

The First AGM of USITAA

The first annual general meeting of the University of Sydney IT Alumni Association was held on 3 June 2008.

Two significant things took place at that meeting:

- The Constitution, which has been approved by the Alumni Council, was unanimously adopted. You can read the constitution online at www.it.usyd.edu.au/alumni
- The Executive Committee was elected and office bearers appointed.

Office bearers

President

Mark Webb, MBA Latrobe, BSc (93), BEng (95)
Director, NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet

Vice-President

Rebekah Griffin, BCST (05)
IT Project Manager, Lion Nathan Australia

Treasurer

Philip Chung, LLB (95), BEcon (96)
Executive Director, Australasian Legal Information Institute, UTS

Secretary

Josephine Spongberg
Administrative Officer, School of IT

Committee members

Franc Carter, BSc Hons (95)
Systems Architect, SIRCA Ltd
Judy Kay, BSc Hons (74), MSc (78), PhD (99)
Associate Professor, School of IT
Matthew Pittman, BSc (83)
Principal Consultant, Pittman Consulting
Greg Ryan, BSc Hons (80)
Manager of Technical & Infrastructure Services, School of IT

For your diary

31 October

Engineering & IT Research Conversazione

8 November

Spring Back to Sydney

For more information

School of Information Technologies
SIT Building, J12
The University of Sydney NSW 2006
Australia
Phone: +61 2 9351 3423
Fax: +61 2 9351 4654
Email: alumni@it.usyd.edu.au
Website: www.it.usyd.edu.au



Celebrating graduations, L-R: Khaled Matrouk, Associate Professor Bing Bing Zhou, Dr Monther Tarawneh (PhD 08), Dr Dan Cutting (PhD 08) and Ghazi Al-Naymat.

From the President of USITAA

Hi all,

It is a great honour to have been elected as the inaugural President of the University of Sydney Information Technology Alumni Association (USITAA). It's been 15 years since I finished my undergraduate degree with the old Basser Department of Computer Science. If you'd asked me back then what my fondest memory of university was, I would have probably said playing cards in the Wentworth building when I should have been attending lectures. However, as my career has progressed I have grown to value more and more the skills I gained in my degree – not just around specific technologies, design methodologies and programming languages, but an approach to problem solving and a way of looking at the world that has stood me in good stead.

I've often wished I could build on the knowledge and relationships I started when I was at university, both to develop

my own career and give something back to an institution that contributed so much to my life. The creation of USITAA is an opportunity for all alumni to do just that. We have an exciting series of events planned for the remainder of 2008, and we'll be reaching out to all of our alumni to find out what you want out of your association. I see this as an exciting opportunity to enhance the value we have all received from our involvement with the University and build a lasting partnership between the School of IT and its alumni.

As you'll see in the rest of the newsletter, there are many ways to start getting involved with USITAA. In the mean time if you have any suggestions, I'd love to hear from you at:

alumnipresident@it.usyd.edu.au.

Mark Webb

President,

The University of Sydney Information Technology Alumni Association (USITAA)



The University of Sydney
Alumni

SoIT's News

School of IT Alumni Newsletter

Issue 3, 2008

September 2008

Inside:

From the Head of School.....	1
Graduations and Honorary Degrees	1
Prizes and Scholarships Ceremony and Graduation Dinner	2
Staff News	3
ACM SIGMOD Best Paper Award	3
The First AGM of USITAA.....	4
For your diary.....	4
From the President of USITAA	4

From the Head of School

Occasionally we have a confluence of events which on hindsight will allow us to reflect back and say "Gosh! we are so lucky to be part of the School of IT!"

In May of 2008 we had the privilege of welcoming Professor John Hopcroft who was awarded an honorary doctorate. Professor Hopcroft is a pioneer of Computer Science and the great thing about our discipline is that we can still meet the giants of our field in person. Imagine Newton, Schrodinger or Einstein walking into the School of Physics! Professor Hopcroft is credited with, among other things, advocating the use of "worst case complexity" in the analysis of algorithms.

