



# University of Cambridge Computing Service Newsletter

Number 235  
January 2008

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# Diary

Thursday 7 February	First meeting of the ISSS
Friday 21 March	Service closed: no Reception, Sales or Help Desk. All services running unattended
Tuesday 25 March	Service re-opens
Friday 14 March	Deadline for requests for new PWF applications software for 2008-9
Monday 7 April	Closure of Netnews
Tuesday 8 April	User Briefing for the replacement telephone system, Babbage Lecture Theatre, 14.30
Tuesday 15 April	User Briefing for the replacement telephone system, Babbage Lecture Theatre, 14.30
Thursday 17 April	Old mailing list system finally closes down
Monday 5 May	Service closed: no Reception, Sales or Help Desk. All services running unattended
Monday 26 May	Service closed: no Reception, Sales or Help Desk. All services running unattended
Thursday 31 July	Athens passwords withdrawn
Wednesday 1 October	CUS closes down

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## In this edition

The Computing Service is now under the supervision of the new Information Strategy and Services Syndicate; see below.

The supplier for the University's new telephone system will be BT iNet; see Network News.

Users of Athens passwords are recommended to change to using Raven; see the article on Shibboleth in Mail, News and Information services.

Requests for new PWF applications and application updates for next academic year should reach the Computing Service by the end of the Lent Term; see Central Services News.

The CIFS service for remote access to PWF filespace is no longer a pilot service; see Central Services News.

## The new ISSS

Since 1991 the University Computing Service has been the responsibility of the Information Technology Syndicate (ITS) (previously the Computing Service was part of the Computer Laboratory under the supervision of the Computer Syndicate).

In 2001 the University set up a Standing Joint Committee on Information Strategy (the ISG). It has now been agreed that the Information Strategy Group and the Information Technology Syndicate should be merged into a single Information Strategy and Services Syndicate, advising both the Council and the General Board. The Grace to implement this proposal was approved on 2 November 2007 and the regulatory responsibilities of the Information Technology Syndicate are now being assumed by the new body. The new ISSS also takes over the responsibilities of the GBN Management Committee and the Joint Telecommunications Management Committee.

The Information Strategy and Services Syndicate consists of:

- the Vice-Chancellor (or a duly appointed deputy) as Chairman;
- three persons appointed by the Council;
- three persons appointed by the General Board of the Faculties;
- three persons appointed by the Colleges' Committee;
- one person elected from among their own number by the officers of the University Computing Service;
- one person elected from their own number by the officers of the Management Information Services Division of the University Offices;
- two members of the University *in statu pupillari*, co-opted by the Syndicate, at least one of whom shall be a graduate student;
- not more than two persons co-opted by the Syndicate, provided that it shall not be obligatory for the Syndicate to co-opt any person or persons.

The Registry, the Librarian, and the Directors of the University Computing Service, the Management Information Services Division, and the Finance Division of the University Offices, have the right to attend meetings of the Syndicate.

The actual membership of the ISSS will be published on the Web when available.

The ITS met for the last time on 27 November 2007. The first meeting of the new Syndicate will take place early in February 2008.

For the Report and fuller details of the remit of the new Syndicate, see <http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2006-07/weekly/6079/19.html> and <http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2007-08/weekly/6087/3.html>

# General News

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## New Development Group in the Computing Service

Since October the University Computing Service has been creating a new Development Group to work on some of the small to medium-scale development projects (particularly new web services and interfaces) required across the Service. Four posts have been created through internal restructuring; three are filled already and advertising for the fourth post is starting in January.

## UCS News Service; withdrawal of Netnews

Users are reminded of the new Web/RSS feed news service for UCS announcements, which has been running since October.

The web interface is at <http://ucsnews.csx.cam.ac.uk/> and the RSS feeds are incorporated into the new UCS home page at <http://www.cam.ac.uk/cs/>

Among other things, the News service covers the same information as the Netnews service, which has long provided users with information about service downtime. Netnews will therefore close on Monday, 7 April 2008. Please see <http://ucsnews.csx.cam.ac.uk/articles/category/service-interruptions> for information about service interruptions.

