

RSC Northwest News

JISC Regional Support Centre of the Northwest



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Introduction to the Regional Support Centre of the North West

Welcome to the first issue of the RSC NW bulletin. We hope to bring you news of some of the regional ILT activities that YOUR Regional Support Centre (RSC) is engaged with. Although many readers will well be aware of the JISC Regional Support Centre for the NorthWest and its activities, some of you may be less acquainted with the RSC. With this in mind we will begin with a brief description of the RSC remit. To those of you who have heard it until you are blue in the face - apologies!!

The nine regional support centres in England (13 in the UK) were established to support connection of FE colleges to the Joint Academic Network (JANET) and promote awareness and uptake of JISC resources and provide training opportunities for technical and ILT staff. The RSC also plays a large part in promoting collaboration between colleges as well as providing a focus for other groups involved in ILT.

The Northwest Regional Support centre is a partnership between Blackpool and The Fylde College and Lancaster University with the college as the lead partner and host for the RSC office. Listed below are the primary activities that the NW RSC provide

- Provide assistance with the process of connecting to JANET including ongoing associated technical support.
 - Help Desk for technical and ILT issues (01253 504070)
 - College visits
 - Regional training events and seminars for college technical staff, Learning Resources staff and ILT champions.
 - Provide a regional focus for ILT activities including collaboration with other regional ILT groups.
 - Mailing list to promote sharing of ideas and practice between colleges.
 - Web site updated regularly with useful resources, events, technical support etc.
- For further details please visit the RSC NW website at www.rsc-northwest.ac.uk

Jonathan Day—RSC Manager
jday@blackpool.ac.uk

RSC Northwest Open Day



RSC Northwest Seminar



Internet Resources for FE Workshop



Meet the Team

Meet the Team



*Jonathan Day
RSC Manager*

Jonathan Day—Regional Support Centre Manager (jday@blackpool.ac.uk)

Jonathan is the Centre Manager based at Blackpool and The Fylde College. His role is to manage the day to day running of the RSC.

Jonathan graduated from the University of Central Lancashire with a degree in Applied Psychology.

Since leaving University he has had a varied career which has included working with the mentally ill, working on a technical support help desk and managing a PC repair centre at Dabs Direct.

He joined the college about 2 years ago as IT Support Supervisor before moving to his current role.



*Jim Mann
Technology Manager*

Jim Mann—Technical Manager (j.mann@lancs.ac.uk)

Jim is the Technical Manager for the RSC and is based at Lancaster University Computer Centre. He is responsible for the provision of technical support to the colleges during the connection phase and the continuing support and development.

Jim graduated with a degree in Engineering and Environmental Sciences where he became interested in the communication requirements of the research group. He joined the Computer Centre in 1996 as part of the Network team concentrating on datacoms. He has been involved in the NGfL initiative and the Cumbria and North Lancashire MAN.



*Chrissie Mason
RSC Assistant*

Chrissie Mason—RSC Assistant (cm@blackpool.ac.uk)

Chrissie is one of the RSC Assistants manning the Help Desk at the Regional Support Centre. Her particular role is to assist Learning Resources and Library personnel with ILT resources by providing training events and promotional material along with sharing of best practice throughout the region.

She has worked within FE colleges since finishing her degree in Software Engineering as an I.T. lecturer, Learning Centre Facilitator and more recently Assistant Co-ordinator of the Preston Flagship Learndirect centre.

She also moderates I.T. Vocational qualifications for a leading examinations board and is the webmaster for the Regional Support Centre's Website.



*Keith Wilson
RSC Assistant*

Keith Wilson—RSC Assistant (kwil@blackpool.ac.uk)

Keith is one of the RSC Assistants manning the Help Desk at the Regional Support Centre. Keith trained at the Fleetwood Nautical College as a Radio Officer and also served in the Royal Signals as a technician.

After leaving the services he has worked as a Technical Support Engineer for several companies on Main Frame Computers, PC's and Communications equipment.

He joined the College IT department in October 1999.



*Navin Panchal
Network Engineer*

Navin Panchal—Network Engineer (n.panchal@lancs.ac.uk)

Navin Joined the Regional support Centre in January 2001 after working for several years in the Middle East, and is based in Lancaster University Computer Centre.



*Yvonne Ferrell
Administrator*

Yvonne Ferrell—Administrator (yf@blackpool.ac.uk)

Yvonne Joined the Regional support Centre in January 2001 as the administrator after previously working within the Finance Department at the University of Teeside.

