Minutes

of meeting held 23rd February 2017, IF5.02.

Present: Tim Colles, Bjoern Franke, Jane Hillston, Alastair Scobie, Perdita Stevens, Martin Wright.

Apologies: Johanna Moore

Minutes and matters arising

Actions all done or in train. The research lunch about research data was useful. JEH reported successful use of DataShare in the Quanticol project, with ~17 data downloads. DataVault is still not available: the importance of this has been raised by CCITC. This has an impact on archiving: since Informatics' needs are not special it makes no sense for us to implement our own archiving solution, so we have no plans to do so. We continue with backups aimed at disaster recovery, only.

Action: TC will ensure our documentation of how to use central research data facilities is updated.

Mail (we are now in a small minority using Staffmail)

We and Physics will shortly be the only schools still using Staffmail; it seems inevitable that we will have to either move to O365 or run our own mail server, fairly soon. Our earlier concerns about O365 have not gone away, especially relating to the wide range of different mail clients in use in Informatics and the extent to which Informatics people rely on their familiar client to work efficiently. O365's imap support is better than it was, but is still not guaranteed to be a priority for MS. At the same time we have heard informally of major problems with O365, including lost and/or reappearing mail; also of migation trouble in some (but not all) schools. We would much rather not have to run our own service, however, for something as fundamental as mail. We could engage the School's staff and the CIO, but this will only be productive with a clear understanding of the issues.

Action: AS and PS will make notes of the issues, as specifically as possible, and consider setting up a meeting. (DONE see next meeting discussion)

Action: All to provide whatever details they can of issues with O365, and any solutions known, elsewhere in the university. Especially, BF to provide details of the College Office mail loss problem (DONE).

Action: AS will quantify the costs of running our own service.(DONE, c 0.25 FTE)

Computing Plan

Main points discussed, some modifications made; any further comments to AS.

Web strategy

(AS writes: The web strategy group has become moribund. I originally proposed this group (2011) to discuss our entire web presence (intranet, top-level school site, institute sites, home pages etc) from both the content and technical delivery perspectives. No one "branch" of the School "owns" this space, hence the original

group included reps from all of teaching, research, admin and computing. I propose that we re-form this group with similar representation.)

We discussed that, beyond web strategy, there is an issue of information architecture. It would not be helpful to make the remit of this group that wide at present, but an item will be inserted in the 2018 plan to look at information more broadly. At that point it may be useful to see if there are things to be learned from IS's Enterprise Architecture undertaking.

Action: AS to re-form the group.

College security policy - mobile devices

(AS writes: The College security policy strongly recommends that people encrypt their mobile devices if they use those devices for work, particularly if handling medium to high risk data. The recent University Bring-Your-Own-Device policy **mandates** that you encrypt any mobile device if it is being used to handle medium to high risk data. Some people have just stopped using their own mobile devices for work because their device does not support encryption and they don't **need** to be able to do so. Others feel that they are under pressure, particularly when travelling on work business, to be responsive to eg. work email. Other parts of the University provide such staff with University owned devices - should we do likewise. (Note: we could limit to just paying for the hardware).)

We discussed issues including:
- that probably all academic staff rely on being able to access work mail when away from Edinburgh, especially during semester. If we can identify ways in which they can do so without violating policy, that will be very helpful. For example, can we instruct staff to access Staffmail via its web interface, and explicitly log out (from both Staffmail and EASE?) when they are done? Or does that involve caching information in a way that would be seriously unsafe? (NB that if so, this will need review if our mail provision changes.) What if staff are accessing their mail via Gmail (as an interface to the external mail service, not by forwarding their mail to a gmail account - the latter is forbidden)? Action: AS to investigate. (MODIFIED: AS to push IS to document appropriately)
- however, some staff are much more likely than others to be handling medium/high risk data when they read their mail - e.g. DoT , Senior Tutor. Could we greatly lower our risk without great expense by discussion with those individuals, which might, e.g., lead to them being provided with university-owned devices? Action: MW to pass to Exec Group the task of identifying these individuals (and then what? refer them to AS's delegate for technical discussion of options?)
- in practice, wifi is not reliably available in conference locations and staff typically end up using their own data. This is probably acceptable at the levels it's happening, but we should bear it in mind.

Strategy for specialist computing support of IPAB and perhaps other groups that make little use of DICE.

(Passed on from Strategy Committee, raised by Barbara Webb. More information needed, if so what? Roll in with DICE review, or something else?)

Reframe as: can IPAB be supported better? (It's not really true that it doesn't use what is provided, e.g. IPAB puts a high demand on networking provision; the DICE desktop itself is not the most relevant thing to look at, and many academic staff in all institutes don't use it (but labs do and teaching does, heavily; review underway on that anyway).) Underlying problem is that RAT, which supports research computing, is currently under-strength (used to be 6 people, now 3), limiting what has been possible, but we do have more CSO effort

coming in (one post this year, one in the plan for next year), and this will be used (by freeing up other folk) to increase the strength of RAT, which will help. It's not clear (e.g. from grant overheads brought in) why IPAB should be very special, but we want to improve support for research specialist computing overall, so let's start with IPAB and see what can be learned and done.

Action: TC to discuss with Barbara Webb, and feed back as appropriate.

AOCB

Tom Spink's development of the DPMT project proposal and allocation web site, in collaboration with TC and RAT, has been a positive experience all round and we believe it's been done in such a way that it will be sustainable: handover to RAT to be done.

Action: PS to doodle for next meeting.(DONE)

-- PerditaStevens - 19 Jan 2017

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