Gardens & Museums IT

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Welcome

Welcome to the 18th and Summer 2024 Edition of the Gardens & Museums IT Newsletter.

We are in June, and Summer is here - well, at least in a typically unpredictable manner! And unpredictable very much sums up the last few months within the Gardens & Museums IT Team.

Throughout Spring the Gardens & Museums IT Team have been on somewhat of a rollercoaster, with various ups and downs, lefts and rights, and twists and turns! This topsy turvy nature has been influenced by many factors, and looks set to continue throughout the Summer, with changes in personnel, developing responsibilities, emerging requirements and adjusted priorities.

I've purposefully used the term rollercoaster, because I think the feelings of queuing up for, and riding one, match how we've felt at points - with an air of trepidation mixed with an excitement for things to come. And the team have been incredibly dynamic, flexible and pragmatic when facing these challenges.

We have always been a very close-knit team, but I've been particularly impressed and enthused by how we've supported each other, and when heads or moods have dropped how well we've rallied to uplift. I'm continually grateful for their resilience, support and positive outlook.

Many of these changes come as great opportunities for the team, with a number discussed in more detail within this newsletter, whereas others I hope to write about in the Autumn issue.

Please do read on for more on this, and for news of things to come.

Carl

What's been going on? And what's coming?

User Feedback Survey

In July we will be carrying out a Colleague Feedback Survey, to capture the current perception of the IT provision within the Gardens & Museums, and your views on the Gardens & Museums IT Team.

This has been on our minds for some time, but the recent changes in leadership, personnel and structure of the Gardens & Museums IT Team (more on this on Page 4), alongside some other potential changes in the way IT is delivered, has meant establishing a baseline of where we are now, and any potential improvements is incredibly important.

Please do take the time to fill out the survey, which will be communicated via email and will be available throughout August, and we will report back on the results, outputs and outcomes in the Autumn Newsletter.

New Information Security Training

For some time now the University Information Security Team have been working on a new and improved Information and Data Protection training course. This work has now been completed and the new training course is available to take here: https://www.infosec.ox.ac.uk/do-the-online-training .

This new training has a more holistic approach to Information security and encompasses all the varying elements to offer and affords a better understanding of how to protect ourselves, the University and its data.

This training is a mandatory annual requirement for University colleagues and will take around 40 minutes to complete. This doesn't need to be achieved in one go, though setting aside the time to carry out as a single activity is advised. And please do reach out if you need any guidance on this.

Information Security - British Library

In the last newsletter we mentioned that Jona and I were writing a response to the Cyber Security Incident at the British Library, reviewing the current Gardens & Museums Information and Cyber Security posture against the Lessons Learned that the British Library provided.

This paper was shared with the Director's and Heads Of Operations across the Gardens & Museums (and also the Bodleian Library) in view to identify areas for improvement and possible steps to progress, which have helped in recent high-level discussions and decision making.

Audio Visual…

AV continues to keep us busy with a mixture of smaller requests and some larger long-term projects, including space renovations, new exhibitions and lecture theatre improvements, alongside the associated consultancy and engagement which is required to support and progress this.

There are some exciting things on the horizon that we'll look to share with you in future newsletters. But, if you do have an upcoming AV related project or requirement, please do reach out so that we can factor this into our work plans and schedules.

What's been going on? And what's coming?

Apple Computer Replacement Cycle

Over Spring we have been reviewing the current Apple estate and organising, in collaboration with impacted colleagues, the replacement of older Apple Computers.

This has been quite a fun experience, due to the variety of Apple Computers available and their respective options in colour.

We've had a number of interesting conversations in relation to this, and the excitement by our colleagues being involved in the selection of their new computer, including determining the colour, has been an incredibly positive experience all round.
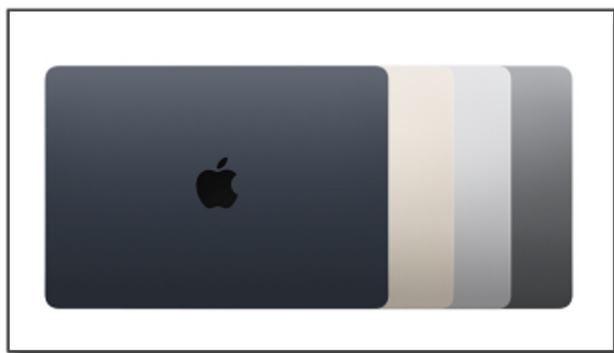
Procurement

As is often the case at this time of the year many of us find ourselves with some unspent budget that we look to direct towards some form of technology. This often leads to a surge in the demand for help and guidance in this process, but it is one we're very happy to help with due to the value which we can offer in this area, such as...

