Welcome to the first issue of 2007. To start the year we have two very interesting but different articles. The first is the Forced Migration Research project, the second from the Arts and Humanities Data Service (AHDS). Both of whom have used JISCmail successfully for some years increasing their membership through careful and dedicated interaction. In the coming months we will also be including a series of articles from the National Grid Service starting with an introduction to the service in our next issue. If you have any suggestions for future articles or would like to contribute yourself, please contact the editor helpline@jiscmail.ac.uk. We would welcome your suggestions.

This year the JISC Annual Conference is being held on the 13 March at the International Convention Centre (ICC), Birmingham. If you would like to come along and talk to a member of the JISCmail team we can be found on stand 13.

Penny Windebank - Director

1. FORCED MIGRATION

Supporting the Forced Migration Research Community

Eight years after its inception, the discussion list www.jiscmail.ac.uk/forced-migration (**FMLIST**) is closing in on a membership of 1000. In an online environment dominated by blogs, wikis, and other social networking tools, the **FMLIST** has successfully used the LISTSERV© model

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Sudanese refugee women waiting for aid distribution in Djoran, Birak canton. Some 4,000 to 8,000 refugees are gathered at Djoran. Refugees say they walked from their villages in Sudan over the border to Chad when militia raided their village.

to exchange information and promote linkages within the forced migration research community.

What is forced migration? According to the International Association for the Study of Forced Migration (IASFM), it is a "general term that refers to the movements of refugees and internally displaced people (those displaced by conflicts) as well as people displaced by natural or environmental disasters, chemical or nuclear disasters, famine, or development projects." The forced migration phenomenon is of interest to a diverse range of individuals, including those who study it, those who formulate policy about it, and those who provide assistance and protection to the people whose lives are impacted by it. Forced migration is a global issue, uprooting tens of millions of people every year. The FMLIST is owned and moderated by the Refugee Studies Centre (RSC) at the University of Oxford. The RSC's mission is to undertake multidisciplinary research and teaching on the causes and consequences of forced migration; to disseminate the results of that research to policy makers and practitioners, as well as within the academic community; and to understand the experience of forced migration from

the point of view of the affected populations. The forced migration discussion list was established in 1998 as yet another mechanism to help realize the Centre's objectives. Given the academic roots of the **FMLIST**, teachers, students and scholars constitute the largest percentage of subscribers. However, policy makers, practitioners, and advocates can also be counted in sizeable numbers. The membership is quite international, reflecting the global interest in the problem of forced migration. Currently, 46 countries are represented, with the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and the Netherlands as the five top-ranked. The list has grown steadily over the years, averaging 100 new subscribers annually until 2005 when the rate of new members doubled. This trend has continued in 2006. In the past, promotion of the list tended to be organic rather than systematic. New members were attracted through word of mouth and online links. However, more recently, RSC has taken steps to actively encourage students in the Centre's MSc programme and participants in the forced migration student conferences to join the list. An RSS feed for the latest postings to the list is also displayed on Forced Migration Online (FMO), a **project** of the RSC These efforts have very likely helped to increase membership.

Typical postings to the list include event announcements (upcoming conferences or courses), calls for papers, notices of new publications, descriptions of research activities, invitations to collaborate on projects, job/internship offers, and requests for research assistance. New members often introduce themselves with a brief profile of their research interests. A regular feature is the "Web Information Update" prepared by the list moderator, which highlights new online publications, journal/newsletter issues, events and opportunities, and web sites. With an average of 18 messages circulated each month, the list's activity level strikes a good balance between informing members versus overwhelming them.

So what accounts for the list's success, if indeed the 1000-member mark can be considered a meaningful measure? While a formal survey is needed to more precisely assess outcomes, several factors can be highlighted as possible explanations:

- Linkages: The list brings members together; examples include forming a thematic panel at a conference, providing expert testimony for refugee claims, and soliciting ideas and participants for specialized workshops on topical issues.
- Information: Members report the list helps to keep them informed of new publications and new policy developments.
- Relevance: Because the list is moderated, spam and error messages are filtered out, and generic "PR" notices are kept to a minimum.
- Moderate list activity: Members are not inundated with postings.
- Longevity and continuity: The list has existed for eight years and has been managed continuously by one institution that is well-known and respected within the forced migration community.
- Uniqueness: The reality is that no other similar mechanism for communication exists on the same scale. Other chat groups, boards and electronic discussion lists are available, but these tend to focus on sub-themes or sub-groups within the wider community.

The RSC laid the groundwork for establishing the forced migration list eight years ago. However, it is the contributions of the membership that ultimately have brought about the list's success, creating "an invaluable tool" that "helps members immeasurably" in the process.

