Dear all,

We are all becoming more dependent on computers, both in our daily lives and as LU employees. Today it is difficult to find simple information, such as phone numbers and train schedules without using an app, and government authorities increasingly expect us to be constantly connected to the Internet in order to receive information and download forms. For the younger generation, this is perhaps a natural development – my kids, for instance, can’t understand why I insist on having a print newspaper to browse every morning when you can download the news at the click of a button, but we who have experienced a time when you used to communicate with the outside world by writing letters may have some doubts about certain aspects of this new world.

The costs are one example. We obviously pay for hardware that is constantly becoming more and more sophisticated and capable, and in fact we are forced to regularly upgrade or rather replace it to be compatible with other computers and systems. You might think that software simply comes along with the package, but we in fact pay considerable amounts for it in different ways. At LU, new systems to manage students, staff and finances are constantly introduced and often replace old systems which have perhaps only been running for a few years, but now fall short. New systems present new problems, and our staff is not always happy about making a change when they finally got the hang of the old system. In addition, the cost of purchasing and implementing a new LADOK, LUCAT or KUBEN is enormous, and consumes a large part of LU’s budget. Another limitation is safety. LU must be able to ensure that sensitive data cannot be manipulated, and our websites, just like those of other government authorities, media outlets and businesses, are exposed to various types of attacks. A few weeks ago, there was a so-called DDoS attack against lu.se, which resulted in a temporary shutdown of the website with all the usual consequences. It is difficult to identify who or what is behind something like that, and it’s obviously difficult (and therefore expensive) to protect ourselves.

At the same time, we appreciate the help and the opportunities that computers provide us with. For example, as a chemist you used to build models of molecules to estimate the distances between the constituent atoms and the angles between the bonds – this is now done in a faster, easier and more reliable way, using a program that can be installed on a regular computer. LU, which is a gigantic organisation for education and research, can present itself and report its activities via websites and in databases. One of those recently launched initiatives, which I believe will become important, is LUCRIS, where all of LU’s research information is summarised, and where internal and external visitors can learn about the research going on at the University and who is conducting it. Having such an overview is valuable at a time when interdisciplinarity is a condition for successful research, and once it includes all LU researchers, I’m sure most people will have eureka moments in LUCRIS. What was previously part of LUP has been automatically transferred to LUCRIS, and it only takes a small amount of effort for you to supplement the information about yourself and your research. See you in LUCRIS!

Olov Sterner, Dean