- Ensuring what is bought is fit-for-purpose, and fulfils the operational needs of the equipment.

- Ensuring that what is bought is in-line with any University of Oxford security requirements.

- Ensuring that what is bought offers the best economic value, taking into consideration price, warranty and equipment quality.

We have established a number of trusted suppliers, who can help ensure we're purchasing the right type of equipment at the best price. Therefore, please do reach out if you have any technical purchases to make, whether that be for a computer, tablet, phone or something more specific like a UPS or a piece of AV equipment.

Sustainable Printing

Discussions with an external supplier regards Sustainable Printing have continued throughout Spring (mentioned in both the Winter and Spring newsletter) with the next sensible step determined to be establishing a department within the Gardens & Museums to test the solution and give feedback on the performance, in respect to the quality and speed of printing.

If you, or your department would be interested in trialling this printing solution please do get in touch via it@museums.ox.ac.uk.

Gardens & Museums IT Team Changes

Those who have spoken to us recently will be aware that we're in the midst of a transition of sorts, with a mix of restructuring and recruitment taking place. And others may have noticed some of us doing different things, or filling different roles, or being included in different meetings, and that some of us have fancy new job titles.

For context, Haas Ezzet who has been Head of IT for the Gardens & Museums for over 7 years, has temporarily vacated his role to become Head of Technology for GLAM and Continuing Education on a 2-year secondment as part of the University of Oxford Digital Transformation Project - Haas will lead in the engagement of GLAM and Continuing Education with the University's Shared Infrastructure Services Programme. A massive congratulations to Haas in this achievement, and we collectively wish him well with this new opportunity - though we are still working closely together and are all seeing the mutual benefits of this!

Now, any form of leadership change can be de-stabilising, and as this is a temporary role, we've needed to consider a number of different factors in our approach to address this. Fortunately, over the last few years a number of us have been actively developing our skills and taking on more responsibilities and growing our respective positions, so that a natural and organic overlap of duties, skills and experiences has transpired. With this in mind, Jona and I have also received new job titles (and a long list of new responsibilities to go alongside), with Jona becoming Head of IT Infrastructure and me becoming Head of IT Service Delivery. This has been determined as the best and most pragmatic means to secure a continuation of the service, support and infrastructure standards which have been implemented, alongside ensuring the comradery and leadership within the team.

As change often leads to further change, Calum and Alex have courageously taken on the role of Senior IT Officer (well done both), to offer support to Jona and I in our new roles, and to take on some of our responsibilities and afford us the time to address those taken from Haas. This will also offer Jona and I the required time to begin planning for some exciting new developments which we hope to share in the Autumn Newsletter.

We are also busy recruiting for a new IT Officer; to provide additional support to the team and to ensure our service levels, and in particular response levels, are not adversely impacted by the various changes. If recruitment is successful, we hope to introduce our new colleague to you over the Summer and in the next Newsletter.

Making all this happen has required the support and involvement of many people, first off those within the Gardens & Museums IT Team who have remained positive and supportive whilst the new roles were investigated and established. Lindsay Rudge for her trust in us and allowing us this opportunity, and to Emma Thomas and Giselle Lee for their general awesomeness and HR support! Thank you all, and also a massive thank you to the messages of encouragement, trust and support that we've collectively and individually received in our new roles - it's greatly appreciated.

Museums WiFi Replacement Project

In the Summer 2022 Newsletter I began writing about the Museums WiFi, and at that point a review of the current provision. And in the following newsletters across the 2 years updates have been provided on the progress of this project. And I'm now happy to report that Phase 1 of the WiFi Project has now been completed, and Phase 2 has begun!

Phase 1: Access Point Replacement

Phase 1 of the project has been focussed on the replacement of the existing WiFi Access Points across the Museums, which has been a significant undertaking and has seen over 200 Access Points replaced across the four Museums.

