

ITSC News April 2007

Welcome to news from ITSC. It is a long time since an ITSC newsletter has been published, so hopefully you will find it interesting, useful and informative. Please let me have your feedback.

Jeff McDonell, ITSC Director

BANNER Upgrade

This major project for 2007 has engaged more than 10 ITSC staff for several months (I did say major) to upgrade Banner 5 (which is no longer supported by SunGard) to the latest version 7, plus also upgrade the Oracle database system to the latest version 10g. One major improvement in the new system is the ability to handle Chinese characters directly in the database.

Assisted by the UGC funded Joint ERP Development Project with the City University of Hong Kong and the Hong Kong Institute of Education, Lingnan's major administration systems have been upgraded, including Student, Finance, HR, Payroll and Alumni. The project also required upgrading the interfaces to the Luminis portal and to WebCT.

While most organisations typically take two weeks for such a major upgrade, ITSC staff worked throughout the Easter break to cram it into 5 days! This was very successful! Some performance issues were experienced due to the new software being more resource hungry, but fine tuning has now addressed these problems.

A new system is never implemented with 100% satisfaction, so any issues arising from the upgrade will be handled by ITSC staff over the next few days, possibly weeks.

Email Systems

Substantial effort has gone into improving Lingnan's email services, with a lot more to come in the future. This has included....

- doubling the student email quota from 50 Mb to 100 Mb,
- doubling the staff email quota from 500 Mb to 1 Gb,
- spam email now being quarantined into just two daily messages,
- placing orders for two new servers for student Webmail as well as student Mail, plus
- improving the reliability of email account handling.

In the future, all email systems will be extensively reviewed; bulk email handling will be totally revised, while commercial quality email services for students will also be investigated.

Wireless Access on Campus

Several additional areas of the campus have been equipped with wireless Access Points (APs), to enable remote access to the university network from portable devices, such as laptop computers, PDAs and smart mobiles. This has included all hostels, the Visitor's Quarters, Auditorium, Student Cafeteria, etc. ITSC hopes to provide near 100% coverage of the campus in the future.

An MOU has been signed with PCCW to allow all Lingnan staff and students to access Lingnan services via PCCW wireless hotspots across Hong Kong (including the airport), plus also allow PCCW customers to access services from some locations at Lingnan. A similar agreement will be implemented with Y5ZONE as well. Further details for access will be circulated soon.

Additionally, Lingnan is enabling EDUROAM at Lingnan University, an international standard for secure remote wireless access. This will allow international visitors, exchange students, etc, to access their home institutions, as well as Lingnan staff and students visiting other universities to get secure access back to Lingnan via EDUROAM enabled locations around the world. Typically, most European and US universities are implementing EDUROAM on their campuses.

Research Computing

Following a clampdown of the RGC on not allowing research grants to be used to purchase computing equipment, the university has now provided special funding for this purpose for 2007-2008. Later this year ITSC will order five laptop computers, which will be available for loan through the Library for ORSD approved research projects.

Replacement of the Telephone System

Following a large grant from UGC through an AA&I allocation, Lingnan will be replacing our current telephone system, which is more than 10 years old, with a state-of-the-art IP phone system. ITSC and CO spent many months of exhaustive testing, tendering and negotiating, with CISCO Systems now chosen as the VoIP (voice over IP) system to be implemented. The changeover is currently scheduled for one Sunday in late July or early August. Training will be provided for all users.

Teaching Room Audio Visual Upgrades

Improving the AV control systems in major teaching labs is now in progress, with the new CCUI (central control user interface) units installed in 12 lecture rooms and two computer labs, with 3 more lecture theatres to be equipped in the coming summer. New wireless microphones have also been installed in 18 teaching venues, with 26 more to be installed over the summer break.

IT Training Courses

Following poor student attendance at ITSC run IT training courses in the past, ITSC has now appointed a part-time IT Training Coordinator (Mr. Desmond Ho), to review and revamp all our IT courses. This will include implementing 'FAITH' or 'First Aid I.T. Helpers' courses for staff training to address basic IT problems. Second semester IT courses this year have been much better attended, for further details see <http://www.ln.edu.hk/itsc/infolit/courselist.html>.

Printer and Computer rollouts

150 personal printers were recently funded by the university and all are now rolled out to staff allocated the units (excluding those staff whose deferred their requirements until 2007-2008).

More than 30 PCs are about to be deployed to staff, which is additional to the 145 PCs installed for student use in four computer labs BUG19, BU220, BU321 and SO202 in semester one. Two PCs plus a wireless AP have also been installed in AM212 for the use of student society groups.

Student Printing

The installation of Octopus printers has been a huge success with students, plus the improved Pykota print servers have dramatically improved printing performance. Year to date printing by students has already exceeded last year's total printing!