

UCONNECT: making the right connections

New CD and website offer easy access to software and how-to advice



We got connections: Nick D'Alesandro (CALT) and Adrian Dillon (IT Resources) with a Student Resource CD hot off the press.

The development of the UCONNECT brand has seen the introduction of the UCONNECT website and Student Resource CD from Semester 1, 2006.

Following the development of a website associated with the University Authenticated Network Access (UANA) project and having gained permission to use the UCONNECT branding from PR&UE, the Teaching Systems Management Group (TSMG) determined to increase the number and variety of software titles on the Vista Support CD provided to students by CALT and incorporate the new CD under the UCONNECT brand. The existing CD contained information, plug-ins and software for students to set up their own computers for use with WebCT Vista.

The basis of the UCONNECT concept was the creation of a website that students could use to access a broader range of software that would make connecting to learning resources and course materials easier. This website can be accessed by students using the internet at any time so students with broadband connections can choose to download software directly from the website or download onto a memory device or burnt to CD on-campus using suitably equipped lab computers. The entire UCONNECT site is included on the CD so students can run the site offline at home to reduce download times and save on costs.

For Semester 1, 2006 students have been provided with a voucher to redeem the CD when obtaining their student ID card from Student Administration. This will enable accurate recording for software licensing and usage statistic purposes. Students were able to collect the CDs from the Service Desk from February 28 in most centres. This CD is seen as an important resource for improving the student experience, particularly for first-year students.

Production of the CD was undertaken by a cross-section team of CALT, Library and IT Resources staff to a tight timeframe leading up to one of the busiest periods of the year and Team Leader Desktop Management Systems (ITR), Colin Broadbent, thanks everyone involved in the project for their work and achievement in delivering this high quality resource for students.

The TSMG would welcome submissions for inclusion of content from other areas of the University in a revision to be made available for the beginning of Semester 2, 2006.

The UCONNECT site can be accessed at www.utas.edu.au/uconnect.

In this issue

- 2 Microsoft Campus Agreement signed
- 2 ICT Strategic Plan 2005-2007 released
- 2 University Card System driving change
- 3 2006: Another big year for IT Resources
- 4 SPAM filter service now online
- 4 IT Resources Hobart Relocation Update
- 5 Internet access with no strings attached?
- 6 TREN-Connect - building e-Highways
- 7 Videoconference Upgrade Project Developments
- 7 iLecture project expanded for 2006
- 8 Staff Profile - Rod Bilson

Microsoft Campus Agreement signed

The University has entered into a new three-year arrangement with Microsoft for the provision of a suite of core software applications and client licences.

The agreement ensures the entire University complies with all current Microsoft software licensing requirements for Office Professional for Windows and Macintosh, Visual Studio Pro 2005, Frontpage 2003 and Windows XP Professional Upgrade. Client Access Licences for Exchange, SQL 2005, and Windows 2003 Server are also included in the agreement.

“Now that the Microsoft Campus Agreement has been signed

University faculties, schools and organisational units can enjoy greater discounts on commonly used Microsoft applications such as Microsoft Office Professional for Windows and Macintosh,” Glenda Wardlaw, ITR Procurement Services Manager, said.

Staff members who are required to work from home can also take advantage of the agreement and may purchase the software for use on their home PCs for the price of the media.

All enquiries concerning the purchase of software under the agreement should be directed to the IT Procurement Services unit at lease.scheme@utas.edu.au.

ICT Strategic Plan 2005-2007 released

The University of Tasmania (UTAS) Information Communication Technology (ICT) Strategic Plan 2005-2007 was approved in November 2005 and it identifies the strategies and initiatives that overarch decision making, planning, and deployment of ICT services and systems across the University community. This important document also provides a context for the use of ICT to support and enhance the ambition, mission, and goals espoused in the University Plan 2005-2007, and provides direction for the use and development of ICT in support of the University’s ambition, mission and goals identified within the parameters of the EDGE agenda.

