Jisc Digital Festival and Stakeholder Forum  
11 March 2014

Summary of discussions

**Jisc Digital Festival introduction**

Professor Martyn Harrow welcomed colleagues to the Jisc Digital Festival 2014. The Festival was expected to be inspiring, energising and informative and the aim was for delegates to take at least one issue away that they would discuss and act on in their organisation.

The role of Jisc was to work with nations and sectors to harness and exploit technology for the advantage of colleges and universities. Jisc had undergone a radical transformation in order to successfully deliver this role at lower cost. Jisc was working in a 30% lower funding envelope without damaging the services used every day of colleges and universities. More work is underway to reshape Jisc and the services it provides to ensure that we continue to provide the services that support colleges and universities in the delivery of their missions.

The digital world is fast moving and the digital future will be bigger than the digital past. The challenge is to keep up with the game and turn it to the advantage of colleges and universities.

**Introduction to Stakeholder Forum stream**

Professor Martyn Harrow welcomed attendees to the second Stakeholder Forum, an invitation only stream of the Jisc Digital Festival. Professor Harrow drew attention to the report of the inaugural Stakeholder Forum held in November 2013. The report summarised the feedback that had been gathered at the last Forum and demonstrated how Jisc was responding to the issues raised.

Discussions at the inaugural Forum gave Jisc some very useful insights into the issues that are of primary concern to different groups of its customers. It was hoped that this Stakeholder Forum would continue to be a valuable information-sharing and intelligence gathering exercise, with attendees from a wide range of representative bodies, professional associations, universities and colleges participating in discussions. A list of organisations in attendance at the Stakeholder Forum is appended to this report.

A high level summary of the changes to Jisc in 2012/13 was tabled. Professor Harrow discussed the key changes to date and the priorities for 2014, which were focussed around engagement, efficiency and value, technology presence and new innovation, and Jisc reshaping and optimisation.
Ms Heather MacDonald, Principal, The Sheffield College and Professor Paul Layzell, Principal, Royal Holloway University of London were introduced as co-Chairs of the Stakeholder Forum.

The programme for the Forum included presentations from students who received Jisc support through our ground-breaking Summer of Student Innovation programme, details of our global connections programme, support institutional needs for international connectivity and an open question and answer session with the Jisc Leadership Team.

**Students from Summer of Student Innovation 2013**

Two students (Matt Beveridge, University of Birmingham and Matt Terrell, University of Nottingham) spoke of their experiences working with Jisc through the Summer of Student Innovation programme. The programme provided small scale funding and a network of support and expertise to a small number of projects proposed by students during the summer of 2013. In the increasingly demanding graduate job-search environment, the opportunity to demonstrate skills and entrepreneurship through participation in this programme was felt to be hugely valuable by both students. The ideas and concepts identified by programme applicants were entirely their own, with Jisc providing the underlying support and expert contacts to give students the direction to bring their ideas to fruition. The programme had proved to be hugely valuable and a number of projects borne out of the programme had good prospects for further development. Institutions with students involved in the programme had been hugely positive and beginning to recognise achievements like this outside academia, with some applying credit for participation.

Martyn Harrow thanked Matt Beveridge and Matt Terrell and commented that the programme was a very strong and powerful example of how Jisc can start to make a difference for UK education and research. The programme would be enhanced and repeated in 2014 to continue to encourage innovation at all levels in UK education and research. Forum attendees were keen to have the opportunity for staff to engage in a programme like this, as such opportunities had not been available before. The challenge is to create a climate to achieve an understanding of the innovative ideas that are present at all levels of complex organisations. Jisc is committed to finding out how to make this work, potentially via our co-design approach, and are keen to hold discussions and achieve a maximum return for all involved.

The great strength of the Student Summer of Innovation competition was it was unrestricted and did not just focus on the technical disciplines. Jisc was very much prepared to put resources into the programme to ensure that universities would not view it as a barrier but something which would add value for both students and their institution.
Presentation Global Connections: supporting institutional needs for international connectivity

Professor Paul Layzell introduced the topic of global connections by stating that HE was a major contributor to global economy and is the 10th biggest expert industry. He commented that the real challenge is how to reach out around the world – how does Jisc distribute knowledge and maintain connectivity with people in geographically remote locations. All institutions are aware of the connectivity from the transnational education to working with local partners and there is a real pressure to be more efficient and this can be achieved through working collaboratively.

Jeremy Sharp, Head of Strategic Technology at Janet gave a presentation on global connections. The Janet network is truly world leading and colleagues of other NRENs are truly envious of Janet. The network helps to enable major research and industrial developments. It offers reliability, security and wider services as well as speed. As a result, the UK is a major player in global research.

Education contributes £18bn to the economy and connectivity is critical to this. Janet Global Connect helps HEIs deliver to branch campuses overseas, providing robust Janet connections and cost effective working with telecoms around the world.

Trusted connectivity is vital to underpin receipt and delivery of cloud based services and the Access Management Federation (AMF) aspects of this connectivity. There is increasing work with cloud service providers to put AMF into their products and also looking how to connect to Janet or global NREN infrastructure. There are currently three pieces of work: 1) Agreements with big global players: Microsoft 365 deal (google and amazon strategic partnerships to come); 2) global deals and delivery (connecting cloud providers to the network) and; 3) technical integration into cloud products – this is the value added bits of AMF and security features. As an infrastructure provider Janet can provide a reliable and well-managed infrastructure (in terms of threats) and a robust AIM (access and identity management) service.

