



Information Technology Services

In this issue

Standard Operating Environment

Security Special
Turning the Internet
against Itself
Defend Your Desktop
Troubleshooting Tips
Is it a Virus?

No Fear!
– Advice on Automated
Lecture Theatres

Video Streaming Trial

Web Development Unit
keeps our Legal Eagles
Aloft

Helpdesk Report
"The Problem with Proxies..."

Internet services
for UQ Departments

New Look Bulletin

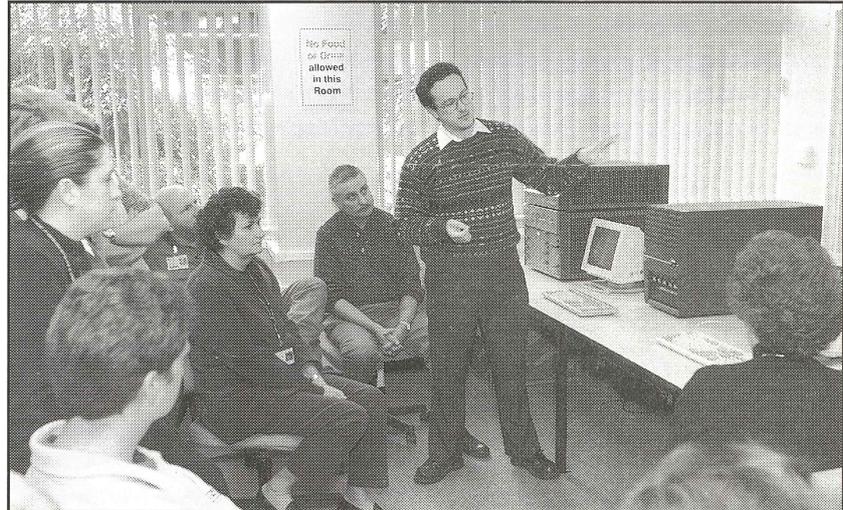
Welcome to the first of our new look ITS Bulletins.

Are there any topics which you would like to see covered in the Bulletin?

Email us at
help@its.uq.edu.au

and let us know.

Don't forget...
we are *your* IT Services!



Gavin Stone-Tolcher from Facilities Management demonstrates Quips to ITS staff.

SOE Project Set for Pilot

Following a successful round of demonstrations mid-year, the Standard Operating Environment (SOE) is set to enter its second phase with a pilot implementation. The Pilot program will commence before the end of semester and will involve participants from many departments.

Pilot users will run the standard productivity tools (based around the Microsoft Office 2000 family) which reside on the SOE server. All Office user files can be saved on the server (or locally if you prefer) but participants will continue to utilise their existing computer (Windows, Unix or Mac OS) to run and save files for their own specialised software.

In addition to the selected departmental users, ITS will shift all of their own staff desktops to the SOE environment. This means that the pilot will be both broad – involving a wide range of departments and deep, with the mass involvement of ITS staff used to spot potential weaknesses in the implementation of the system.

Sun and Windows NT servers are now in place, with the next phase expected to be the roll out of client software. We'll keep you posted!

What is the SOE?

The SOE is a Standard Operating Environment for your desktop which gathers all the regular productivity tools – word processing, spreadsheets, e-mail, calendars and so on and runs them from a central server. This has several important advantages:

Speed

The standard programs (like the Microsoft Office family) run blindingly fast on the server – even when using older client computers.

Flexibility

You can log on to your own desktop from any computer on campus (provided it has SOE) or from home, and have all your

productivity tools and files at hand. You can continue to use your PC, Unix or Mac equipment to run specialised software alongside SOE.

Cost

You benefit from the latest speed and power of up-to-date software without needing to purchase new generation computer hardware. Using SOE, Office 2000 runs just as well on a 486 as on a Pentium III.

Compatibility

When all computers in a workgroup run SOE, there is no problem with interchanging files. And when new software releases occur – all users are upgraded automatically.

Security Special

Turning the Internet against Itself

You can't see it happen but you can certainly feel the impact!

AusCERT has published information about the latest attack tool which clogs internet traffic, making connection slow or simply impossible.

It works when the attacker 'spoofs' or forges the internet address of the victim and sends a large number of messages to a server or just one to many. The Domain

Name System (DNS) server receives the request and sends back a response to the forged IP address telling the message where to go. These responses are large in comparison to the initial query. This, combined with the fact that the DNS will respond to a query from any source (including a bogus one), can cause the unsuspecting name server to flood the site

targeted by forged requests from an attacker. The resulting excessive traffic means there is little bandwidth, or room, left for legitimate messages.

MORE INFO ▼

Measures for addressing the problem can be found in the following advisory: ftp://ftp.auscert.org.au/pub/auscert/advisory/AL-1999.004.dns_dos

Defend Your Desktop

The Melissa computer virus affected many people earlier this year despite wide media exposure and warnings within the University. Just following a few simple rules can help stop you being a victim.