The University faces unique challenges, particularly in accommodating changing demands and providing equity of access to ICT infrastructure and services across the University’s various campuses and operational units. Successfully addressing these issues is crucial to the development of the

University and the focus for 2005-2007 will be on leveraging ICT to develop strong Teaching and Learning, Research, and Administrative infrastructure and services, as well as improved self-service options for students and staff.

In the simplest of terms the mission of IT Resources over the coming two years is two-fold. The first part is to develop and apply ICT-based services to teaching and learning, research and administrative activities across the University in a manner that facilitates and enhances the learning experience; enables and augments research activities; and improves efficiency and effectiveness within the University’s administrative divisions. The second is to achieve these aims in a financially responsible and ethical manner.

A copy of the plan is available online at http://www.utas.edu.au/universitycouncil/plans_structure/ict.pdf

University card system a driver of change

The University Card System (UCS) that handles University ID card generation and integration with photo-copying, printing and other library systems has been undergoing a number of changes recently.

The project has been progressing for more than 18 months and many of the existing functions were completed back in early 2005. However many of the project’s processes have been lacking adequate documentation and improvements were needed in this area to reduce the sometimes significant overhead in managing the system.

With the appointment of a new services manager late in 2005 and with help from a number of staff from the Library, Finance & Business Services and Student and Academic Services the project has seen a rapid improvement in support through better documentation, faster response times and enhanced issue management processes. This has in turn increased general confidence in the system, reduced risk and the project team has

achieved a key milestone by reducing card generation time for the beginning of the new semester — a critical time for Student and Academic Services.

The project has been unique in its wide spread support requirements and staff from many different areas of ITR and other administrative divisions have been involved. Although Management Information Systems manage the UCS system through its service manager, without the significant assistance from CaDS, Finance & Business Services, and Student and Academic Services, the system could not be supported adequately. Due largely to the sizeable number of support staff involved, the project also provided impetus to the implementation of consistent issue management and documentation processes.

The UCS steering committee oversees the strategic development and expansion of the UCS system and will be pursuing the introduction of additional services into the future.

2006: A big year ahead for IT Resources

Welcome to 2006 and the commencement of the academic year. This year promises to be both a challenging and exciting year for Information Technology Resources (ITR). ITR's role within the University continues to become more complex and diverse. In that context I would like to take a few moments to answer the question – "What does ITR do?"

The relevance of this question is not just to our clients within the University community, but also to individual staff members within the section who have suggested a general lack of understanding in the University community of ITR's functions and contribution to University activities.

I have also heard references or descriptions of IT, or ITR, as a black box.

A number of strategies, including this newsletter, have been implemented to address that position. Hopefully, after reading Insight, a greater appreciation of ITR's role will become evident. I would also like to publicly acknowledge the contribution of ITR staff. Their commitment to, and enthusiasm for, the University are evident throughout the articles in Insight.

The issue of understanding the role of Information Technology (IT) in an organisation, and also IT understanding its role, is a continuously moving target and one laced with technical jargon. This situation is not peculiar to ITR. It is documented as one of the major challenges facing my counterparts, both nationally and internationally. In fact Educause – an international association of Higher Education institutions that focuses on the advancement of Higher Education by promoting the intelligent use of Information Technology - has identified the alignment of IT with business as one of the top challenges facing organisations.

So what does ITR look like?

We are an administrative section in the Division of Finance and Administration, comprising some 75 staff supplying over 50 services across several major business functions. Many of those services are provided 'behind the scenes', while others are at the forefront of customer

service. The services themselves may be simple and straight forward or form a complex web of interrelated tasks requiring expert knowledge to maintain and develop.

ITR has as its mission '...the reliable and sustainable provision of core Information and Communication Technology (ICT) services in support of the University's primary activities of Teaching and Learning and Research.'

ITR's involvement in activities across the University in pursuit of this mission is enormous. In 2005 ITR was involved in more than 20 projects ranging from High Performance Computing and research infrastructure developments, through piloting of learning technologies for students and the provision of compliance information to government agencies.

