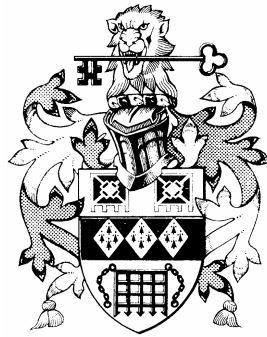


SUSSEX aBaCuS

The Newsletter of the Sussex Branch of the
British Computer Society



Issue 16

January 1999

Branches Board Report

Roy Newell FBCS, Sussex Branch Representative

Computer jobs and how to get them and keep them continue to figure in the Branches Board activities at national level and general links and procedures for overseas members are under review.

YPG is launching WorkLink, a national work placement system designed to increase work experience opportunities available to current and prospective members of the YPG. WorkLink is an Internet recruitment software system that helps students to create a quality 'achievement-based' CV specially designed by recruitment software developers, IntraSolve. CVs are stored in a standard format that can be transmitted via all e-mail systems and read by any word processing software. An innovative system automatically sends an e-mail message to each candidate selected by an employer, inviting them to make contact with the employer if they wish. Companies offering work placement opportunities or looking for newly qualified graduates can search for candidates by the relevant skills and achievements they require rather than by basic details. Internet technology is increasing the potential for shared information among candidates and potential employers. Internet based solutions ensure that maximum time is spent on finding the right person for the job and not on mounds of paperwork. WorkLink webpage - <http://www.intrasolve.co.uk/bcs/welcome.asp>

To complement this the Consultancy and Security Registers are inviting applications for senior members. The Pollard Membership Review is progressing and it established that 88% of members responding were in favour of widening the scope of BCS Membership on the basis proposed by the Working Party. 75% were also in favour of subdivision into sections for the professional grades. Other initiatives proposed that the scope of professional membership should be widened to include all those professionally involved with information systems. This should include those involved in IS related management and education. A new status of Certified Affiliate should be created to enable the Society to recognise a wide range of relevant academic and vocational qualifications. Early action should be taken to improve the progression path to professional membership, including significant reductions in the experience

continued overleaf

requirement for Associate Membership and for the experience only routes together with the continued improvements in application processing.

The ECDL European Computer Driving License initiative is enjoying substantial take-up and encouraging the acquisition by a large group of people of initial computer training and qualifications. The teaching profession is an obvious market where there is now a requirement for all teachers to have this level of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) capability.

Headquarter computer systems are "enjoying" an upgrade and the possibility of a London "drop-in" computer facility for members to browse the web, etc. is under active consideration.

Some, if they browse the BCS site, will have seen the sad news of our web mistress Pam Bolwell who edited the Web site since it started in 1995, passed away on the 28th November 1998. Pam had been with the Society from 1991 initially as Branches Liaison Officer and then as Web Editor. She had great style and personality and she made both roles very much her own. Her contribution to the BCS over the past eight years has been very substantial. Pam had many friends across the Society, particularly in Branch organisations and in the Young Professional Group. They and all the staff in BCS Headquarters will miss her greatly. For my activities at Branches Board Pam gave invaluable support. Pam, Rest In Peace.

Accessibility - the Big Issue – Ken Hobbs, Disability Liaison Officer

1998 was a climactic year for your Disability Liaison Officer on both professional and family levels. I hope to have more time in 1999 to pursue constructive ideas in disability issues. Here are some thoughts on the big issue:- accessibility.

Accessibility means enabling everyone to visit or use facilities without restriction on grounds of ability. Physically, the room B317 venue for Members' Meetings could hardly be less accessible (but the stairs are well-lit, with shallow risers and hand-rails). I apologise on behalf of the Branch for this. Unfortunately we have been unable to get the Asa Briggs Hall for our February and April meetings. Finances mean the Branch is in a "beggars-can't-be-choosers" situation - we are trying to get more funds in 1999. If there are any members who would like to attend meetings, but think they might have access difficulties, would they please contact me, or another Committee member (details on the back page of aBaCuS)? We will try our best to enable you to attend.

Accessibility covers access to information, too, often via computers. Professionally, I feel we should strive to make the computing facilities we are responsible for accessible to all. If we cannot specify this, we can perhaps influence the design - or the designers. The law is now on your side! It is not easy to make systems accessible to such a wide range of impairments: mobility (48 million people in Europe); dexterity (35 million); hearing (12 million); vision (12 million); speech (63 million), but the numbers speak for themselves. If the population of France could not walk without aid, or the whole German nation had speech and language impairments (not counting the tortuous grammar!), things would surely be different. As computer professionals, we can help to make a difference. Let's do it.

