Playing games

Lesley Smith   **Darrell Love**

Information Technology
Otago Polytechnic
lsmith@tekotago.ac.nz

For several years Otago Polytechnic has held a "BITLAN". Organised by Bachelor of Information Technology students, BITLAN is a 24 gaming LAN. In 2008 a full quota of 70 tickets sold out before the event started, and the Student Centre was packed with keen gamers. Alongside the usual tournaments (CSS, DOTA, Quake3) the predominantly student crowd enjoyed Guitar Hero, Wii games, table tennis and even a few hands of poker.

We support BITLAN for a number of reasons

- With a focus on retention, this event provides a great community focus for staff and students Most of the work is done by student volunteers.

- The non-trivial network required to support a LAN provides learning opportunities for students, as does the event management. Staff are impressed with the elegance of the networks and the server management.

- Although at least half of the participants are current students, the event is a marketing opportunity for the department. In addition to the paid advertising, we benefit from presence on community websites, including active discussion boards on bitlan.tekotago.ac.nz/. We had a visit from a writer from geekpulp website (http://www.geekpulp.co.nz/2008/04/13/dunedin-bitlan-08-at-its-halfway-point/)

- The staff benefit from being actively involved in something students are interested in.

- The event provides connections to business, being sponsored by computing retailers.

Budgeted as cost neutral, the department facilitates organisation, provides some technical assistance, and . While there is a staff member roster during the event, the supervision role is minimal. The event is alcohol and trouble free.

The local gaming community got in behind the event, with players coming from as far as Christchurch and Invercargill, and online forums buzzing with comments before and after the event. *"Good LAN, well organised network. I'd recommend this LAN to anyone, hope there's another one soon."* (Gameplanet forum)