Most UCS web pages have already been updated to link to the UCS news service, and where we know of other pages linking to Netnews we are contacting those responsible to ask them to update their pages to link to the new service.

## Thirty-five years ago

From Newsletter 13 (February 1973):

*Phoenix, the multi-access system for the IBM 370/165, has recently been made available for test purposes to about twenty selected users for whom two consoles have been provided in the public console room. The trial is going well and the system will be released to further users as soon as possible.*

Phoenix closed down in 1995. It is not known how many of the original twenty users are still users of Computing Service facilities.

## Thirty years ago

From Newsletter 54 (Jan/Feb 1978):

*Two of the single-density disc drives (on the IBM 370/165) have been upgraded to double density, increasing the total size of the disc storage from 1800 to 2000 Megabytes.*

This total of 2GB was the whole storage available to all users of the central mainframe: potentially, to the entire University.

## Twenty years ago

From Newsletter 137 (January 1988):

*Project Granta, the University's new strategy for computing and computing services...was approved by the Computer Board for Universities and Research Councils.*

Project Granta had four main components: upgrading of the IBM mainframe, development of distributed computing facilities, support for personal workstations (*a high proportion of personal ownership among staff and students in the longer term... is assumed*), and, most radically, the installation of "a transparent backbone network connecting all Departments and Colleges, providing high-speed links between institutional LANs and wide-area networks". The Granta Backbone Network continues to serve the University today.

The following table shows the number of calls completed by the Help Desk, together with other parts of the Computing Service, in September to November 2007. The second shows the number of calls received that could not be answered as they concerned systems not supported by the Help Desk; those calls were referred to local support staff.

September	595	8
October	905	13
November	673	1

The Help Desk Frequently Asked Questions can be found at <http://www.cam.ac.uk/cs/docs/faqslist.html>. The latest FAQs added to the list or updated are

- V27: How can I print my EndNote references in a format that is acceptable to my examiners/publisher?
- V28: How can I obtain a foreign-language spell-checker to use with Microsoft Word 2007?

## Mail, News and Information Services

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### Hermes quotas

A substantial hardware and software upgrade to Hermes was completed during the Michaelmas term. As a consequence the default mail store quota on Hermes has been raised from 250MB to 500MB and all quotas that were smaller than 500MB have been increased to the new default. We expect to announce a further increase to the default quota at Easter, once we have observed the effects of the present increase.

Users who need more space than the default can apply for a quota increase online at <http://www.cam.ac.uk/cs/request/quota.html>

The message size limit remains 25MB and this is the same for all users.

### Mailing lists - old system now withdrawn

The Mailman system for University mailing lists has been in operation since Spring 2006, and the shutdown of the old list system has been advertised both in these Newsletters and elsewhere since the start of 2007. Any remaining old style lists which have received messages (including spam) in the last two months or which have been updated in the last 12 months have now been moved to Mailman. This leaves 1975 dormant lists on

the old system. These can still receive email or be moved to Mailman. Any remaining dormant lists will be removed altogether at the end of the Lent term.

If a list has been moved, basic properties such as list visibility, moderator lists, and message footers, are carried across unchanged. List managers and moderators will need to read the information at <http://www.cam.ac.uk/cs/docs/leaflets/g90/mailman/> to find out how to manage and moderate lists on the new system.

### Raven developments: Shibboleth

The extension of Raven to support the Shibboleth protocol, launched at the start of the academic year, has proved a success. During the Michaelmas term the Raven Shibboleth service processed an average of about 3000 authentication requests on behalf of about 1300 distinct users each week. The service was busiest between about 08:00 and 22:00 but has provided authentication services at all hours of the day and night.

