The University Computer Club Inc.
Clubroom Modernisation Project
Business Case

Executive Summary

The University Computer Club Inc. ("UCC" or "the Club") is a longstanding club based on the Crawley Campus of the University of Western Australia. It has had a long history of social and educational contribution to its immediate context both on campus and the wider technological community of Perth. It currently holds club space in Cameron Hall which over the years has allowed the Club to grow into one of the most active clubs on campus.

For several years, the direction of the Club has led it towards full utilisation of its clubroom space and to continue its expansion, the Committee and the Club are investigating improvements to its club space. The needs of this space paired with considerations related to our affiliation with the UWA Student Guild ("the Guild") lead the Club towards suggesting a complete clubroom move to a separate location within the Guild East Wing.

UCC: A Summary

The University Computer Club was founded in 1974. Since inception, UCC has been one of the most active clubs at UWA. Currently, we have over 300 members who study a variety of disciplines on campus, not only limited to Computer Science and Information Technology. We provide a range of services to our membership from the use of an array of machines and environments to a recently acquired Virtual Reality Kit. We are a unique club on campus, and we believe our significant and active membership reflect this.

We have contributed to the social atmosphere of the University and the Guild in a multitude of ways over the years. We have collaborated with other UWA societies and Perth-based organisations to hold a broad range of events from LANs and Technical Talks to being an integral part of the Cameron Hall Charity Vigil, soon to be in its seventh year. We have always been a club looking for ways to contribute to our surrounds and continue to provide new technologies and services to our members than they would otherwise have access to.

UCC: A Constrained Club.

Due to our founding as a technical society, UCC is constrained more than most by its space. Between the physical housing of servers, general use machines and dedicated projects area; the Club is already using its current space to capacity. Adding furniture and people into that space often means that sacrifices have been made to optimise the utility of the clubroom at specific times.

It has not helped that the Guild Masterplan hampered a rebuild of the clubroom after hail damage the space suffered in 2010. UCC's intent at the time was to wait until the Masterplan - which dictated a move into the Central Wing of the Guild Building for all Cameron Hall clubs - was completed before further significant investment in the clubroom would be made. Since then, there have been several iterations of the Masterplan that have changed that intent. To put it bluntly; UCC has been a club in limbo for a long time, and we believe that the society and its services have outgrown its current space.

There are other concerns to the Club above and beyond our space constraints; within the clubroom, we have tens of thousands dollars worth of equipment, but the clubroom has no formal secure ceiling. This lowers the security of the clubroom and has been a problem that allowed several incidents of theft over the past 10-15 years. Small alterations have been made to the space to lessen the magnitude of this as an issue, but the current situation is still far from ideal as these cause large and continual costs to the Club.

It is also of note that Cameron Hall is a dusty and untidy place. The clutter and regular cycling of dust through our current space is less than ideal for our equipment. Dust could, and has, damaged our machines before and while Busy Bee's are held regularly by the Tenancy Committee, this can often just compound the dust problem as clubs jettison cruft and reintroduce settled dust into the air.

Finally, the lack of ceiling further influences possible activity in and around the Club. The proximity of a communal area such as the Cameron Hall Loft often means that noise from the clubroom or the loft inhibits other activity in those spaces. This is to the detriment of both areas, but specifically lowers the utility of the UCC clubroom for events held at the same time as those in the loft.

UCC: Eyes on the Future

Even with these challenges, UCC has plans to increase the current offering to its membership. Having obtained Virtual Reality hardware from Foundry 10, the Club has an immediate intent to investigate projects that could have educational benefits to our members and other organisations. The Club aims to involve external education organisations in this which will include High School students.

With external stakeholders in mind, the Club also needs to improve its day-to-day professionalism. To date, we have changed our Committee structure to represent the equal importance of both educational and social events to the Club. We are also in the process of standardising room cleanliness and hygiene through our relevant sub-committee. We have also implemented a trial of mandatory closing hours of the clubroom to ensure members treat the space as a social and projects area, not a living space. Finally, we are working with the Guild Engagement and Marketing Department to update our public image through a website redesign, creation of social media content and an updated branding portfolio.

With professionalism comes the ability to establish further relationships with on-campus organisations and other external entities. Beyond educational institutions, there are many technical organisations and companies that could be partnered with to create networking opportunities that our members and the greater student population could benefit from. There would also be a greater impetus for pursuing sponsorship.

UCC has a history of investing in broad-ranging hardware to allow us to offer as many facilities to our members as possible on our relatively short annual budget. In recent times we have invested in a 3D Printer that has opened project doors that are vast. Paired with VR hardware, there is the opportunity for members to design items in a virtual space and then have those printed. Beyond this, there are opportunities in biometrics, robotics, Computer Assisted Design/Manufacturing and many more areas. As a technical club, we believe the possibilities we could deliver are limited only by the imagination and ability of our members.

The Proposal

Given the issues with the current Clubroom, we believe the most viable solution on both financial and applicability of criteria is moving the clubroom to a more suitable space. Doing so whilst staying within the purview of the Guild is not a simple undertaking, as the most recent Tenancy Reallocation proved. The result for UCC at this meeting was the reallocation of our current space and limited discussion of future opportunities. There was however an issue with the jurisdiction of this individual committee and its ability to allocate spaces outside its scope. Further considerations include the commercial activities of the Guild, inclusive of its current and future projects.

Within the above considerations, we believe the most viable space would be the old catering offices. This space will provide:

- increased space for our expanding projects and educational activities;
- greatly increased security for our equipment;
- adequate power and network provisions with numerous expansion capabilities for our server room and machines;
- a healthier environment for our members and machines which is easy to maintain with improved ventilation and the potential for climate control;
- increased access to the student population allowing for a greater presence on campus.

It may also be considered that a relocation of the server room or enclosure of the current clubroom will resolve some of the Club's issues, however due to the great cost of these solutions in consideration of their many downfalls including accessibility and security, they are not of significant merit and thus fall out of the scope of this document.

Financing

As stated, UCC has wished to renovate its space for years. With certainty regarding a new space, the Club is prepared to dedicate up to $30,000 to the refurbishment of a new room, installation of equipment and is open to discussion in further assisting the Guild with its current renovation plans, with specific regard to the image and accessibility of the first floor of the Refectory.

Further, UCC will look to apply for external grants such as those through Lotterywest, and for what can be offered by a Societies Council Special Projects Grant. The Club will also look to engage alumni and current members in fundraising for new equipment and facilities to a limited extent.

Finally, UCC is prepared to assist in the delivery of services that the Guild and its affiliates can benefit from. Beyond previously mentioned examples of community and social outreach, we currently provide mailing lists, websites, virtual machines, webcams and a host of other services to a variety of clubs and associations on campus. Within hardware limitations, these and more services could be offered to a larger cohort of organisations.

Recommendation

That the Guild Strategic Resources Committee -

- Approve the allocation of Guild Village Rooms 190 and 191 (the old Catering Offices) to the University Computer Club;
- Establish a working committee whose membership consists of members from the Guild Strategic Resources Committee and the UCC Committee to decide upon renovation plans for the aforementioned rooms; including scope of works and costings, project timeframe, and ultimate division of financial responsibility.