While ITR's achievements during 2005 were significant, the future generates both a sense of anticipation and trepidation as ITR, like many areas of the University, is confronted with challenges including:

- Increasing demands for ICT service delivery and support,
- Improving efficiency and productivity,
- Developing greater business capabilities despite tightening budgets,
- Aligning IT goals with business strategies,
- Building knowledge and appreciation of IT operations,
- Changing business needs and dynamic technical environments,
- Skills management,
- Tactical and strategic planning,
- The documentation and dissemination of policy and procedures,
- Security management and alignment of security and business operations in a diverse and dynamic institutional environment.



How will ITR address these challenges in 2006?

We will take a considered and managed approach to service provision and development, applying technical innovation and using tools such as industry best practice approaches, benchmarking, and, importantly, communication.

In closing, I encourage you to reflect on the impact of IT on your own role in the University and to consider what lies behind those services we treat as essential to our day-to-day activities. These include e-mail, internet, administrative systems, and teaching and learning and research tools.

I welcome your feedback, both positive and negative, on the way in which ITR does, or could, support you in your own endeavours and look forward to a future opportunity to interact again on ICT matters.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Parry', written in a cursive style.

John Parry

Director, IT Resources

SPAM filter service available to staff and students

The University's SPAM filtering service has been improved in a bid to help manage the 800,000 unsolicited e-mail messages received by the University each week and reduce staff exposure to offensive and inappropriate material.

Colin Broadbent, Desktop Management Systems Team Leader, said the current policy position on SPAM is to scan all incoming e-mail messages for material of a pornographic, commercial or racially discriminatory nature and electronically tag messages deemed likely to cause offence or contain unwanted commercial material.

"From that point staff can either have all messages tagged as SPAM transferred to a separate folder in their e-mail client program, or have all messages tagged as SPAM deleted automatically," Colin said.

Staff opting to have potentially offensive or inappropriate messages transferred to a SPAM folder will need to check and periodically delete the contents of their SPAM folders if they are concerned about missing important messages.

This approach provides staff with a means of reducing or eliminating their exposure to offensive unsolicited e-mail messages, while allowing a mechanism for minimising the risk of missing important messages.

"For the most part people should be able to determine the content and relevance of e-mail messages they receive from details in message sender and subject lines - without having to open individual messages and be exposed to undesirable content," Colin said.

For detailed instructions on setting up your e-mail program to make use of the automatic SPAM filtering service please contact the service desk or visit the service desk web site. <http://www.utas.edu.au/servicedesk/staff/index.html>.

A copy of the University's SPAM policy is available on the IT Resources web site at www.utas.edu.au/itr/policies/Spam_Policy/SPAM_Policy_Sept2004.pdf

IT Resources Hobart Office relocation

As many of you may be aware IT Resources' Hobart operations and staff will be relocating to a redeveloped Corporate Services building (formerly AMS). This move will see the co-location of AMS, Financial & Business Services and IT Resources and is currently scheduled to occur between mid-November and early December 2006.

The relocation brings with it a number of logistical challenges as it will see the movement of staff and equipment from three separate buildings, the most significant being the relocation of the existing machine room or data centre. To assist with meeting this challenge, IT Resources is in the initial stages of implementing new processes and procedures to better align our service model with 'best practice' IT Service Management - ITIL.

Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL) is a set of best practice standards for Information Technology service management. Central to ITIL processes is the creation of a configuration management database (CMDB) which enables the integration and sharing of information between processes.

ITR's CMDB contains information that is essential to the relocation and future operation of the data centre including the relationships between individual hardware and software components and vital details regarding system and service

dependencies. The intention is that having determined these dependencies the information will be used to ensure that the relocation of equipment is undertaken in a predetermined order that will minimise service downtime and impacts on business operations.

The development of the CMDB is progressing and will see it become the authoritative source for all ITR-managed ICT infrastructure, detailing dependency and system information, and underpinning planning for the IT Resources data centre relocation in 2006.