This is an even more impressive feat considering that many of these Access Points were hidden in floors, ceilings and on the odd occasion other "interesting" places! These discoveries have also led to some other intriguing and often unexplained technical findings!

Once all the Access Points were successfully found the next step in the replacement project was to design and configure the new system and deploy the Access Points on a rolling schedule across the sites. This took place over the course of 6 months, beginning with the History of Science Museum and finishing with the Ashmolean.

During the process, some interesting techniques were explored and used, that could be utilised in other similar scenarios across the University - most pertinently the digital image wrapping of Access Points to disguise their presence in spaces without adversely affecting performance through enclosures or hiding in ceilings and floors.

Phase 2: WiFi Improvement

Phase 2 is underway, with surveys being organised across the Museums to identify those spaces whether either signal or service doesn't exist or is currently not fit for purpose. These surveys will continue during the Summer, with plans for design and installation to take place once complete.

Special Mention…

Jona has very much lived and breathed this project in his time with us, and has been pivotal to its success. Therefore, a massive well done and thank you to Jona for his effort and coordination of this project, and also a thank you to those within IT Services who have been involved in the successful implementation of this alongside Jona.

Friendly WiFi - Public WiFi Certification

As mentioned in the Spring Newsletter we had begun discussions about having our Public WiFi service 'Friendly WiFi' certified, and I'm delighted to announce that this process has been completed and excitingly our Public WiFi has now achieved this safety standard. Also, and equally as exciting, we are the first to achieve this in the Heritage and Culture sector, and the first within the University of Oxford!

Many people have been involved in this initiative, and the support has been incredible, and is greatly appreciated.

To provide some additional context Friendly WiF is a government initiated safe certification standard for WiFi solutions that are available in public spaces. The certification assesses the Public WiFi service to ensure it meets the filtering standards of the scheme, and those locations which achieve this standard are able to show the Friendly WiFi symbol on their Public WiFi landing pages and portals. And we are now part of this as communicated on the Friendly WiFi webpages:
https://www.friendlywifi.com/single-post/oxford-university-glam-achieves-friendly-wifi-certification.

The journey to achieve this certification began with an initial introduction from Rachel Johns (Head of Visitor Experience; Ashmolean Museum) and then subsequent conversations between myself, Bev Smith (Director; Friendly WiFi) and Karen Kong (Account Executive; WiFi Spark) to explore this opportunity and to establish the feasibility and cost of implementation. Fortunately, as WiFi Spark, (our Public WiFi supplier for a number of years) were a listed partner of Friendly WiFi the required filtering and safety standards were already in place and therefore no technical changes were needed and in-turn there would be no cost for carrying out the landing page re-branding exercises.

Subsequent communications were sent across GLAM to explain Friendly WiFi and the benefits of this certification, and to establish whether this would be something that each GLAM site would like to see progressed. Unsurprisingly there was a positive and unanimous response to this, with everyone being in favour of this certification.

The final steps were for WiFi Spark to implement the branding changes to our Landing Pages, whilst I continued discussions with Friendly WiFi and finalised communications (with a lot of assistance from Suzanne De La Rosa - thank you Suzanne). And now after 3 months of significant engagement, conversation and collaboration we are Friendly WiFi approved! Once again thank you to all those involved in this massive achievement.

OneDrive for Business Storage Quota Reduction Update

In the Spring Gardens & Museums Newsletter, and alongside some other communications, we wrote about a significant upcoming change to our Microsoft 365 accounts and more pertinently our OneDrive for Business allowance being reduced from 5TB to 100GB.

And although this wasn't going to adversely affect everyone, it was going to have a significant impact on many, in particular those in research positions, or who handle large data sets. And this impact was going to be felt throughout the University, and crucially was going to be implemented from August 2024. Fortunately, there has been a positive update to this!

Although the problem isn't going away the University, after a number of high-level discussions, have managed to agree with Microsoft an extension to the deadline of reduction from August 2024 to August 2026.

Although this doesn't fully remove the problem it does allow the University more time to assess the issue in a more strategic and considered manner, and to establish whether to adopt and implement the new proposed allocation, or whether alternative solutions are needed - be it an overall increase in OneDrive storage capacity or something entirely different.

