



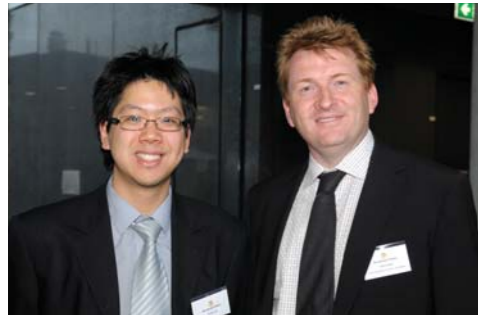
The University of Sydney  
Alumni

# SoIT's News

## School of IT Alumni Newsletter

Issue 1, 2009

March 2009



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### From the President

Welcome to 2009! A new year dawns and with it comes new challenges and opportunities. Uncertain times like these can make you realise the importance of developing both what you know and who you know. With that in mind, your alumni association will be focusing on bringing you a series of events this year that will give you access to some of the latest thinking in computing as well as broadening your networks and helping you stay in touch with your fellow alumni.

With that in mind, we have released an alumni survey through the website ([www.it.usyd.edu.au/alumni/survey](http://www.it.usyd.edu.au/alumni/survey)), which will be open until the end of March. I'd encourage you all to take the time to give us your perspective to ensure we create relevant and interesting activities throughout the year.

This edition of SoIT's News contains some fantastic alumni stories. Well done to Ryan Junee and Simon Ratner for receiving the prestigious Engineering Sydney Young Alumni of the Year Award late last year. I'd also like to add my personal congratulations to Professor Judy Kay on her promotion. Besides her exemplary work within the School of IT, Judy has been one of the driving forces behind the establishment of the alumni



Photos: Left, Vice-Chancellor Professor Michael Spence opening the 2009 Research Conversazione (by Alex Wisser); Right, Young Alumni of the Year, Simon Ratner and Ryan Junee.

## 2009 Research Conversazione and Alumni of the Year Awards

Over 300 industry representatives attended the opening of the Faculty of Engineering and IT's annual Research Conversazione at the Seymour Centre in October last year. For the first time, the opening included the presentation of the Engineering Sydney Alumni of the Year Awards, where SIT alumni Ryan Junee and Simon Ratner, were named Young Alumni of the Year.

The Awards were established in 2007, and the Young Alumni of the Year Award honours former students of the Faculty of Engineering and IT under the age of 35, who have shown outstanding creativity, dedication or leadership in their professional endeavours. Head of School, Associate Professor Sanjay Chawla says they are "extremely talented engineers and entrepreneurs, and their achievements since graduating make

them very worthy recipients of this award".

In March 2008, Ryan and Simon, together with UNSW alumnus Julian Frumar, founded Omnisio. Recognising how vastly different the web is to TV, their goal was to improve the online video experience. Omnisio developed software that allows users to interact with video, by being able to slice video clips to make their own videos, and add comments, audio and overlay images onto video. Together they significantly improved the user experience, and YouTubers enthusiastically embraced the platforms they created.

By July 2008 Omnisio was acquired by Google, reflecting the value of their product. Both Simon and Ryan have now joined Google's YouTube team, Simon is a

Continued on Page 2.

### EOyF Photos

Photos from top, left to right:  
Melody Yeo, Geomayra Silva, Saira Macan Makar, Fadi Dahbar and Trevor Williams;  
Carolin Plate, William Niu, Jeremy Pu and Carol Ling;  
Helen Guam, Mathias Gunkel, Chunnan She, Paulo Leite, Tie Shao and Georges Klopotowksi;  
Enoch Lau and Mark Webb;  
Liviu Constantinescu, Greg Darke, Stephen Sommer, Georgina Wilcox and Yan Sommer;  
Camilla Ip and Danny Yee;  
Jacquie Hocking, Troy Till, Dominck Ng, Ben Taylor, Jonathan Travaglis and Mellanie Hodgson;  
Paolo Lai, Lily Liu, Kelly Lam and Li Bin Huang;  
Jon Patrick, Nick Pellow, Conor McNeill and Daniel Ostermeier;  
Tim De Vries, Made Mastika and Enoch Lau;  
Roland Slee and Alan Fekete;  
Kurt Gubi, Glen Whitaker, Andrew Lum, May Lyn Ng and Andrew Delaney;  
Greg Ryan, Paul Lorgier and Josephine Spongberg.  
Photographer: Nuran Zorlu.