IT Resources has also been working with the project architects and contracted mechanical service engineers for a number of months. To ensure design of the data centre met Australian design standards, an analysis of the initial mechanical engineers return design brief against the Australian standard and recent tertiary sector data centre implementations was prepared within IT Resources. This analysis identified some deficiencies that are currently being addressed.

The data centre is a significant strategic asset and it is essential that the existing IT infrastructure requirements are addressed in the design, within the prescribed budget framework, while also providing a degree of scalability for the future.

Tech Tip

Logging out of your PC every night allows time for essential automatic software updates to happen.

Wireless Internet: fast flexible mobile access

While Tasmania may not yet enjoy the complete range of telecommunications services available in other states, mobile telephone based Internet access packages are becoming more affordable. If you are considering upgrading your Internet service, and would appreciate the convenience of an Internet connection that you can take with you almost anywhere, it is worth taking a look at Telstra and Vodafone's current wireless Internet offerings.

Connecting to the Internet wirelessly over a cellular phone network is pretty straightforward and there are a couple of ways to do it. The more common methods are using a wireless-capable mobile phone or PDA [personal digital assistant] as a modem or plugging a wireless network card into a laptop PC.

GPRS (General Packet Radio Service) Internet services are available over GSM mobile telephone networks and provide usable, though relatively slow, e-mail and web-browsing performance at 40kbps (roughly equivalent to a traditional dial-up modem). A wide range of GPRS-capable mobile telephone handsets and PDAs that provide e-mail and web-browsing capability are available, and many can be used as modems for laptop computers.

For those looking for faster connections

1x-RTT (One x Radio Transmission Technology) is a CDMA-based option that typically supports connections at around 100 kbps. Like GPRS, connection to the Internet via 1x-RTT services is accomplished via compatible mobile phone handsets, PDAs and PC cards.

The latest development is the 1x-EVDO standard which supports mobile Internet connections at up to 512 kbps in areas where full speed connectivity is available. Outside these areas the service typically falls back to 1x-RTT speed (100 kbps).

Looking to the future

In November 2005 Telstra CEO Sol Trujillo announced Telstra's intention to move to a W-CDMA standard across Australia from late 2007. The first generation of Telstra's W-CDMA network is expected to support connections at up to 1 megabit per second for speedy web browsing and making video calls. As no current mobile handset models are W-CDMA capable Telstra customers can also anticipate having to change handsets when the new technology is phased in.

For more information or advice about how you can make the best use of the current crop of telecommunications services please contact IT Resources' Communications Technologies unit on (03) 6226 6191.

Recent model cellular telephones, laptop computers and personal digital assistants (PDAs) are excellent examples of convergence - the latest buzzword in telecommunications - where previously separate activities such as making telephone calls, sending SMS messages and accessing the Internet that used to require separate services and devices can now be accomplished using a single device.



Telstra's 1x-EVDO PC Card. Plug one into a laptop PC and you're connected at up to 512 kbps, where full speed services are available - and around 100 kbps where they're not.



The BlackBerry 7250 Handheld Unit. Telephone, e-mail and wireless modem. Internet access to your laptop at up to 600kbps on Telstra's 1xEVDO network (100kbps on some regional CDMA networks).

Generations: The development of cellular phone technology.

- 1G. Analogue wireless mobile telephones.
- 2G. Early digital telephones - SMS, Basic Data (WAP).
- 2.5G Later digital telephones - MMS, Faster Data (GPRS and 1xRTT).
- 3G. Third Generation digital mobile services, broadband data speeds, streaming multi-media (1xEVDO and W-CDMA).

Generation	1G	2G	2.5G	3G
Technology	AMPS (Analogue)	GSM CDMA	WAP GPRS 1x-RTT	1x-EVDO UMTS
Timeline	1985 - 1995	1995-2000	2000 - 2005	2005-2008

TREN-Connect: building e-Highways

The University's strategic direction for telecommunications development over the next 10 to 15 years has been determined and a great deal of progress has been made towards realising the strategy.