As the issue hasn't gone away, we should all take this time, and particularly those who have been directly contacted to say they exceed the 100GB quota, to look at our respective data and identify opportunities to clean and refine this if possible.

I mentioned in the previous newsletter other existing options for data storage within the University, and we have been actively exploring whether any of these may be suitable for our use cases in view to being better placed to help in future conversations. Some of these have been beneficial for certain cases, some not so. But, If you do have a data storage requirement, either new or existing, please do get in touch so that we can discuss and explore options.

CONNECT Computer Replacement Cycle

Over the course of the last year, we have been actively discussing with IT Services the schedule for replacing the older CONNECT Computers which are in active service across the Gardens & Museums, and where and when appropriate providing updates on this.

A recent email was sent detailing where we were with the project and outlining one key element which was delaying the progression, being that on the initial implementation of the service it was agreed that we would have up to 430 devices but that numbers had risen to 515, which means we now either need to reduce these numbers or pay for the excess. Fortunately, there was an incredibly positive response to my email, with many willing to return unused machines, or move to a single CONNECT Device and utilise Hybrid Working practices. A huge thank you to all that responded, and as a result of this we are closer to the start of machine replacement.

Where we are right now…

Discussions are continuing with Central IT Services and although the numbers have been reduced, some further work needs to be done to consolidate further through the two-phased approach below.

Phase 1: The return/removal of all CONNECT Desktop and Laptops not in use

On analysis of the data between ourselves and Central IT Services it was identified that a considerable number of the 515 machines have not been used or accessed in some time. We are asking that if you have any computers within your space which are not in use and not needed - for example laptops in cupboards and desktops under desks – to please let us know so that we can discuss the removal of these devices from service. Already many have been returned, but if you are aware of others, please do get in touch via it@museums.ox.ac.uk .

Phase 2: Move from two CONNECT Devices to one CONNECT Device

For those who have two CONNECT Devices we can look at the possibilities of moving to a single CONNECT Laptop and associated Hybrid Working equipment. And although we understand that having one device is not suitable in all cases, the University's model for funding allows for one device per person, and this needs consideration for the cases where one person has two older machines, as only one will be replaced within the available funding of the project.

The one device hybrid working approach is proving more and more popular, and many have been in touch since my email to actively move to this model or express an interest in this.

What next?

Continued conversation is taking place with IT Services and further meetings are scheduled. And if we continue to successfully reduce the numbers, alongside identifying further colleagues who are happy to move to a single device, IT Services hope to commence replacement in Autumn. And in the event of a requirement before this please do reach out so that we can discuss.

GMIT Open Sessions – Summer 2024

The Gardens & Museums IT Open Sessions for the Summer months have been organised and can be found below.

The last two sessions have been somewhat quieter than previous, and although it's reassuring to hope that this means the number of issues experienced is lessening, it does mean that we need to look carefully at the importance of these sessions, the value that they offer, and crucially whether they're still needed.

Therefore, please do show your support and come along - even if it's just to say hello and eat our biscuits! And if you have ideas as to how we can improve the sessions please do let me know.

Also, we hope to have members of the Central IT Services Service Desk joining us again throughout the Summer to gain an insight in to how the Open sessions operate, whilst also looking to help those who attend, and learn from the experience.

Date	Location	Time
Wednesday 17th July	Headley Lecture Theatre Ashmolean Museum	11.00AM – 12.30PM
Wednesday 14th August	Seminar Room Pitt Rivers Museum	11.00AM – 12.30PM
Wednesday 11th September	Annexe Room 1 Museum of Natural History	11.00AM – 12.30PM

The sessions will offer an opportunity….

- To meet us face-to-face in an open forum to discuss any matter.
- To discuss or get advice on any IT issues or problems which you may have, whether big or small.
- To discuss any upcoming projects or innovations within your respective departments and location.
- For new members of staff to meet with us and receive an overview of IT within the University and the Gardens & Museums.
- To talk through any general IT matter.

Service & Support Statistics –
1st February 2024 to 30th April 2024

Quarter 3 of the 2023/24 Academic Year, has been busy within the GMIT Team, with the number of requests being either close to, or over 400 each month.