Focus On...

As part of our commitment to the Northwest Post 16 sector to promote JISC resources, we intend in every newsletter to Focus On a specific ILT service and also a Technical service. For this initial newsletter we have focused on the Resource Discovery Network and the JANET Web Cache. If you feel there is a service or resource that you would like us to Focus On, then do not hesitate to contact the Regional Support Centre and we will try to include it in our next newsletter.

Chrissie Mason—Project Assistant
cm@blackpool.ac.uk

Focus On...The Resource Discovery Network



The RDN is a free Internet service dedicated to providing effective access to high quality Internet resources for the learning, teaching and research community. The service is primarily aimed at Internet users in further and higher education. Others will also find the service to be of value for personal and professional development.

The RDN provides access to a series of Internet resource catalogues containing descriptions of high quality Internet sites, selected and described by specialists from within UK academia and affiliated organisations. Value-added services such as interactive web tutorials and alerting services are also provided to enable users to make more of their time on the Internet

The RDN is a co-operative network consisting of a central organisation, the Resource Discovery Network Centre (RDNC) and a number of independent service providers called hubs.

The RDN provides much more than a collection of isolated databases. While each hub maintains its own character and identity, collaboration enables them to offer users the ability to search for resources across several hubs at the same time.

The RDN is freely accessible to all via the Internet. Some services may have restricted access; please consult the relevant hub for more details. <http://www.rdn.ac.uk>

Behind the Headlines



Colleagues may be interested in "Behind the Headlines" - a new service from the RDN. The service offers users background information on the latest news stories via pre-set searches of high-quality Internet resources. All of the RDN's 30,000 resources are selected, catalogued and described by subject and information professionals drawn from over 60 UK education institutions and related organisations.

The service is offered free at the point of use and is available online at <http://www.rdn.ac.uk/news/headlines> - feedback on this or any other aspect of the RDN is always welcome.

Teaching Academics to become eLiterate!

The RDN Virtual Training Suite is a national initiative designed to teach Internet information skills to students, lecturers and researchers in higher and further education in the UK, though it is also freely available for any one else to use.

It comprises a set of "teach yourself" tutorials, delivered over the Web, each of which offers Internet information skills training in a particular subject area.

The tutorials offer "any time, any place" training, take around an hour each to complete and include quizzes and interactive exercises to lighten the learning experience. They offer a subject-based approach to Internet skills training, enabling the user to:

- TOUR key Internet resources for the subject
- DISCOVER how to improve their Internet search skills
- REVIEW the need for critical evaluation of information on the Internet
- REFLECT on practical ways to use the Internet to support learning, teaching and research



The tutorials can be used by individuals as a "teach yourself" tool, or by lecturers, librarians and trainers wanting to teach Internet information skills to their students. Supplementary Resources for Trainers can be found on each tutorial.

<http://www.vts.rdn.ac.uk>

Who's Who in the Northwest ILT Region

Are you confused by acronyms such as NILTA, Ferl, LSDA and COFHE? Not sure who to contact to find out details of the latest NILTA event? Need help with a resource on Ferl? Then the RSC Newsletter is here to help.

We have contacted a number of organisations to put together this directory for the Northwest Region. Alternatively you can contact the RSC helpdesk and we will be happy to put you in contact with the relevant person.

Chrissie Mason—Project Assistant
cm@blackpool.ac.uk

Ferl – <http://ferl.becta.org.uk>

Ferl is funded by the Learning and Skills Council and managed by the British Educational Communications and Technology Agency (Becta). Its services include the provision of a web site, a Ferl annual conference and a number of regional events such as workshops and seminars, all aimed at supporting colleges to integrate ILT into their teaching and learning practice.



Ferl web site

The Ferl web site contains a wealth of information for staff in the post compulsory education sector, including: reviews of electronic learning materials, multimedia and web sites, by subject area; case studies on the development and integration of ILT into colleges, information on learning technologies, including hardware, software, the Web, intranets, distance learning, multimedia, videoconferencing,

virtual reality, UK events listings special features, such as Managed Learning Environments, key sector documents and papers related to ILT

How to get involved in Ferl if you are a college practitioner

In the first instance, simply get in touch. Contributing to Ferl is not complicated and new contributors are always welcome. The most common form of contribution is to undertake reviews of software or web sites, to be published on Ferl. However, you may wish to contribute lesson plans, schemes of work, downloadable examples of teaching materials or a case study on the success - or otherwise - of an ILT project in your college. You might want to get involved in the discussion forums, submit an idea for a resource link, or suggest a multimedia resource.