Central to this plan is the development of a Tasmanian Research and Education Network (TREN); a high-speed wide area network that will use the Tasmanian Government owned optic-fibre backbone to connect research and education facilities in Hobart, Launceston and Burnie. The ultimate aim is to then link the TREN to the Australian Research and Education Network (AREN) which will require establishing connections to Melbourne via Basslink and TREN's Victorian counterpart VERN.

Background work has been in progress since 2003 - when a business case for developing the network as part of AREN was put to the Australian Research and Education Advisory Committee. This project became known as TREN-Connect and subsequently received \$7 million in grant funds from the Department of Science Education and Training.

Phase I of the TREN-Connect project involves establishing interim bandwidth of 310 megabits per second to Australia's Academic and Research Network (AARNet). This work is nearing completion with the recent establishment of two

155Mbps services to the AARNet node in Hobart.

As well as providing greater access to University resources through a much larger Internet gateway University members can anticipate immediate performance improvements across a wide range of internal telecommunications services, the increased bandwidth will also provide vital support for collaborative computing and cooperative research activities.

Tasmania is developing into a widely recognised centre of marine and climate research and the activities of organisations such as the CSIRO, the Bureau of Meteorology and the Antarctic Climate and Ecosystems Cooperative Research Centre (ACECRC) generate significant amounts of data. Being able to gather, interpret and communicate the information to research partners around the globe is what TREN is all about". With the establishment of the 310Mbps service the University is now connected to AARNet3 - AARNet's next generation network which is designed to provide 10 gigabit per second services between the mainland capitals. This will in turn provide significant opportunities to access data and participate in research activities across Australia, the United States and South-East Asia.

Tasmanian-based activities such as the BlueNet marine data repository and the Very Long Baseline Interferometry experiments at the Mt Pleasant radio telescope facility will also enjoy greater capacity to foster cooperation with a much larger number of research partners. The work of Professor John Dickey and Dr Simon Ellingson at the Mount Pleasant Observatory is an excellent example of the efforts that can be supported.

These changes to the network will greatly increase its capacity to shift huge quantities of data and this requires careful consideration from a business perspective according to John Parry, Director of ITR.

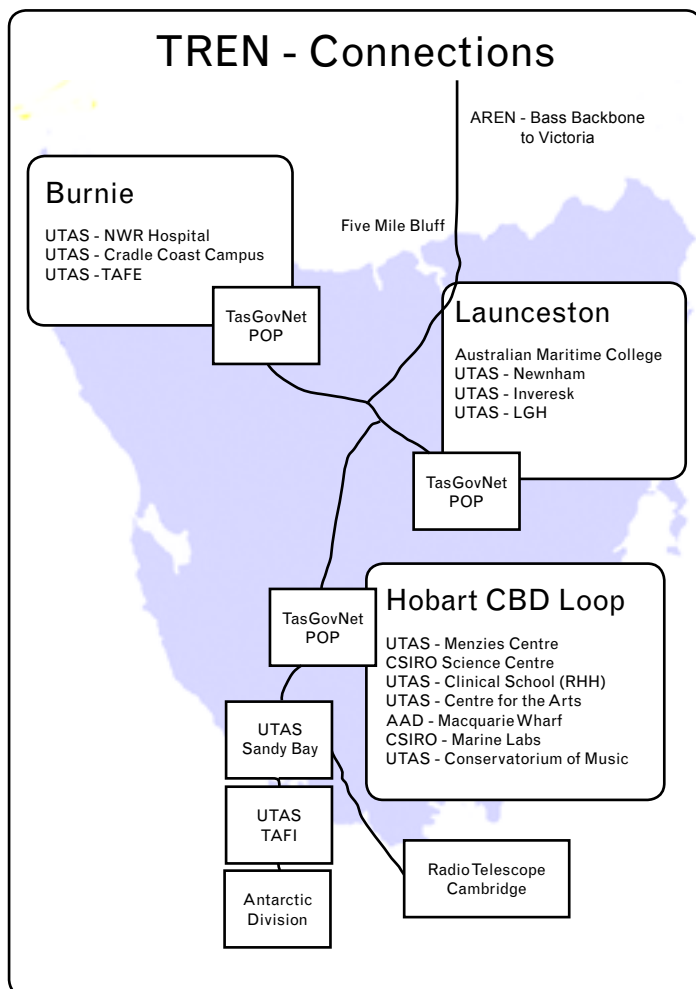
"Given the possibility that project partners might be exposed to excessive volume usage charges, it was important to work out a pricing strategy that provides sufficient funds to maintain the network, while keeping individual participant costs to reasonable levels," John said.