Maybe you think your computer contains nothing important and therefore won't be a target of an attack. But you may still be at risk either because the assailant is interested in using your computer or you may just be the innocent victim of an indiscriminate raid.

1. Email

Scan attachments with an anti-virus program before opening, especially if you don't know the sender or the document seems suspicious. It is possible for hackers to mimic legitimate senders so question why your colleague is sending you "Make a million bucks", "Hot Teen Sex" or other unusual material.

If you exchange Word documents with other people, try to save and exchange them in RTF format instead the standard .doc format.

Also regularly update your anti-virus software – Norton AntiVirus can do this automatically and purchase price includes one year of updates.

If you have any doubts, you may wish to have your system administrator check any suspicious messages for potential problems.

2. Web Browsing

Many web sites make use of executable code such as Java, Javascript, and Active-X. Most sites use these tools for legitimate purposes, but unfortunately a small number do not. These facilities are generally switched on by default, so, if possible, disable them until you need them. Then, when you visit an unfamiliar site it can't execute code on your machine without your knowledge. The method used to switch off these facilities varies with the range of browsers available. Refer to questions 63 through 65 at <http://www.w3.org/Security/Faq/www-security-faq.html>.

3. Microsoft Application

When using Microsoft applications, such as Word, Excel and PowerPoint, disable Macros by default. In Word97, for example, you can disable automatic macro execution by clicking Tools/Options/General and turning on the 'Macro virus protection' checkbox. Word98 it's under Tools/Preferences/General.

While these steps won't prevent all possible attacks, they will help you avoid many common ones. By investing just a few moments in getting to know the software you use, you may save yourself embarrassment and loss later on.

MORE INFO ▼

AUSCert

Troubleshooting Tips Is it a Virus?

Before you pick up the phone to call for help, check you don't have one of these common problems with a simple solution. These are the top five from Gai and Lorna from the IT Support Desk.

Computer crashed or frozen? Simply use CTRL+ALT+DEL to reboot. Or CTRL+CMND (Apple key)+RESTART KEY for Mac users. If this doesn't work try the reset button or switching off the power.

'Password has expired' For security purposes passwords on Central Administration systems need to be changed via telnet or qvt term every 60 days. If you get this message simply log into telnet or qvt term and change password.

'Non-system disk error' If you get this message when rebooting it means there is a disk in one of the drives which the computer tries to access. Solution – eject the disk and then reboot.

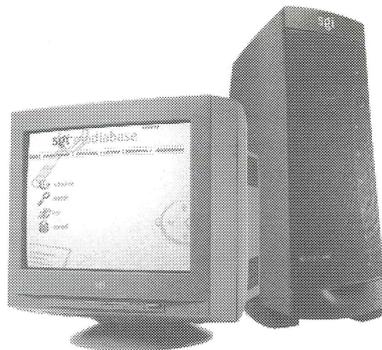
'Performed an illegal operation' – no, it's not a U-turn at the traffic lights – just close the application and reopen. If message doesn't go away, reboot the machine.

'No network access' Sounds like big trouble but before you call check the cabling. Is the blue cable plugged in at both ends? Obvious answer but surprisingly accounts for a large number of calls to the help line.

Video Streaming Trial

In October and November, ITS will be conducting a trial of Streaming Video technology using SGI's MediaBase product. The trial will demonstrate a variety of modes for delivering Video and Audio for flexible delivery of course content. MPEG1 video streams will be available across the LAN to desktop computers and Real Media streams will be tested across the Internet for student use off-campus and for previewing of video assets where a LAN connection is not available. The trials will include inter-campus tests at Ipswich and Gatton.

Multimedia content, especially Video is difficult to serve effectively from a standard web-server and there are substantial issues of effective access control and copyright. The aim of ITS is to develop an infrastructure for departmental clients to use which provides guaranteed high quality



while being flexible and secure. The trial will test issues of network loading, speed and quality using a variety of typical course material. Two SGI *Origin 200* computers will provide the server horsepower while client browser applications will be tested on PC, Mac and UNIX platforms.

MORE INFO ▼

To receive information about demonstration times contact **Derek Powell <d.powell@its.uq.edu.au>**

No Fear!

- Advice on Automated Lecture Theatres

The AMX control panel allows lecturers easy one touch operation of all lecture theatre functions from lighting to audio and visual aids. The system is as easy to operate as a TV remote control but can seem a little intimidating at first glance.

As part of an ongoing upgrade of facilities, there are already 12 AMX controlled theatres on the St. Lucia campus and six at Gatton. Eighty percent of the new theatres at the Ipswich campus are AMX controlled. By the end of 2002, all lecture theatres seating over 150 will have AMX control.