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**Join the Alumni web community or update your details:**  
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## 2008 Annual End of Year Function (EOyF)

The School of IT again joined forces with the USITAA and the Sydney University IT Society (SUITS) to host the annual End Of year Function (EOyF) on Wednesday 26 November 2008. The event was very successful with approximately 100 staff, students, alumni in attendance. The event was very generously sponsored by Optiver.

The evening began with drinks and mingling in the Winter Garden, followed by a buffet bbq feast in the lantern-lit boardroom. Judy Kay acted as MC for the formal part of the evening which included speeches by USITAA President Mark Webb, SUITS President Ben Taylor, Head of School Sanjay Chawla and Mellanie Hodgson from Optiver.

The evening would not have been possible without the hard work of our student volunteers: James Bunton; Anthony Collins; James Constable; Liviu Constantinescu; Aaron Cowie; Greg Darke; Tim Dawborn; Anna Dominguez; Enoch Lau; Dominick Ng; Lynden Shields and Benjamin Taylor. We are very grateful for their help.

The lucky door prize, a lovely University of Sydney picnic blanket, went to one of our volunteers, Tim Dawborn. Congratulations Tim!

There are several photos of this event on page 4, and there are many more on the USITAA website: [www.it.usyd.edu.au/alumni](http://www.it.usyd.edu.au/alumni).

### From the President, cont. from Page 1

association and has been a fantastic guide in reacquainting me with the university (things have changed a lot since I was an undergraduate!). Her elevation to the ranks of full professor is very well deserved.

I would also like to welcome those new alumni that join us from the 2008 graduating year.

More than ever, alumni have an important role to play in ensuring that the school stays connected with the wider industry. I look forward to working with you all through 2009 to that end.

Mark Webb

President, University of Sydney IT Alumni Association (USITAA)



Enjoying the festivities in the beautifully decorated boardroom at the End Of year Function in November last year

### Research Conversazione, cont. from Page 1.

software engineer and Ryan is a product manager, leading the development of new features for community engagement.

Ryan says "It feels great to be recognized by the university, especially because there are undoubtedly many other talented graduates also doing great things with their careers. I'm glad for the opportunity to stay in touch with the university and hope I can help future graduates be the best they can be."

Ryan graduated from the University in 2002 with a first-class honours degree in Computer Engineering and a Bachelor degree in Commerce, and Simon graduated in 2003 with first-class honours degree in Software Engineering and a Bachelor degree in Science. Thinking back on favourite memories of studying at Sydney, Ryan says "There are too many to pick a favourite. I particularly enjoyed the advanced computer science courses, and being surrounded by very talented peers, lecturers and tutors striving for perfection and elegance in algorithms and code. I continue to hold myself to those standards whenever I'm writing code today."

Also recognised at the awards were chemical engineer and Chair of Skills Tasmania, David Hind and late aviation pioneer, Nancy-Bird Walton. The awards were very generously sponsored by intellectual property law firm Spruson and Ferguson.

After the opening and awards, guests moved to the student displays, judging work by honours and postgraduate students.