The solution has been the development of a subscription-based pricing model where on-net traffic (activity between AARNet members) is charged on a non-volume basis and off-net traffic is charged on a subscription basis along with low excess traffic charges.

"This model allows for low-cost high volume traffic between AARNet members and limits volume charges for other traffic as use increases over time," John said.

The second phase of the TREN-Connect project concerns establishing fibre-optic links from participating organisations to connection points in the central business districts of Hobart, Launceston and Burnie.

Phase 2 of the TREN-Connect project has progressed to the issuing of a request for proposals to develop or acquire these links.



Videoconference Infrastructure Upgrade (VIU)

The first phase of the VIU project is well underway with expressions of interest having been called from parties wishing to be recognised as preferred suppliers of videoconference equipment to the University.

The project's primary objectives are to present high quality video of both people and content and to improve the quality of the experience and interaction between conference participants.

According to Project Leader Kathryn McGuinness, these factors are very important to providing opportunities for innovation and flexibility in teaching and learning activities and maintaining the University's position as one of the top users of videoconference technology in Australia.

"Being at the forefront of this technology provides the University with a marketable point of difference with other Australian universities in terms of teaching delivery methods, and the quality of the learning experience for both lecturers and students," Kathryn said.

Reflecting the importance of this initiative to the University community, the project steering committee includes representatives of CALT, AMS, IT Resources, the School of

Government and Human Life Sciences.

Information Technology Resources currently administers nine dedicated videoconference venues and two videoconference-enabled lecture theatres across three campuses and, while these venues have served the University well, some items of equipment are already 13 years old and are no longer supported by manufacturers.

A number of replies from companies interested in being recognised as preferred suppliers of videoconference equipment to the University have been received and are currently being evaluated. The information gathered in this process will assist in evaluating current technologies and enable project staff to fine tune the new infrastructure design.

The aim is to move away from equipment that uses the older ISDN codecs to handle videoconferences and to adopt IP (Internet Protocol) based equipment. Ideally the project will also see the introduction of higher quality ancillary video display and audio equipment.

For more information concerning this project please contact Kathryn McGuinness on (03) 6226 6351.

iLecture pilot project expanded for 2006

Following the completion of the 2005 iLecture pilot a review was undertaken to determine the viability of this service and a decision was made to expand the pilot to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the potential for this product.

iLecture is an integrated lecture recording system developed by the University of Western Australia that lecturers can use to create and post integrated PowerPoint presentations and audio recordings of their lectures for later online viewing or downloading by students.

iLecture is based on a scheduling system that allows participants to book iLecture equipped facilities and have the audio recording start automatically when the microphone in the learning space is switched on. The raw audio files are then processed by the system and the finished recordings can be made available to students in a variety of formats as streams or downloads.

The expanded pilot will see additional lecture theatres enabled and an additional staffing resource made available to

assist in all facets of the system.

The iLecture Service Manager should be appointed soon and their primary responsibilities will be the day to day management of the system and the ongoing pilot project.

The pilot expansion has been divided into two phases and the first will see the iLecture initiated in five Lecture Theatres; Lecture Theatres 5 and 9 in Launceston and the Centenary, Clinical 2 and Law 1 lecture theatres in Hobart. The second phase will see the expansion of the base lecture theatres and a further five are scheduled to be ready for use after the Easter break. These lecture theatres are Lecture Theatre 2 Launceston and Commerce (Business) 2, Life Science 1, Arts and The Stanley Burbury Lecture Theatre.