To date the main use of the new service has been in authorising access to University Library electronic resources protected by the Athens service. Use of Raven for this purpose is steadily replacing the older 'classic Athens' service that required separate usernames

# Mail, News and Information Services

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and passwords administered by the Library. About 50% of access to Athens resources now uses Raven. Existing unexpired classic Athens accounts will continue to work until the end of July 2008, but the Library would like to encourage people using such accounts to move to Raven as soon as possible. The transition is simple and means that you need to remember fewer passwords! Further information and guidance is provided at the University Library website at: <http://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/electronicresources/athenschanges.html>

Beyond Athens, Raven and Shibboleth is also being used directly to provide user authentication to a growing range of other external resources used by the University, including:

- \* Science Direct
- \* ProQuest (Chadwyck-Healey products)
- \* EDINA: Film and Sound Online
- \* EDINA: Digimap
- \* MIMAS Zetoc Service
- \* JANET Videoconference Booking Service (JVCS)
- \* JISCmail Service
- \* LSE Projects WIKI
- \* Internet2 Spaces wiki

## Central Services News

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### Streaming Media Service

Considerable work continues to go into the pilot streaming media service. During its pilot phase we have been very grateful for bug reports from a number of users, which are either being addressed in the pilot directly or being taken into account for the specification of the final service. There is considerable pressure for the Service to deliver a fully supported facility in this area, but it is important that time is taken to monitor usage, performance and obtain feedback concerning the features and facilities required if the final result is to be fit for purpose over the long term.

The next version is expected to be released by October 2008.

### CUS closure

Users are reminded that, as announced in previous Newsletters, the Central Unix Service will close down on 1 October 2008. The intention is that the majority of the functions of the CUS should be consolidated into other services, including an enhanced PWF Linux service.

The Service has already ceased to issue new CUS accounts. The remaining schedule will be as follows:

- 1 October 2008: CUS will be closed down. Email addressed to [CRSid@cus.cam.ac.uk](mailto:CRSid@cus.cam.ac.uk) will be redirected to [CRSid@cam.ac.uk](mailto:CRSid@cam.ac.uk), and web requests to <http://www.cus.cam.ac.uk/~CRSid/> will be redirected to <http://people.pwf.cam.ac.uk/CRSid/>
- \* 1 October 2010: mail and web forwarding will cease.

Mail users with `.forward` files should note that these will not be effective once CUS has closed down; the mail forwarding to `@cam` addresses after 1 October 2008 will be all-or-nothing, and any filtering will have to be done at the destination. Users will be able to request to have their forwarding turned off.

Advice on migrating from CUS has been published at <http://www.cam.ac.uk/cs/unix/cusmigration.html>

Any CUS user who no longer needs their CUS account (and does not require any mail forwarding) should contact [ids@ucs.cam.ac.uk](mailto:ids@ucs.cam.ac.uk) asking for the account to be cancelled.

- Individual messages have been sent to all CUS users (to @cus and @cam accounts where these differ), warning of the closure. A second message will be sent out towards the end of this term.
- As previously announced, the anonymous FTP service on CUS (providing access to `ftp://ftp.cus.cam.ac.uk/pub`) closed down at the end of December 2007. Non-anonymous ftp to CUS is not affected, and anything remaining in the /pub directory tree is still accessible to users logged on to CUS.
- ARC/Info on CUS will be withdrawn on 29 March.
- The XDMCP service is no longer available to users outside the Computing Service (there have been no such users for some time).

## Closure of Pelican

The Pelican archive service closed on 1 January 2008. For advice on alternative archiving methods see <http://www.cam.ac.uk/cs/instadmin/pelicanend.html>

## Requests for PWF teaching and other software for 2008-09

The annual notice about teaching software and other applications for use on the PWF for the next academic year will be published in The Reporter at the end of January. Requests for new applications or upgrades to existing software for all three platforms (Linux, Macintosh and Windows) should be submitted to the Computing Service by the end of Full Lent Term (Friday 14 March 2008).

The Computing Service will shortly be reviewing usage of all teaching software currently available on the PWF, and if any teaching software shows little or no usage the responsible Department will be asked whether the application is still required.

This year, all requests for application upgrades and new applications must be on a request form, and must include information such as licensing details and the date by which the application is required. The form will be published as a PDF and will appear shortly at <http://www.cam.ac.uk/cs/pwf/swrequest.pdf>

## Vista and the PWF

It was announced in earlier Newsletters that there were no plans to move the PWF onto Windows Vista before summer 2008 at the earliest. Further review suggests that there is no good reason to move on to Vista in the foreseeable future.