Contacting Ferl

You can either call the Ferl team at Becta on 024 7641 6994 or e-mail at: ferl@becta.org.uk. Alternatively you can contact Sal Cooke on 07801 612455 or sal_cooke@becta.org.uk - who is the Ferl rep for the North

NW CMIS Group

The North West CMIS Group started over ten years ago when Lancashire and Cheshire LEAs came together to discuss the Computerised Management Information Systems (CMIS) that were emerging at the time. When colleges were incorporated in 1994 the group carried on under the direction of colleges and the membership grew to include all North West colleges. Meetings are held bi-monthly and are free to all NW colleges. Meetings start at 10:00am and include a morning business meeting followed by a buffet lunch and then an afternoon session which will be either a demonstration of software or hardware relevant to MIS users, or a session with a representative of an organisation such as FEFC/LSC, the Data Protection Commission or other similar.

Lunches are funded by the running of occasional conferences for North West colleges.

The group is chaired by John Burke of Myerscough College (jburke@myerscough.ac.uk), Assoc. Chair is Nigel Parkinson of Tameside College. Secretarial support is provided by John Taylor of St Helen's College and Treasurer is John Nugent of Stockport College. The Group's website can be found at <http://www.myerscough.ac.uk/nwcmis>

NILTA—National Information & Learning Technologies Association

The North West Committee of NILTA has only recently been elected, with past events in the NW Region put together by Maureen McDermott Chair of the Regional Committee, and John Burke (jburke@myerscough.ac.uk), NW Regional Representative to NILTA Council.

NILTA's mission is to provide support to member institutions to use information and learning technologies effectively within all areas of the post-16, lifelong learning sector. NILTA is committed to running events designed to meet the particular needs of College Members in the Region and also to working with the other agencies active in the North West. The Region is delighted that the Annual NILTA Conference is to be held within the North West this year, at the Imperial Hotel, Blackpool.



The NILTA Website can be found at <http://www.nilta.org.uk/> and North West Regional Reports at http://www.nilta.org.uk/regions/nor_west/nor_west.htm

Who's Who in the Northwest ILT Region

CoFHE – Colleges of Further and Higher Education Group of The Library Association

- CoFHE NW Circle has been going for over fifteen years and exists to provide continuing education and networking opportunities to CoFHE members in the North West.
- Our programme has been wide ranging and has included such topics as World Wide Web, Lifelong Learning, Business Plans, FE Inspection, User Education, Library Services to Users with Special Needs and the National Year of Reading.
- We have a dedicated Committee who work hard to ensure our events run smoothly but we also enjoy ourselves.
- Our AGM is held in November each year and we are always looking for volunteers to join us.
- We also welcome any interested people to our meetings whether they are CoFHE members or even Librarians as many of our events are aimed wider than a library audience.
- Any suggestions for future meetings are warmly welcomed, as are offers of hospitality for meetings at local colleges. Please address any such suggestions or offers or requests for further information to our secretary Val Graham at MANCAT, e-mail: val_graham@mancat.ac.uk. We look forward to meeting you at future CoFHE meetings.



The Council for Learning Resources in Colleges (CoLRiC)

The Council for Learning Resources in Colleges (CoLRiC) was founded in 1993 as an independent organisation dedicated to enhancing and maintaining the quality of learning resources services in further education colleges throughout the United Kingdom and Ireland. It now has a membership of over 250 colleges.

CoLRiC stimulates the enhancement of quality in college learning resources services in a number of ways, including

- providing and publishing national standards and criteria for service provision
- a peer accreditation scheme
- offering a Beacon Award (through the Association of Colleges) for the 'Effective integration of college libraries/learning resources centres in curriculum delivery'
- publishing 'Working Papers' and guidelines for inspections
- initiating research into areas related to the aims of CoLRiC.

CoLRiC also raises awareness and understanding of the learning resources service's role by

- contacting college senior managers and governing bodies
- making strong representation to organisations that are important to the future of college learning resources services
- organising conferences
- being active members of other organisations.



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Learning and Skills Development Agency



The Learning and Skills Development Agency is a strategic national resource for the development of policy and practice in post-16 education and training. The Agency was previously known as the Further Education Development Agency (FEDA).

The learning technologies web site (www.learningtechnologies.ac.uk) supports the activities and hosts the reports of LSDA's Learning Technologies team. Several of the team are based in the North West, at the Agency's Liverpool office. For further information about the Agency's work see the main site (www.lsda.org.uk).