We continue to provide an incredibly responsive service, despite the growing complexity of some requests. The teams individual and collective contributions in ensuring service standards are maintained is greatly appreciated, and we continue to receive high praise across the Gardens & Museums for this.

Requests Received	Requests Resolved	Avg. Days to Respond	Avg. Days to Resolve
1227	1206	0.2	3.3
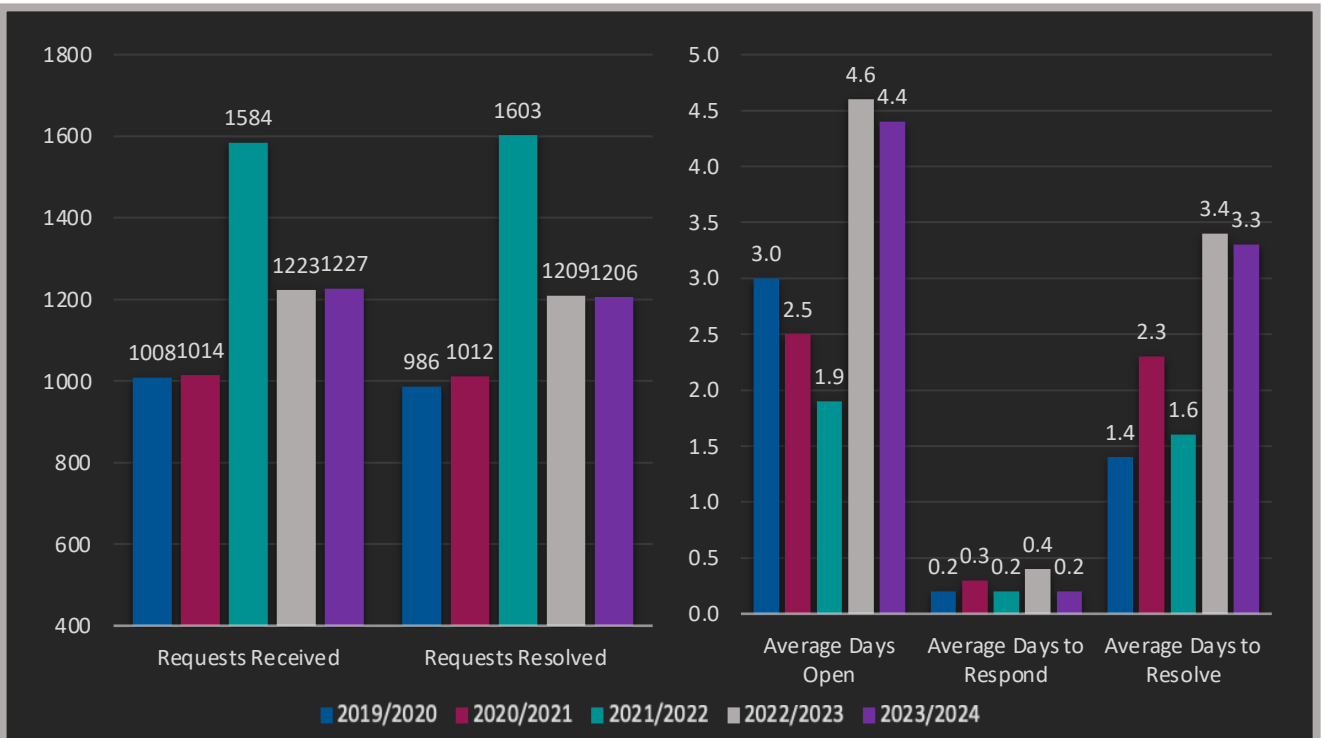
Location	Requests	Percentage
Ashmolean Museum	471	38%
Museum of Natural History	146	12%
Pitt Rivers Museum	170	14%
History of Science Museum	63	5%
Botanic Gardens & Arboretum	38	3%
GLAM Divisional Office	79	6%
Bodleian Libraries	21	2%
All sites - requests and activities which benefit or impact all locations	239	20%

GMIT Service Reports are available on the Gardens & Museums IT Website: https://it.museums.ox.ac.uk/article/service-reports

2023/2024 Gardens & Museums IT Roadmap