The second great event was SIT researchers Michael Cahill, Uwe Röhm and Alan Fekete winning the best paper award at the 2008 ACM-SIGMOD conference. Their work is likely to have a profound impact on the database software industry in the coming years.

Finally, Joseph Davis was the only Australian to receive the prestigious IBM Faculty Award. Another fine achievement.

As I said, we are lucky to be part of this great School.

Regards, Sanjay



Left: Chancellor The Chancellor Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir AC conferring the honorary degree upon Professor John Hopcroft (Photo: Memento Photography). Right: Dr Adam Hudson and Sir William Tyree.

Graduations and Honorary Degrees

Students graduating from IT degrees earlier this year were in exceptional company. Professor John Hopcroft and Sir William Tyree were awarded the Honorary degree of Doctor of Engineering at separate graduation ceremonies in May.

Professor Hopcroft is the IBM Professor of Engineering and Applied Mathematics in Computer Science at Cornell University, USA. In 1986 he was honoured with the A M Turing Award (which is regarded by many as the equivalent to the Nobel Prize for Computer Science) for fundamental achievements in the design and analysis of algorithms and data structures.

In addition to his research work, which centres on the theoretical aspects of computing, especially analysis of algorithms, automata theory, and graph algorithms, Professor Hopcroft is well known for his books on algorithms and formal languages which are regarded as

classic texts in the field.

He is a member of the National Academy of Engineering and a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, IEEE, and the ACM.

In the Computer Science field, Professor Hopcroft is an outstanding force both in intellectual contributions and in commitment to service and building the discipline. He has been a mentor to academic staff, giving guidance on research projects and directions the School of IT is very fortunate to have an ongoing relationship with him.

Sir William Tyree is a pioneer in the electrical engineering industry, founding Tyree Industries in 1956. After two decades of success in industry, in 1970 Sir William made a generous philanthropic investment and established the A W Tyree Foundation. In

Join the Alumni web community or
update your details:

<http://www.usyd.edu.au/alumni>

and sign up for your lifelong email
forwarding service.

Produced by the Alumni Association of the
School of IT of the University of Sydney, June 2008.
The University reserves the right to make alterations
to any information contained within this publication
without notice. CRICOS Provider No. 00026A.



The University of Sydney
Alumni



L-R Professor Jon Patrick, the table settings, guests gathering in the Winter Garden before dinner. Photos by Greg Darke

Prizes and Scholarships Ceremony and Graduation Dinner

The School's annual Graduation Dinner in May was particularly special. The dinner was held for the first time in our own building and also for the first time, was very generously sponsored by Optiver. This meant that we were able to provide extras that greatly enhanced the experience. The School is very grateful to Optiver for their sponsorship and continued support.

Distinguished researcher and Honorary degree recipient Professor John Hopcroft was an inspirational dinner speaker, sharing anecdotes from a long career in IT and wishing the graduands well in their future pursuits.

The Prizes and Scholarships Ceremony in the afternoon before the dinner celebrated our best and brightest students, and gave the School the opportunity to again thank our generous prize and scholarship sponsors Accenture, Soprano, the Foundation for IT, Microsoft Research Asia, CISCO and HEDLOC.

It also gave us the chance to honour retiring Foundation for IT President John Debrincat, who is leaving the role after four years. John has been a keen supporter of the School for many years, providing advice and assistance in many areas, and has been instrumental in securing sponsorship for several initiatives, including the National Computer Science School (NCSS).

The 2007 prizes and scholarships were awarded to:

The Professor John Rosenberg Prize for Excellence in Computer Science: David Day

The Allan Bromley Prize for the student who achieves the highest mark for an Honours thesis: Daniel Gar-Shon Tse
FIT Prize for the most proficient student in junior (first year) computer science: Benjamin Taylor

FIT Prize for the second most proficient student in junior (first year) computer science. Recipients: Benjamin Itzstein

The Accenture Prize for the group which produces the most professional project in ISYS3400: Jonathan Jin Yi Ang, Wendy Duong, Tian Tim Shou, Kali Sreagiraju, Lucy Vasconcelos and Jimmy Yu
GS Caird Scholarship in Computer Science for proficiency in intermediate (2nd year) computer science: Jonathan Kummerfeld

