News from the Computing Facilities Group

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(Head of Computing, ING)

The CFG recently appointed Juan Vicente Piñero Pérez as the ING’s Data Manager. He has taken over this role from Luis Javier Hernández who is now our Network Manager. One of Juan’s principal objectives will be the development of a graphical user interface for querying and extracting images from the DVD archive. In the meanwhile, the DVD archiving system continues to write images from the INT to DVDs. Recently we have also started writing images from the WHT to DVDs.

The introduction of the ING’s Beowulf cluster for reducing data from the INT has been a total success. Robert Greimel successfully completed the installation several months ago and the system has been operational ever since. The success of this system has attracted a great deal of support and interest, so much so that another Beowulf cluster was purchased and installed to reduce data from the WHT and the JKT.

As part of the ING’s computing enhancement strategy we have introduced Sun Microsystems’ Sun Ray Appliances as an alternative computing platform. These devices have proved very popular in offices were conventional machines are deemed to be environmentally undesirable in terms of noise pollution or heat production. It is hoped that, were practicable, the Sun Ray Appliances will replace the aging and obsolete X Terminals on the ORM. In addition to the Sun Ray roll out, we have introduced a Sun Enterprise E250 at the SLO. This is a general compute server with two 400Mhz UltraSPARC-II processors and 2Gb of memory. Finally, the FTP server was replaced with an Ultra 10 and now boosts in excess of 200Gb of disk space. Similarly, the ING mail server was upgraded to an Ultra 10 with 75Gb of disk space.

Over the last few months we have been engaged in fruitful discussions with IAC personnel, namely; Juan Carlos Pérez Arencibia, Jesús Jiménez Fuensalida and Diego Sierra González. The discussions have centred on improving the computing facilities in the Residencia. As a result of these discussions we have extended the ING network to within the Residencia. A standard 10/100Mbps hub has been installed in the computer room, as well as a wireless hub. These devices are there for the benefit of the ING staff and visitors. To use the wireless hub, you will need a wireless network card, which we can provide. The standard hub can be used as if you were in any of the ING telescopes. Clearly, both of these systems require an ING authorised IP address.

We have been working very closely with Ian Skillen to address a number of problems with the Service System. Whilst we can only apologise for recent problems that have made the system problematic, we have introduced a more robust solution that will be more tolerant of recent problems. In the short term, with the collaboration of Ian, we will be migrating the whole of the Service System to a dedicated machine with the intention of improving this service.

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