The votes were tallied, and thanks to the generous sponsorship of Macquarie Group, Smart Services CRC, NICTA, IBM and Microsoft Research Asia, the following prizes were awarded:

Macquarie Group Prize for Research Project Work within a Masters by Coursework degree - Alex Pavel  
School of IT Prize for Research Project Work in Information Systems - Yung Shwen Ho

Smart Services CRC Prize for Research Project Work in Visual Computing - Cherry Ballangan

NICTA Prize for Research Project Work in Networks and Systems - Suparerk Manitponsut

Smart Services CRC Prize for Research Project Work in Human Computer Interaction - Anthony Collins

IBM Prize for 4th year Project Work in Information Systems - James Bunton

Microsoft Research Asia Prize for 4th year Project Work in Computer Science - Susan Howlett

Macquarie Group Prize for 4th year Project Work in Computer Science - Mathew Rodley

Thank you to our sponsors, your continued support is greatly appreciated, and congratulations to all the students who took part.



## Alumni Profile: Professor Judy Kay BSc Hons (74), MSc (78), PhD (99)

In 1970 Judy Kay enrolled in Electrical Engineering at the University of Sydney as one of only 10 women among approximately 400 first year students. Now, having recently been promoted, Judy is again in an elite group of women; one of two female Professors currently in the Faculty of Engineering and IT and the first female Professor in the School of IT.

Judy was first attracted to IT after attending a university summer school during her high school years. "I felt that computing was going to be important so I enrolled in Electrical Engineering. In second year I took my first computer science subject, taught by the very charismatic Arthur Sale." That saw her move to computer science. Her undergraduate years also fired her passion for teaching. Judy began her academic career as a Senior Tutor in the Basser Department of Computer Science and has moved through her career by combining computer science education with her research in creating personalised teaching systems and in human-computer interaction.

Since then Judy has had an enviable career. She is widely recognised as an innovative educator and has worked with the School on many exciting initiatives, including the undergraduate mentoring program, three major changes to foundation programming teaching, and

rather fittingly, was the co-ordinator of the first computer science summer school for high school students. This year the National Computer Science School is in its fourteenth year with an intake of 65 year eleven students from around the nation.

Judy's research and teaching have always been integrated, one supporting and inspiring the other. "Over the years, my research has often been driven by teaching and recognition that huge improvements to learning could be possible with better technology". Her early work was into CPU scheduling was inspired by overcrowding in labs while more recent research has encompassed areas such as pervasive computing, user modelling and artificial intelligence in education: "My work aims to create personalised systems that can be really useful and at the same time I want to build them so that people really control them. The key to this is to build a model of the user and make sure people can scrutinise that model and control the personalisation. When people can see a model of themselves, presented in a way they can understand, that is also a very powerful tool for reflection and improving learning".

Judy has been the recipient of several major grants including collaborative research with industry such as the

Smart Services Cooperative Research Centres and the recent Australian Research Fellowship for the project "Pervasive Lifelong User Modelling for User Controlled Personalisation and Augmented Cognition", jointly with Associate Professor Bob Kummerfeld. She has been an invited keynote speaker at major research conferences and is President Elect of the Artificial Intelligence in Education Society and is Associate Editor of its journal and the new IEEE Transactions on Learning Technologies.

Judy has also received several teaching awards including the 2008 CORE National Teaching award, but says the true rewards are working with students: "When you give a little extra help to a student who is struggling, and you see them really master difficult concepts, that is so rewarding. To build computer systems that can help do that for every student: that would be my career highlight."

## Staff news

### Farewell

In February the School said farewell to finance officer Sharon Chambers. Sharon has been with the School since 1998, and has ably navigated staff and students through the complicated world of University finance. She will be missed.

### Grant success

Dr James Curran, Dr Tara Murphy and Dr Irena Koprinska have been awarded a TIES grant, receiving funding totalling \$113,619 for their project "An Online Environment for Introductory Programming". The project is a collaboration with staff from Civil and Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering.

### Associate Dean

Dr Irena Koprinska has been appointed as Associate Dean, (Teaching and Learning) for the Faculty of Engineering & IT.

### Best Paper

Postgraduate students Elizabeth Wu and Wei Liu together with Associate Professor Sanjay Chawla have won the Best Paper Award (Second Prize) at the 2nd International Workshop on Knowledge Discovery from Sensor Data for their paper "Spatio-Temporal Outlier Detection in Precipitation Data".