Users running Vista on their own machines may wish to access their PWF filespace or PWF printers remotely. Some information about access to PWF facilities from Vista machines is at <http://www.cam.ac.uk/cs/pwf/vista.html> See also the CIFS service, below.

## CIFS service

The pilot CIFS service described in previous Newsletters has been running successfully for some months, and has now become a fully supported service.

The CIFS service enables you to use your PWF personal filespace (or group filespace) directly from a non-PWF machine. When you have successfully set up your CIFS connection, your PWF filespace will appear as just another network device, and can be used in exactly the same way as any local filing system (like your CD drive or local hard disk). It is therefore easy and convenient to use the PWF for safety copies of work in progress, for instance, and for files which you may want to access from several different locations within the CUDN. For more details see <http://www.cam.ac.uk/cs/pwf/cifs.html>

# Central Services News

## Hardware upgrades on the PWF

During the Christmas Vacation both Titan Teaching Rooms and the Phoenix Teaching Room have been upgraded with Dell Optiplex 745s, and the upgrade to Dell 20in monitors was completed.

## PWF filestore

As reported in the last Newsletter, the PWF filestore was moved to new hardware in October; some 20.5 million files, totalling some 1.5TB of data, were moved during the transfer work over the weekend of 13/14 October.

The new filestore consists of two IBM DS4800 systems, associated Fibre Channel SAN switches and a management server. It supports the user filespaces hosted on the four PWF Home servers and the group spaces on PWF-SHARED, and provides a net capacity of 7.8TB, 3.9TB on each of the two IBM storage systems. Currently, about 3.5TB has been allocated for user filespaces and 1TB, a substantial increase, for the UX volume. The content transferred included all users' personal filespaces (Home Directories) and all group filespaces (on the UX volume) as well as ancillary storage.

Following the major increase in capacity for group filespaces, the quota for these has been increased from 60 Mb to 250 Mb.

## Passwords on the PWF

In the Summer 2007 Newsletter it was reported that we were making some technical changes to the way PWF passwords are handled. The changes affected only a very few PWF Macintosh users.

Later this term, on a date to be announced shortly, we intend to complete the process with a further change which will mean that PWF passwords when used on a Macintosh are subject to a 31-character limit, rather than an 8 character one. They will become case-sensitive, needing to be typed in the same case as they were set, when used on Macs and will also be more secure.

Once this change has taken place, a small group of users may need to reset their PWF passwords before using a Macintosh for the first time. This group should not include anyone whose PWF password has been set or reset since 20 Aug 2007.

Notice of the change will be given via the PWF Message of the Day and the CS News Service at <http://ucsnews.csx.cam.ac.uk/>

## Telephone Replacement Project: Supplier Chosen

As announced in a previous Newsletter, the University Telephone Network (UTN) is being replaced.

The present system, set up in 1986, was based on leading technology at the time and has served the University well; however, by the end of 2009, maintenance and spares will no longer be available, and it will be essential to have a replacement in service. As in the past, the new system will again be a joint venture between the University, its Colleges, and other affiliated Institutions wishing to be part of the University network.

Following extensive research by the University Computing Service and the University Telephone Office, the decision was taken to use Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) technology which allows for voice and other types of communication to pass over the existing University Data Network. In May 2007 a Request for Proposals was issued to the telecommunications community, and during November 2007 BT iNet was selected as the delivery partner for the new system.

BT iNet has already begun the process of replacing the system with Cisco brand technology. The entire system will be configured off-site and ultimately installed into duplicate data centres operated by the University Computing Service. Rollout of the physical handsets will start in March, the first official installation site being the Department of Chemistry. The replacement is a large and

complex undertaking, and the installation schedule for the rest of the University will need to be very tightly maintained. For most Institutions, it is expected that there will be minimal disruption during the changeover.

For the end user with no special requirements, the change of technology will not make a great difference; phone numbers will generally be unchanged and the new handsets will operate in much the same way as the old, just plugging into a different wall socket. However, there may be a much wider range of add on services available including special feature phones, or alternatively 'softphones' running on a PC or laptop.

A number of general User Briefings are being held for users, technical staff, and management within the University. The next briefings will take place on 8 and 15 April 2008 in the Babbage Lecture Theatre at 14.30, and in late April at the Addenbrookes site.