Staff using these facilities will shortly be invited to take part in the pilot and a maximum of 25 staff will be required for the 10 lecture theatres. For a successful pilot we will need two to three staff using iLecture in each lecture theatre.

In Hindsight

1996: Desktop video conferencing using Apple's plug in microphone and camera over Appletalk was possible and Netscape combined e-mail and news clients with their Navigator browser.



Rod Bilson: TREN-Connect Project Manager

It is more than 40 years since Rod Bilson first joined the University as a student and he has seen more than a few changes since then. Rod said it was the diversity of work he had been involved in and the ever-changing nature of the IT field that had kept him interested. Apart from a two-year stint working for Digital Equipment in London and Sweden in the mid-seventies, Rod has stayed close to UTAS.

"I first encountered the University in 1962 as a student majoring in Physics and Chemistry," Rod said.

"It was more usual to do Physics and Maths – but Chemistry was a lot easier to pass than Maths.

Staff Profile: Rod Bilson

"When I passed my Honours in Physics I started work for the Antarctic Division which involved looking after cosmic ray equipment at Wilkes Base. My first real job with the University was in 1969 when I was employed to support the engineer looking after the Elliot 503 machine - and I later became the Operations Manager where I oversaw the job processing operations and provided programming support. I was also involved in developing the interface between the Elliot 503 and the Digital PDP8 data processor."

Connecting things became Rod's forte and he has been involved in networking since the late 1970's. He has been involved in establishing and developing the University's local and wide area networks from the introduction of the first lengths of twisted pair cabling, to the 34Mb microwave link between campuses. He has fond memories of the early days of the Unix User Group and the development of AARNet and considers the development of the Unix Operating System as one of the more notable events he has seen.

"I remember when it was a diskless operating system that operated in 16k of memory and now there are the many various releases of it and it is the basis of the Mac OS as well. Remarkable for a product that was free," he said.

And what have working conditions been like?

"The University has been a pleasant place to work and the people I have worked with throughout my time here have been great," Rod said.

"Neil Hickey once floored me with a squash racquet, he caught me above the eye - but it was on the court and I don't think it was personal."

Over the years Rod has also had the occasional flood and fire alarm to deal with to keep things interesting.

"Thankfully the flood of 1976 was limited to the air-conditioning pumping water into the machine room floor and, apart from the odd monitor melting and occasional burnt-out component, the fire alarms have largely been tests," he said

Outside of work Rod has been kept busy raising a family and has a range of sporting interests. "I've been involved in orienteering since 1978 and my other interests include rogaining, golf and squash," he said.

Rod is currently overseeing the TREN-Connect project which involves the development of optic fibre connections to the State Government-owned fibre backbone between Burnie, Launceston and Hobart and is planning to retire at the completion of the project.

And looking further into the future? "We're looking to join the grey nomads and do the trip around Australia," he said.

IT Resources - Services and Solutions

Communications

Network and Internet Services

Telephony and Messaging Solutions

Videoconferencing

Contact: John Mieзитis, Manager - Communications Technologies

Email: John.Mieзитis@utas.edu.au Telephone: (03) 6226 6181

ICT Procurement

Equipment Purchase and Lease Co-ordination

Equipment Lifecycle Management

Software Licence Procurement and Management

Contact: Glenda Wardlaw, Manager - ITR Procurement Services

Email: Glenda.Wardlaw@utas.edu.au Telephone: (03) 6226 6333

Office Locations

Cradle Coast Campus
University of Tasmania
Private Bag 3511
BURNIE TAS 7320

Sandy Bay Campus
University of Tasmania
Private Bag 69
HOBART TAS 7001

Newnham Campus
University of Tasmania
Locked Bag 1304
LAUNCESTON TAS 7250

Telephone: (03) 6226 6336
Facsimile: (03) 6226 7171

For more information on IT Resources services please visit our website at www.utas.edu.au/itr/