Lab and Construction News

Upgraded bugle lab
Lab Air-Conditioning
New Labs (for 2002)
Lab Computer Replacement (for 2002)
Linux in the Labs (for 2002)

New Systems

Colour Printer Proposals
Local Colour Printers
Large-format Printer

Staff Issues

New Staff (continuing)
Inaugural CSG Retreat

Lab and Construction News

Upgraded bugle lab

As part of computer shuffling in general, and specifically so that we can arrange
to have computers installed ready-to-go in visitors and other empty offices, we
are replacing the computers in the bugle lab over the approaching mid-session
break.

This means that the bugle and pipe labs will now conveniently have iden-
tical hardware.

Lab Air-Conditioning

We have been having a number of on-going problems with air-conditioning in
the labs for some time, particularly in the Electrical Engineering and Mechanical
Engineering buildings. With summer coming on, it is time to be anxious about
this again.

The problems in Electrical Engineering are now fairly much in hand; the old
units are being refurbished or replaced as required.

Mechanical Engineering has been more interesting.

One concern is that their is now significantly more heat load in the Mecha-
nical Engineering Undercroft than when the air-conditioning system was designed
and installed. There is a chance that it is simply under-powered. Unfortunately several other problems have stood in the way of determining this.

As part of trying to get a handle on this, we have installed cheap thermometers in all labs and the Help Desk staff are taking regular readings. As temperatures reach various ceilings, messages of increasing urgency are sent to Facilities with appropriate local action (for example, open doors at 27°, evacuate lab at 31°).

Since then, it has seemed that one cause of occasional high temperatures in the leaf and spoons labs has been slipping fan belt causing ‘no air’. It eventually burned through, filling the lab with smoke and making it very clear where the problem was.

Since then, the same unit has tripped out several times and Assets Services are still looking into it trying to establish the cause. I presume it will be fixed before summer temperatures start in earnest.

The bongo, moog and bell labs, with large north-facing windows are also a source of concern are temperatures in there are being closely monitored.

**New Labs (for 2002)**

As reported earlier, there are plans for two new labs in the Mechanical Engineering cafeteria, and three new labs underneath the Physics Theatre. Plans progress slowly and are not yet certain. It does not currently seem likely that we will be vacating the Samuels Building next year.

**Lab Computer Replacement (for 2002)**

As reported earlier, we will be replacing the computers in the flute, fife, gong, kazoo and oboe labs over the Christmas period.

**Linux in the Labs (for 2002)**

We are still planning to move to linux in all labs next year (currently about one third of the labs run linux). This makes purchasing new equipment much easier (the Solaris-X86 hardware compatibility list is nowhere near as comprehensive as the Linux hardware compatibility list), and will make it much easier to deploy new versions of software (increasingly Linux is the preferred platform for developers).

If anyone has teaching software that has not been tested on Linux, can I suggest that you try it on one of the Linux servers (such as wagner), or in one of the Linux labs (such as pipe or bugle).

I am also be interested in converting as many staff Solaris computers to Linux computers as possible. This can be arranged at any time; if you are interested, please get in contact with System Support (sscse.unsw.edu.au) to discuss or arrange it.
New Systems

Colour Printer Proposals

I propose that we consider two proposals for new colour printing facilities.

Local Colour Printers

For use by staff and postgraduates for most of their work; particularly transparencies (do people still use them) and draft work for various purposes, or simply printing colour-rich documents.

The need for these has become more apparent since access to the large Xerox printer has been restricted. The Xerox printer needs to be kept in good condition for School propaganda and final copies for printing. It is, unfortunately, very easy to cause multi-thousand dollar damage by simply loading the wrong transparencies or similar erroneous action. Anyone with a real need to use the Xerox printer can do so during the day, or get swipe-card access for out-of-hours use via Ric/Tanya.

My suggestion is to place several (one, preferably two, maybe three) more modest colour printers around the school.

Candidate printers include:

- the HP 4550 laser printer
  (http://www.hp.com/uk/printers/lasers/4550.htm)
- the Xerox/Tektronics Phaser 860
  (http://www.officeprinting.xerox.com/cgi-bin/product.pl?product=860&page=home)

Large-format Printer

For posters, plans and large circuit diagrams. These facilities are not frequently needed, but it is often enough that a centralised facility in the school should be considered.

Candidate printers include:

- the HP DesignJet 500ps (24 in wide, will print A1)
  (http://www.hp.com/uk/printers/designjets/500.htm)
- the HP DesignJet 800ps (48 in wide, will print A0)
  (http://www.hp.com/uk/printers/designjets/800.htm)

Staff Issues

New Staff (continuing)

Just to note that we are still in the process of:
• employing a new hardware support person: the sheer number of computers in the school is beyond the ability of Amalan and half of David to maintain.

• making a real position of the Assistant Help Desk Manager: George Emsies has been working regular casual hours for too long and that position needs to be regularised.

Inaugural CSG Retreat

After noting the advantages of the retreats in recent years by academic staff and other general staff, we are planning to have a one day retreat on the Wednesday of the Mid-Session Break (26 September 2001).

I am interested in any comments that might sensibly feed into our discussions. Particularly, one of our discussion areas includes new or different services that we provide to the school. I expect that amongst the outcomes of the retreat will be a list of services (and costs, such as ‘hire two new people’) that the School might consider be provided by the CSG (or possibly by others).

An early draft of the plans for the retreat can be seen (in very plain ASCII) at http://www.cse.unsw.edu.au/~geoffo/retreat-draft. We will be making available a report of the retreat sometime after our return.