The Quick Guide

	Regional Contact Name	Email Address	Telephone Number
Ferl	Sal Cooke	sal_cooke@becta.org.uk	07801 612455
National Information & Learning Technologies Association (NILTA)	Maureen Mc Dermott John Burke	jburke@myerscough.ac.uk	01995 642316
NW CMIS Group	John Burke	jburke@myerscough.ac.uk	01995 642316
COFHE	Val Graham	val_graham@mancat.ac.uk	0161 953 5995
CoLRiC		colric@colric.org.uk	01254 662923
LSDA	Kevin Donovan	kdonovan@learningtechnologies.ac.uk	0151 794 4037

The JANET Web Cache Service

Focus On...The JANET Web Cache Service



The JANET Web Cache Service

for UK Higher & Further Education
<http://wwwcache.ja.net/>

Facilitating the use of the Web for teaching, learning and research.

Bringing Web content closer to the user. Saving valuable time

Reducing national and international bandwidth consumption.

The JANET Web Cache Service for UK Higher & Further Education

(See <http://wwwcache.ja.net> for details) is a free service available to HEFCE & FEFC funded institutions.

What is a Web Cache?

In World Wide Web terms, a cache is a place where temporary copies of web objects are kept.

Web caching minimises the amount of times identical web objects are transferred from remote web sites by retaining copies of requested URLs in a cache.

(there are some objects that can not be cached)

Subsequent requests for previously cached URLs result in the cached copy of the object being returned to the user, thereby creating little or no extra network traffic; improving efficiency and reducing waiting time.

Cached objects are returned to the user from a much closer location, saving the need to go directly to the URL in question. (often via the Trans-Atlantic link.)

Why should our institution use the JANET Web Cache Service?

To appreciate the benefits of web caching, and in particular the JWCS, consider the amount of users at your institution who use the Internet on a regular basis. Now imagine their surfing patterns. Many users will actually be accessing the same popular sites on a regular basis. Without a cache structure, this sort of web access can be wasteful and inefficient.

The JANET Web Cache Service – benefits of using the service

The JANET Web Cache Service is at the hub of the UK Higher & Further Education caching infrastructure, which is one of the most sophisticated and developed in the world. Universities, Further Education colleges, and other eligible institutions can link their local caches to the JANET Web Cache Service, which services user requests for Web objects anywhere on the global Internet.

The overall JANET Web Cache system is created through the use of approximately 170 institutions, with over 100 million requests going through the proxy cache clusters operated by the JANET Web Cache Service to access the Internet. Because the Service has 2 Terabytes of disk capacity and is very widely used, the chances of the JANET Web Cache having a requested web object is greatly enhanced.

We do not have an established local cache – We need more information

Please contact the JWCS HELPDESK, which can be reached between 9am and 5pm (normal office hours) for support and advice on many aspects of web caching.

Email: - support@wwwcache.ja.net or telephone 0161 275 7195 / 6011 / 6008 or 6042 for details.
Ingrid Evans – JANET Web Cache Service User Liaison Officer
ingrid.evans@man.ac.uk

E-Learning in the Northwest

E-Learning in the Northwest

An introduction to the E-learning Northwest Initiative from Wilf Gardner

You may or may not be aware that we are developing our own strategy for E-Learning in the North West. The North West Development Agency are driving this forward as part of the Learning and Skills agenda for the Region. A series of some 16 meetings has just been completed around our part of the World to invite comment and criticism of a draft E-Learning Strategy. There were some very interesting outcomes and in a short space I will try to hit the high points.

The first is that the draft recognises that the "e" bit is not just about distance learning or CBT. It is about all forms of learning because of course ICT can be used in class - at home - at work etc. In this respect it has value for the whole community and is really very relevant to the concept of Life Long Learning – the FE and HE market place. To focus on this aspect the draft uses a novel definition of E-Learning

The delivery and support of learning, locally or remotely at any distance, by DIGITAL means

This definition was not challenged at all during the presentations. In fact many people were pleased to see the how widely the concept was being promoted.

Digital Means is intended to include:

Computers, TV, Radio, CD ROM, DVD, Mobile Phone, VHS.....

And anything that may develop in the future as these incredible technologies evolve and improve.