At a cost of \$35,000 per lecture theatre, each full AMX installation includes new amplifiers, speakers, cabling, lighting dimmer, electronics and a handcrafted lectern.

The correct operation of the AMX control panel is covered in the academic staff orientation held before the start of each semester. But for anyone who missed out or who needs a refresher, AV Services can provide training anytime throughout the year. Just call Kevin Dalton on ext. 54033 to arrange a suitable time.

If you have problems during a lecture call the centralised fault reporting number which is listed on a panel by the phone (x59111) but check below for some common, easily solved problems.

- AMX Screen is blank.

The panel is probably in 'sleep' mode. Just touch the screen to activate.

- Top of screen is flashing 'Preview Mode' and you can't get anything out of the projector.

Touch 'EXIT' at the top left corner and go from there.

- Nothing seems to happen when you make a source selection.

The lights are designed to turn on with a three second fade allowing the eyes to adjust easily. After making your selection, just wait.

MORE INFO ▼

Contact Kevin Dalton on x54033

Web Development Unit keeps our Legal Eagles Aloft

The WDU provides a valuable maintenance service to the Law department under a service arrangement that provides for 10 hours a week of programmer time to develop new pages, update information or address some of the tricky issues in maintaining the existing site.

Dr Michael White, Executive Director of the Centre for Maritime Law, is enthusiastic about the benefits of the work put in to maintain the site. "The TC Beirne School of Law looks on its Web Site as one of its most important tools in providing a service to its students and assisting its scholars to achieve their full potential.

The Law School intends to continue to use the Web Site to a world's best practice standard", he said.

There's a perception that the Web Development Unit only gets involved in major projects like the development of the main University pages. However, in reality they have a number of really useful smaller service packages that can be very cost effective for departments.

WDU developed sites are deliberately designed to be easy to maintain by the client department's own staff for routine things like changes to timetables and so on. But service agreements to provide for updates, changes and modifications are very useful where internal IT people are already fully committed.

MORE INFO ▼

wdu@its.uq.edu.au

Helpdesk Report

“The Problem with Proxies...”



What's a Proxy?

The proxy server saves copies of recently visited web pages so that when people request a website that is saved on the proxy server the site is loaded from that local server, speeding up access time as the pages are not loaded from their domestic or international servers. Difficulty with the “UQ Proxies” is one of the most common causes for staff and student Internet access problems that we encounter here at the Helpdesk.

How do I know if I have a Problem?

You need to tell your browser software to use the Proxy server, as it is a requirement on all staff and student accounts. If you have incorrectly setup the proxies (or missed setting them up all together) you will most likely be encountering one or more of the following symptoms when using the Internet:

- You can dial in but when opening up your internet browser (Netscape or Internet Explorer) you cannot open any web pages and may be getting an error message saying that the software could not locate the website or server;
- You can only browse University Of Queensland websites and get the above errors when trying to connect to websites external to UQ;
- You get a message in your browser software saying that you are using the incorrect proxies and to go to a web page for the steps on how to correct them.

How do I fix it?

To ensure the proxies are set correctly, follow the steps at the following address to enable the Autoproxy:
<http://www.uq.edu.au/uqnet/uq-autoproxy.html>

Please Note:

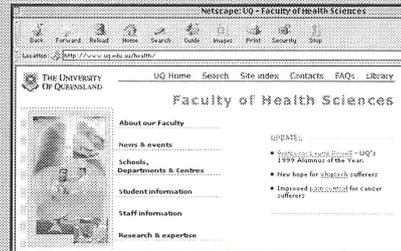
Once you have correctly configured the proxies you will not see any messages to confirm the fact that they are working. You should however, be able to access those websites that were previously unavailable.

MORE INFO ▼

Call the help desk on 336 54400 or drop in to the Client Services counter on the ground floor of the Prentice building. Email: help@its.uq.edu.au

Internet Services for UQ Departments

Web Page publishing under Departmental Name



Now you can publish web pages in your own domain without requiring your own web server. Documents are published on a “virtual” web server created by the ITS multi-homed web server. The name of this virtual server can be any allowable host-name in the department’s domain, for example www.yourdept.uq.edu.au. The URL of web documents for this example would be of the form:

<http://www.yourdept.uq.edu.au>

Ten Mbytes of storage are provided with this service. Extra space may be purchased if required.

This service allows only for the publishing of simple WWW pages. For security reasons, only scripts written (or, in some instances, approved) and installed by the ITS Web Development Unit (WDU) may be used.

Pricing

- \$200 p.a. per virtual web server

MORE INFO ▼

Contact Yamini on x54007

ITS BULLETIN

For enquiries or mailing list amendments, contact:

Presentation Services
 Level 5, Prentice Building
 Telephone (07) 3365 2242
 Facsimile (07) 3365 1954
 Email: d.powell@mailbox.uq.edu.au