More information is available at [www.phone.cam.ac.uk](http://www.phone.cam.ac.uk), or you can contact the project team at [veery@hermes.cam.ac.uk](mailto:veery@hermes.cam.ac.uk).

# Progress Reports

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The Progress Reports made by the Computing Service to the IT Syndicate in October and November 2007 included the following items not covered elsewhere in this or earlier Newsletters:

## Unix Systems

Considerable work has been spent this year on the automatic update systems for various flavours of Unix used in the University. Both Novell (managers of OpenSUSE) and Sun (managers of Solaris) have managed to fundamentally break their automatic updating systems on a number of occasions over the past few months. Both of these flavours of Unix are relied on in the University and significant, urgent effort has been expended to keep them working.

The Service has commissioned 10 new mail storage systems for Hermes, 2 new front-end systems, and 3 mail switch systems.

The lookup system has been migrated to new hardware and a newer base operating system. Following the signing of an agreement between the MRC and the UCS authorising the use of the personal data, all the MRC staff known to the UCS have been added to lookup. Configuration changes were made to lookup's database system to cope with large groups. This works round a bug in the OpenLDAP server.

As part of the development of a Bulletin Board system (phpBB v3) to replace Usenet News in the University, a variant form of the phpBB system was created which supported Raven authentication. This was shared with the University community and will form the core of MISD's "Council business" web discussion system.

The Central Purchasing Office have withdrawn administrative support for the PC bulk purchase scheme, leading to an inevitable increase in work for the UCS.

## Networks and Small Systems

Constraints in the University's DNS system, managed by the Service, have been relaxed so that it is now easier for research groups within departments to get `www.xxx.dept.cam.ac.uk` URLs registered for their web servers.

Lapwing installations were highly active during the summer period. In the autumn, usage figures reached 1,000 unique users per week; as of one week in mid-November there were 1,475 unique users utilising Lapwing across the University. Currently there are 41 Institutions using the service.

The PWF Managed Cluster Service membership remains at 16 departments and 21 colleges. Several more MCS institutions decided to have the Linux option over the summer; it is now provided at 22 institutions, as well as the Computing Service.

New servers and VMware software was purchased in July to resource a PWF virtualization pilot project.

## Technical User Support

In addition to the usual repairs on a wide range of printers and desktops throughout the University, the Hardware Support team has been dealing with a large number of student laptop problems: in particular, rescuing valuable data from failed hard disk drives that were often not adequately backed up.

## User Services

The University Web Review team has been selecting potential designers and sorting out content.

# Sales News

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## IT Exhibition 2007

Software Sales would like to thank all those who helped to organise, worked at, attended and supported the Computing Service IT

Exhibition 2007, which was held on 7 and 8 November 2007 in the Large and Small Exam Halls on the New Museums Site.

## Performance Figures

Percentage of orders completed, in working days:

	< 5	5-10	10-15	15-20	>20
Sept	98.2%	0.9%	0.5%	0.0%	0.4%
Oct	97.9%	1.4%	0.5%	0.2%	0.0%
Nov	99.1%	0.6%	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%

## Products

*Available now:*

Apple Maintenance Programme (including Leopard version 10.5)

EndNote X1/MacOS X  
FileMaker Pro Advanced 9/Windows & MacOS X  
FileMaker Server 9/Windows & MacOS X  
FileMaker Server Advanced 9/Windows & MacOS X  
Hummingbird eXceed 2008/Windows (with Connectivity Secure Shell 2008)  
MathCad 14/Windows  
Solidworks Academic Edition 2007/Windows  
SPSS 16/MacOS X

*Available shortly:*

Adobe GoLive 9/Windows & MacOS X  
Hummingbird eXceed 2008/Windows (with Connectivity Secure Shell 2008)  
Microsoft Exchange Server Enterprise 2007  
Microsoft Exchange Server Standard 2007.