Elisa Mason
Forced Migration List Moderator

2. ARTS & HUMANITIES DATA SERVICE

The Arts and Humanities Data Service and its JISCmail lists

The Arts and Humanities Data Service (AHDS) is a UK national service funded by the JISC and AHRC to collect, preserve and promote the electronic resources that result from research and teaching in the arts and humanities. It offers advice on creating digital resources for teaching and research
<**http://ahds.ac.uk/creating**>,
allows creators to safely deposit their digital creations
<**http://ahds.ac.uk/depositing**>,
and then allows free public access to the thousands of images, texts, datasets and other scholarly resources made available online.
<**http://ahds.ac.uk/collections**>

The AHDS runs seven mailing lists via the JISCmail service. Four of these are subject areas the AHDS operates in, for example, **ahds-history**, then there is a generic announcement list **ahds-all** a discussion list for any digitisation project **ahds-discuss** and a staff list

A JISCmail announcement list such as ahds-all can be an enormously effective communication tool because it gives a simple but progressive means of drawing our user communities' attention to the very stuff the AHDS wants to advertise - its new online collections, advice papers or information about funding. The email is important because, if written correctly, the user can get to this stuff in just two clicks, one to open the email and one to take them to the URL advertised in the email. Compare this to other forms of publicity (printed flyers, newsletters or pamphlets) where the flyer has to be carried back to the office, the computer switched on, and then URL has to be typed in full - a longer process which occurs in the hyperactive, time-challenged, world of cyberspace

where the user's attention can be distracted in the meantime. For this reason, the mailing list and its recipients are treated like gold dust. Losing subscribers means losing an effective means of communications. Potential members are given every opportunity to join - when applying for workshops, sending emails via the AHDS website etc. The number of messages sent to the list is carefully patrolled to avoid alienating members and risk losing them.

Content of emails is important too. Unless an email's content is of crucial information (e.g. information about funding streams) recipients are unlikely to read the whole thing. Therefore short, effective prose with relevant URLs for recipients is crucial for getting an email's message across.

Carefully shepherding requests from others (conference announcements, job vacancies) is also important. Rather than simply allowing such messages to be accepted or rejected, editing them down and provide short snippets of news information collected in one email is an efficient way of filtering and disseminating the mass of possible news items.

So far, such a strategy has been successful. The mailing list has grown from about 600 to over 900 users since 2002 and resources advertised by email tend to show an increase in use (albeit in the short term only)

List users also need to consider the timing for delivering general emails. Possibly as recipients are lazing in front of their computers after a filling lunch, the AHDS website gets the most amount of hits between 2 and 3pm, and this is therefore considered the optimum time for sending emails. Never send an important email for UK recipients during the night - there's a much higher chance of it being deleted amongst the spam next morning, and recipients may also have more urgent emails to deal with first thing in the

morning (double room bookings for the 10am lecture on Viking history or burst water mains in the computer lab, for example).

The AHDS also maintains a list for staff. Given the distributed nature of the AHDS, with six different offices, the list plays a vital role in providing communication between members. For a while, separate lists were split according to different work areas, but this was discontinued when it was realised that each work area has so many dependencies elsewhere (and therefore staff who needed to be aware of the information) that a single, ubiquitous list was more effective in keeping all staff up to date. Having an archive of all this material is very useful as informal institutional memory. Being able to consult this was helpful during the construction of the timeline showing 10 years of the history of the AHDS at
http://ahds.ac.uk/ahds-timeline.htm

Alastair Dunning - AHDS

Question - Since my return from the Christmas vacation I haven't received any mail from my JISCmail lists?

Possible Answer - Did you set your subscription to nomail before the break?

If so send the following command to listserv@jiscmail.ac.uk

set listname mail
--

or

set * mail
--

3. SPAM

One of the things we seem to have to live with in the world of IT is the constant increase in spam messages.

During 2005 we saw an increase in the number of spam messages detected by our incoming mailers from 50K to 748K. During 2006 the increase was to an all time high of 4 million in November. The amount then decreased down to 2 million during December and January. It is possible that trying to capitalise on growing consumer confidence and demand for on-line shopping that spammers were advertising their 'wares' in the run up to Christmas

We have not observed an increase in the number of spam messages reported to JISCmail lists, indicating the effectiveness of our spam filtering system in the face of such a deluge.

N.B. Owners of moderated lists can cut down on spam by adding the confirm parameter to there Send= keyword i.e.

Send=Editor,confirm
or
Send= Editor,hold,confirm

This will at least ensure that only genuine email addresses get through to the moderator.

Reminder

When sending attachments via the web interface please remember to press the attach button after browsing

4. FUNCTIONALITY REFRESHER

For those new to the service or those who may just have missed out on our publicity at the time, below is a reminder of the functionality available from our JISCmail service.

Web / e Mail interface

Online message archives

Membership Surveys

Real-time discussions

Document / Image repository

News / RSS feeds

Online Newsletter

Favourites

List management (create/modify/delete)

A Selection of JISCmail Statistics

	December	January
Total No of lists	5903	5951
Distributed messages	53624	78483
New lists set up	54	74
Unique subscribers	440319	450136
Spams detected	1983159	3711203
Viruses intercepted	24788	24563
Helpline queries	217	366

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On behalf of the JISCmail team I would like to say thank-you to all who have made contributions to our Newsletters during 2006. We are very appreciative of the time and effort involved

Pamela Delaney - Editor