The Ian Jackson Memorial Prize for proficiency in senior (3rd year) computer science: David Day

The Soprano Software Engineering Prize for the best CS and/or IS Honours project in Software Engineering: Timothy De Vries

Microsoft Research Asia Prize for Junior Software Development Projects: Albert Cansino, Sahil Goyal, David Griffin, Sam Harding, Samuel Lipton and Gareth Robinson

Microsoft Research Asia Prize for Senior Software Development Projects: Ruchir Punjabi, Raphael Speyer, Stephen Von Takach, Yang John Xu and Ian Yamey

Microsoft Research Asia Prize for Multimedia Technology: Katie Bell
Microsoft Research Asia Scholarship: Stephen Merity

HEDLOC Prize in Information Systems awarded to the student with the highest aggregate mark for the units: INFO3402/3502 Management of IT Projects and Systems, ISYS3401 Analytical Methods and ISYS3400 IS Project: Jonathan Jin Yi Ang

HEDLOC Postgraduate Prize in Information Systems awarded to the highest achieving student graduating from the MIT degree: Ming Chen

Students on the Honour and High Honour Roll were also presented with certificates.

cont. from page 1

the 1990's the A W Tyree Foundation sponsored the Tyree Scholarship for IT students at the University of Sydney. As well as providing financial support to the recipient for the length of their degree, the scholarship allowed a semester of study at an overseas university. By coincidence, Adam Hudson, the first recipient of the Tyree Scholarship graduated from his PhD studies at the same ceremony at which Sir William was honoured.

Adam was one of many IT PhD students who graduated that day:

Daniel Cutting, Balancing implicit group Messaging over Peer-to-Peer Networks

Adam Hudson Walkabout: An Asynchronous Messaging Architecture for Mobile Devices

Monther Tarawenah, A Novel Quartet-Based Method for Inferring Evolutionary Trees from Molecular Data

Yan Zhang, Autonomic Performance Configuration for Component Middleware Systems

Lanbo Zheng, Optimisation Methods for some Constrained Crossing Number Problems

Tanveer Zia, A Security Framework for Wireless Sensor Networks

Congratulations to all the undergraduate and postgraduate students who graduated at the three ceremonies in May.

Staff News

Carrick Institute Grant and IBM Faculty award

Associate Professor Joseph Davis is celebrating a double success this month after winning a Carrick Institute grant and an IBM Faculty Award.

The prestigious and extremely competitive Carrick Institute (Australian Learning and Teaching Council) grant, titled 'Curriculum renewal in postgraduate information technology education: a response to growing service sector dominance' is a 2-year, multi-institutional grant for \$218,500 which also involves the University of New South Wales, University of Queensland, and University of Melbourne.

Joseph was the only Australian awarded a prestigious IBM Faculty Research Award in 2008. The competitive worldwide program fosters collaboration between researchers at leading universities worldwide and those in IBM research, development and services organizations and promotes courseware and curriculum innovation to stimulate growth in disciplines and geographies that are strategic to IBM.

Faculty Teaching Awards

In May, Professor Greg Hancock, Dean of the Faculty of Engineering and IT announced the winners of the 2007 Faculty Teaching and Research Awards. Amongst the winners were SIT staff Dr Irena Koprinska for outstanding teaching, including new curriculum design, and Dr Tara Murphy and Dr James Curran.