In a different way issues relating to social inclusion/exclusion were raised at many of the events and it became apparent that it would be easier if they could be addressed at the same time as disabled access for example. We therefore developed a concept of **ACCESSIBILITY** which would embrace all the aspects of being able to use e-techniques to learn. A simple way of describing this concept to mixed audiences was to suggest a simple questionnaire approach.

Have you got access to a Machine?
 Does it use the right language for you?
 Can you drive it?
 Can you see it?
 Can you hear it?
 Have you got access to a network?
 Can you get access to the right learning materials?
 Can you afford it all?



Again this was well received and is a concept worth taking further.

There was and still is a lot of attention being paid to getting connected to a network and having access to sufficient bandwidth. Clearly these are important issues but, in my view, are becoming a distraction. The most passionate response from those at the sharp end i.e. the e-tutors, concerned the quality and quantity of on-line learning materials available at the present time. The whole issue of **CONTENT**, including relevance, assessment, pedagogic validity and cost are so important that unless we begin to focus on these with concerted vigour we shall end up with a motorway in place and only imported cars to run on it. This is a major issue. FE must surely be the major player in this arena and unnecessary duplication and competition for the apparent cash cows could lead to long term problems.

The final issue that was raised on a number of occasions related to the threat that this technology poses to conventional teaching methods. In my view, the definition above does not represent a threat. It recognises that E-Learning as defined will add value to all forms of learning. This will challenge teaching staff to the extent that they will not be able to ignore it but, again in my view, it will not replace the classroom or the need for face-to-face contact in most FE teaching. Importantly however is the very clear challenge that for courses offered on-line

WHAT YOU WANT – WHERE YOU WANT – WHEN YOU WANT IT

there will be a very strong market lead. Only those learning opportunities that the learners are prepared to pay for will survive and those learners will call the tune much more significantly than at present. Couple that with the real possibility of learning records being owned by the learners rather than the providers and learners shopping around for the most relevant/best buy materials and you do have a major challenge to the establishment as we know it.

These few issues in no way do justice to the great discussions with those 400 or so people who turned out to the meetings and on behalf of our team thanks to them all for adding real value to this important debate.

Wilf Gardner
 wilf.gardner@wilfdotgardner.co.uk

Events

Events Round-up

www.rsc-northwest.ac.uk

Date	Event	Venue	How do I book a place?
8 October 2001	Securing and Monitoring your Network organised by UCISA Networking Group and UKERNA	Trinity House, Tower Hill, London	http://www.ja.net/conferences/security/monitoring_oct01/booking_form.html
14-15 October 2001	NILTA 13th Annual Conference "Working Smarter: Working Together"	Imperial Hotel, Blackpool	http://www.nilta.org.uk/events/Annual/Conference%20leaflet.pdf
23 October 2001	National Learning Network Crafting the Content: Process and Product	North Trafford College	www.rsc-northwest.ac.uk 01253 504070 support@rsc-northwest.ac.uk
26 October 2001	Literature Online and Know UK Workshop	Preston College	www.rsc-northwest.ac.uk 01253 504070 support@rsc-northwest.ac.uk
6 November 2001	JANET Video Services - The Future	Royal College of Physicians, London	http://www.ja.net/conferences/calendar/2001/index.html
8 November 2001	Interactive Staff Development Nilta Northwest Region	St Helens College	Gill Harrison, Regional Links Officer, NILTA Tel: 0113 258 3029 Fax: 0113 216 2059 gharrison@nilta.org.uk
14 November 2001	National Learning Network Crafting the Content: Process and Product	Kendal College	www.rsc-northwest.ac.uk 01253 504070 support@rsc-northwest.ac.uk
19-20 November 2001	FerI Conference 2001	Moat House Hotel, Stratford	http://feri.becta.org.uk
20-22 November 2001	AoC Annual Conference – Excellence and Innovation	Birmingham	http://www.feonline.net/conference/
7 December 2001	Learning materials interoperability: an event for developers and producers	Wigan and Leigh College	Kevin Donovan – LSDA kdonovan@learningtechnologies.ac.uk – 0151 794 4037
18-19 December 2001	Networking Strategy Workshop	University of Warwick	http://www.ja.net/conferences/calendar/2001/index.html
20-22 March 2002	ITIL 2002 1st International Conference on IT & Information Literacy	Kelvin Conference Centre University of Glasgow	http://www.iteu.gla.ac.uk/IT&ILit2002/IE/index.html
3-6 April 2002	First joint CoFHE /UC&R conference	University of Bath Worcester College of Technology	Kate Gardner kgardner@wortech.ac.uk