electronic catalogue performance are being regularly received from customers, NAS staff and also from the Scottish Records Advisory Council. It was suggested that replacement of Calm as an underlying cataloguing system might also be considered in order that DS support for the system could be discontinued. David Brown suggested that the cataloguing, accessioning and conservation management functionality of Calm and its status as an industry standard were arguments for retaining Calm as the underlying technology. Rob Mildren agreed that development of a replacement archival management system consisting of the interactive modules within Calm would be extremely involved and complicated. Keith Dargie recommended that a formal letter requesting full explanation of the OPAC problems be issued to DS. It was agreed that Rob Mildren would draft such a letter to be signed by the Keeper and that Ian Hill should be kept informed.

Action: A letter requesting OPAC failure explanation be issued to DS Ltd.

3. Facilities at West Register House

It was reported that surface cabling would proceed at West Register House to improve network performance. Keith Dargie noted that 2002/3 estimates for this work were in the region of £44,000. It was agreed that wireless was not a good solution for WRH due to the thickness of walls and asbestos related issues. It would be possible, but considerable infrastructure to boost signal strength to the required levels would be required. Keith agreed to provide a costings analysis for the upgrade of the WRH cabling improvements. He would aim to do this in January 2008, with the aim of trying to complete the work by end of March 2008. It was noted that an additional meeting to consider this may be held if necessary. It was noted that surface cabling would cause minimal disruption to office staff and could be carried out during business hours. It was suggested that any analysis undertaken should include consideration to the level of disruption to staff.

Action: Keith Dargie to discuss surface cabling with Bob Phillips and provide an options and costings report for consideration by Senior Management.
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4. Information Systems security

No issues were reported. Keith Dargie explained that he will be providing a statement on the security implications of USB port use on NASnet and SFHS desktop PC systems.

5. Matters arising from ISPG Minutes of 26 July (circulated)

[4.1] It was noted that the DVD corruption complaint had been settled and the complainant agreed to accept the offer. It was asserted that NAS does not accept responsibility for the failure but that the offer represented a convenient solution for both parties.

6. Any other business

No other business was raised.

7. Date of next meeting

The next meeting is due to be held in January 2008. It was agreed that convening the meeting as late in the month as possible would be preferable but that the date of the January Management Board meeting would determine this.

Jenny Cutts

14 November 2007