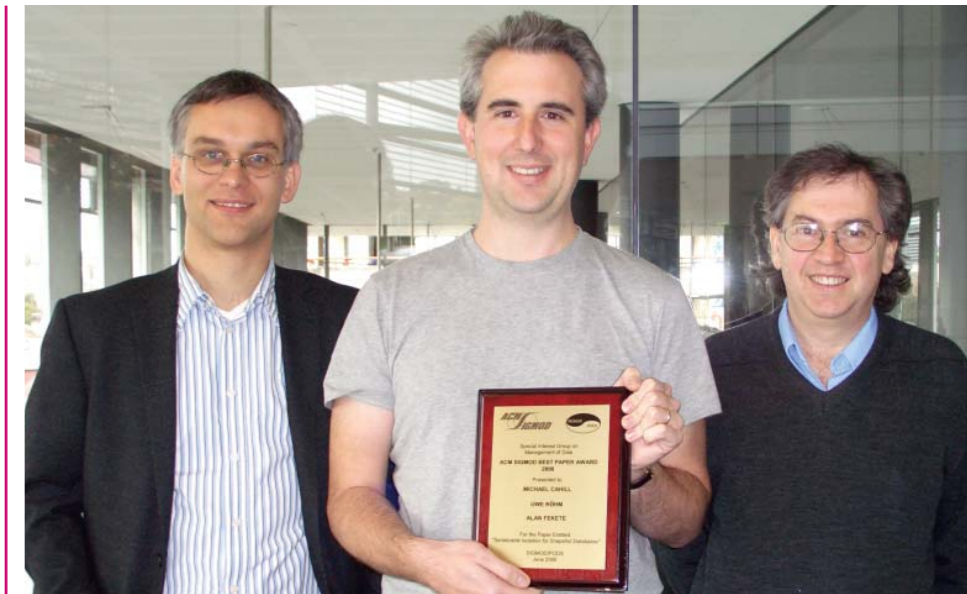
Farewell

In June the School said farewell to Dr Liaquat Hossain. Liaquat began work with the School in 2000, and returned in 2004 after a two-year stint in New York at Syracuse University, and has spent the last few years as the Postgraduate Coursework Director.

Liaquat is taking up an Associate Professor post at the School of Civil Engineering, and will continue to work with the School in his role as Associate Dean.

Welcome

The School welcomes Ms Cecille Faraizi who has taken up the role of Administrative Officer for Postgraduate Coursework. Cecille comes to the School after working in postgraduate admissions at the International Office.



L-R Dr Uwe Röhm, Michael Cahill and Associate Professor Alan Fekete

Database break-through wins ACM-SIGMOD Best Paper Award

Cutting-edge database research at the School of IT has been recognised with the Best Paper Award at the Association for Computing Machinery's SIGMOD International Conference on Management of Data. School of IT alumnus (and current PhD student) Michael Cahill has been investigating an innovative change to the internals of database management systems that will have an impact on commercial databases around the world. ACM-SIGMOD is considered the most important international conference in the field of databases, and the award is one of the highest honours bestowed on researchers in the area.

Many popular database systems allow operations to run in parallel using a technique known as Snapshot Isolation. Software developers reason about databases as if operations are run one after the other, but Snapshot Isolation does not provide the strong guarantees that make their reasoning valid. An example from the award winning paper is of a hospital rostering system: if two doctors rostered on in a shift try to reschedule at the same time, databases using Snapshot Isolation could leave the hospital with no staff.

Michael's paper suggests some changes to the Snapshot Isolation algorithm that allow operations to run in parallel but avoids situations where the data

consistency is violated. In the hospital example, only one of the doctors would be able to reschedule.

This work has the potential for significant impact on commercial databases and applications in fields ranging from scheduling, online bookings and financial transactions.

Industry is showing a keen interest in the research. Dr Dave Lomet, Head of the Database Research group at Microsoft Research in Redmond says "More concurrency - plus serializable transactions! This is a technology with great promise that could change the industry."

Michael graduated from The University of Sydney in 1997 with BSc Honours and the University Medal for Computer Science, and has since worked in the IT industry in both Australia and overseas. He is currently the Principal Software Engineer at Oracle Berkeley DB and is completing his PhD in the School of IT with Associate Professor Alan Fekete and Dr Uwe Röhm. This paper will form the core of his thesis.

ACM SIGMOD is the Association for Computing Machinery's Special Interest Group on Management of Data, which specializes in large-scale data management problems and databases. The annual SIGMOD conference, which began in 1975, was held in Vancouver, Canada in June 2008.