## Documentation and Courses

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### Leaflets

The following leaflets have been updated since the last Newsletter:

- G56 Making a VPDN Connection to the CUDN with Windows Vista (Business, Home Extra or Ultimate)
- IS1 General Hardware Purchase
- IS5 IP Networking Software Configuration
- IS20 Linux on the PWF PCs
- M605 Using Linux on the PWF

### Courses

Computing Service courses are free to current members of staff and students of the University. All details are available at <http://www.cam.ac.uk/cs/courses/> There is also an additional software training programme for departmental support staff, administered by the Staff Development Office - see <http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/personnel/staffdev/computing/> for details.

The most convenient way to register for Computing Service courses is to complete the booking form on the Web at <http://www.cam.ac.uk/cs/courses/> Apart from

being more efficient to process, an advantage to using this method of booking is that it is possible to check the availability of places. If it is not possible to book via the Web, please email [course-admin@ucs.cam.ac.uk](mailto:course-admin@ucs.cam.ac.uk), ring (3)34662 or come to Computing Service Reception.

If necessary, please cancel your booking, preferably via the Web or else by email or phone, giving as much notice as possible. This is important as it enables the place to be allocated to someone else, and avoids waste of resources.

### New courses for Lent Term 2008

We are pleased to offer the following new courses in the Lent Term:

- Stata (Statistical Package): Basic Part 1 (21 Feb)
- Stata (Statistical Package): Basic Part 2 (28 Feb)
- Fortran: Use of Input/Output in Fortran 95/2003 (21 Feb)
- Python: Unit Testing (7 March)



# Contact points

Director of the Computing Service	Director@ucs.cam.ac.uk (334703)
Course Bookings	Course-Admin@ucs.cam.ac.uk (334662)
DNS Registrations	Hostmaster@ucs.cam.ac.uk
Data Protection Act (DPA) registration	Help-Desk@ucs.cam.ac.uk (334681)
Documentation	Documentation@ucs.cam.ac.uk
Electronic Mail Administration	Mail-Support@ucs.cam.ac.uk
Electronic Mail Information (addressing problems)	Postmaster@ucs.cam.ac.uk
Hardware Support	Hardware-Support@ucs.cam.ac.uk (334610)
Help Desk	Help-Desk@ucs.cam.ac.uk (334681)
Information Service (World Wide Web)	Webmaster@ucs.cam.ac.uk
Institution Liaison	Institution-Liaison@ucs.cam.ac.uk (336060)
IP Registration	IP-Register@ucs.cam.ac.uk
Macintosh Support	Mac-Support@ucs.cam.ac.uk
Managed Web server	webserver-admin@ucs.cam.ac.uk
MIMAS national dataset service	Joe.Gluza@ucs.cam.ac.uk (334701)
Network Support	Network-Support@ucs.cam.ac.uk
Network faults	331899
Newsletter editor	Newsletter-editor@ucs.cam.ac.uk
Newsletter notification of new issues	Newsletter-circ@ucs.cam.ac.uk
Operations Staff	Operator@ucs.cam.ac.uk
Photographic and Illustration Service	pandis@ucs.cam.ac.uk (334390)
Reception	Reception@ucs.cam.ac.uk (334600)
Sales	Sales@ucs.cam.ac.uk (334695)
Secretarial Staff	Secretary@ucs.cam.ac.uk
Security reports	cert@cam.ac.uk
Sidgwick Computing Facility	335029
Small institution support	small-inst-support@ucs.cam.ac.uk
Speech-assisted computing	voice-support@ucs.cam.ac.uk
TCP/IP network address allocation	IP-Register@ucs.cam.ac.uk
Unix Support	Unix-Support@ucs.cam.ac.uk (334728)
Usenet News Administration	Newsmaster@ucs.cam.ac.uk
User Administration	User-Admin@ucs.cam.ac.uk (334680)
User Library	User-Librarian@ucs.cam.ac.uk
Web Support	web-support@ucs.cam.ac.uk
Windows Support	NT-Support@ucs.cam.ac.uk
WWW server administration	Webmaster@ucs.cam.ac.uk
Suggestions and announcements	Usenet Newsgroups ucam.comp-serv.announce, ucam.comp-serv.suggest, ucam.cus.suggest, ucam.pwf.suggest
Computing Service News Service	<a href="http://ucsnews.csx.cam.ac.uk/">http://ucsnews.csx.cam.ac.uk/</a>

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