Jisc understands global research and education, is open for business, globally and is here to help institutions be truly international players.

One key area that Jisc is currently addressing is the health industry, working with some key health partnership initiatives on how Janet could offer more secure transmission services via encryption, for example. Difficulties with working collaboratively with the NHS exist because of security barriers within the NHS. Jisc is working with the UK NHS HE Forum on this issue – a number of health research projects deal with patient identifiable data and therefore require guaranteed security of transmission of data. In addition, a project is underway with the biological research institutes regarding the creation of a shared data centre for the safe storage of health research data.

A key challenge continues to be the provision of a global video conference collaboration. Jisc is working hard on an approach to providing a high quality and consistent experience in support of distance learning and international collaboration.

Attendees were keen to understand how stakeholders could feed in to the development of Jisc’s networking activity. A more iterative process would encourage buy-in from institutions which are now
more clearly customers of Jisc. Following the Wilson review Jisc now has proper organisational governance and is constantly striving to develop mechanisms to engage with stakeholders in a focussed way. The customer experience team is working on how to get a continuous dialogue right. Jisc needs operational day to day mechanisms as well as events such as this, bringing our stakeholders together. The Jisc Board sees a huge range of diversity of demands and it is a huge challenge to address them all. Jisc is trying to enhance how it systematically puts this all together to deliver the best possible experience to all its users.

**Q&A with the Jisc Leadership Team**

Heather MacDonald introduced the Jisc Leadership Team Q&A session and invited questions from attendees stating this was a real opportunity to ask questions/make comments about issues of interest from stakeholders own organisations. More importantly, it gives Jisc a chance to take away some of their ideas, comments and concerns and consider how this can shape the work of Jisc.

The questions raised and the responses are summarised below.

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<th>Key issue</th>
<th>You said</th>
<th>What we’re doing</th>
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<td>Supporting the uptake of enterprise corporate information systems in the sector</td>
<td>How can Jisc help to get enterprise corporate information systems into institutions who cannot afford to go to the big providers?</td>
<td>This issue is one that is on our radar and we are looking at a platform for open source software. There is a difficulty in that corporate systems are on a 10 year cycle so the opportunity to address this is limited for a large number of institutions. However, factors such as removal of the student cap, might result in an increase in institutions looking at student record systems, providing Jisc with the opportunity to address the issues.</td>
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<td>The open agenda</td>
<td>Jisc plays an important role in working with publishers but there is a need for innovation in other areas of scholarly communication. How is Jisc communicating with the Higher Education Funding Council (HEFCE) and Research Councils UK (RCUK) with regards to the next Research Excellence Framework (REF), in which open access will play a clearer role?</td>
<td>One of Jisc’s 10 impact areas is to help with the open agenda and to build on our reputation as a trusted partner in this context. We are in regular communication with HEFCE around these issues. We understand that this is a complex area, with a variety of stakeholders and agendas. We will seek further input and ensure a two way dialogue with institutions and relevant communities to build a collaborative approach to an issue of such importance across the HE sector</td>
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<td>Working with the skills sector</td>
<td>What is Jisc's strategy for further engagement with the skills sector?</td>
<td>Jisc has a close association with the Further Education Learning Technology Action Group and is actively involved in taking forward some of its recommendations on behalf of FE and Skills.</td>
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We want to increase our engagement with the skills sector as we want skills providers to benefit from Jisc services. However, we need to be clear where we can, and cannot, help.

We are keen that Skills and FE has a place in the co-design process and intend to involve AoC and the Education and Training Foundation (ETF) at the strategic level, with other relevant skills bodies at project level in this approach.

We particularly want to raise the profile of the Summer of Student Innovation programme with students from the FE and Skills sector. We will involve AoC, the National Union of Students (NUS) and other relevant stakeholders more closely in the future to maximise the opportunity for students to get involved.

We are interested to note that the ETF has issued a tender for further professional development of the workforce to address this key priority for the FE and Skills sector. The Commission on adult and vocational teaching and learning has reached important conclusions around technology and access to industry standard resources is key. The Commission will have to look closely at the role workplace technology plays.

| Jisc subscription fees | The sector would benefit from further transparency on what the Jisc subscription covers and information about whether further cost savings be found to avoid increases being passed to institutions in the future? | The Jisc subscription is a contribution from institutions and does not reflect the full cost of the services and benefits that our customers receive. We have saved over 30% of our cost base and will continue to seek further savings, while protecting the quality of the services that institutions rely on.

We will ensure that the value that institutions get from Jisc is clear to institutions and if it is not we will have a clearer dialogue with you. |
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<td>Catalogue of services</td>
<td>There is concern that the ‘bundle’ that is the Jisc subscription includes services which might be seen as optional by institutions. If</td>
<td>We are looking at each service in exactly this context but we need to bear in mind that what is core for one institution might not be core for other.</td>
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<td>services are not able to be supported through voluntary subscriptions why should Jisc focus its funding to support them?</td>
<td>We need to optimise and exploit the asset base that we have fought so hard to achieve. However, we will ensure that these assets are developed in order that they remain of strategic relevance to the UK and continue to deliver what our customers need. This is a key priority for the Jisc Board.</td>
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Participants were thanked for their attendance and contribution to a useful discussion and it was hoped that we could welcome colleagues again at a future Stakeholder Forum.

Jisc
April 2014