A much-discussed subject is the Internet. With current growth, a significant number of would-be users must have impairments. Yet this enabling technology for information-finding and communication is denied to many of them. We can, however, try to ensure that as much as possible is opened-up. Guidelines for Web-site design exist (not just 'text good, frames bad'). There is also a useful tool for testing sites for accessibility: it's called 'Bobby'. Bobby is a web-based public service offered by the CAST organisation that analyses web pages for their accessibility to people with disabilities as well as their compatibility with various browsers. The analysis of accessibility is based on the working draft of the W3C's WAI Page Author guidelines with the Page Authoring Working Group's latest revisions. The CAST organisation is sponsored by AON Corporation, IBM Corporation, Microsoft Corporation, Mitsubishi Electric America Foundation and Sun Microsystems. To use the tool, call up <http://www.cast.org/bobby> and point it at a web-site. You can ask it to check compatibility with one or more browsers, including Lynx. I checked our Sussex Branch site, which did pretty well (but not 100% - we've investigated and corrected this). Bobby will rate a web page as approved even though it is still inaccessible to a person who is blind, using lynx and a screen reader. CAST say in response: "Accessibility is ultimately a human endeavour. It is determined by whether or not a diverse group of people with a variety of abilities and disabilities can access information efficiently. Bobby helps to make web pages more accessible, but can not guarantee total accessibility. If you find a web page that you think incorrectly receives a Bobby Approved rating, please let us know." Try out some sites you know, and if they fail Bobby, let the creators know their site isn't good enough.

There are techniques, tools, approaches that can make computers (especially PCs) more accessible. Just what is available, where, and is it worth it, are harder questions to answer. Ability-Net, (see aBaCuS, Feb.1998), is one source. Still, it would be good to have a database of products, perhaps available on a (Bobby-approved) web-site. I'm not in favour of re-inventing the wheel, so I am contacting the BCS Disability Special Interest Group and other branch DLOs to see what's in existence. I imagine that any sort of product endorsement would offend the Charity Commissioners, but a collection of users' opinions might be acceptable. If you have experience of using screen magnifiers, 'sticky-keys' (keyboard-aid), or speech control software, let me know what kind of luck you've had.

I wish everyone a healthy, happy and access-rich 1999.

FUTURE ISSUES		
<i>issue</i>	<i>copy by</i>	<i>publication</i>
Oct 1999	10-09-1999	04-10-1999
Feb 2000	07-01-2000	31-01-2000

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 e-mail sticehurst@bcs.org.uk*

A View from The Chair - What does the future hold?

Another year has gone by:- what changes have we seen? The Year 2000 looms closer, and problems will begin to reveal themselves in the next few months, but the training of "Millennium Bug Busters" has not reached the promised levels. The Euro has been introduced as a parallel currency in the EU, and many financial institutions are well on the way to completing their related projects. Most other businesses though, the so-called SMEs, (Small to Medium Enterprises), are still in the early stages of their Y2K and Euro projects - if they have done anything about them at all - and what about the Far East and Africa?

On the hardware front, the relative cost of PCs has continued to fall, but mainstream software has remained expensive in comparison. The good news is that "open" software such as Linux is finally gaining acceptance within the commercial world. What happened to the NC (Network Computer), or the set-top Internet box? No doubt 1999 will finally see the latter arriving in the high street, but the NC still doesn't look likely to take off. Markets that look sure to thrive, however, are WIDs, (Wireless Information Devices - smart phones and communicators), and Internet commerce.

The Branch has two talks on these important areas scheduled. Internet banking is covered in February, and other aspects of e-commerce, electronic wallets and so on. The interesting topic of emerging wireless and home networking protocols, and what their adoption will mean to the consumer, is the subject of the March meeting. At our April meeting, the use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) for mapping the complex infrastructure of London, and their potential application to Sussex and Brighton & Hove in particular will be explained. Our President will be telling us his vision of the future in May, (after the AGM), bringing all of these threads together and projecting the trends.

Sussex aBaCuS has a new stand-in editor, Stephen Ticehurst. He will be officially nominated as a committee member, for ratification at our AGM in May, which I hope as many of you as possible will attend. Another potential chairman? I have told him that progressing from Editor to Chairman is not compulsory - though Alan Cooper and I both took that route!

Finally, what of the future of the Sussex BCS Branch itself? Your committee would like to know how you see the Branch evolving. Would you like fewer, but more prestigious meetings? Should we be holding meetings in more varied locations? What about special projects? There is funding available via Branches Board that is available to help support interesting ideas. Please send us your brainwaves, bugbears and nominations for the Lovelace Medal and Branch Committee officers. I look forward to your correspondence, and to further rapid and interesting change in the world of ICT over the coming months.

Best Regards

Clive Craske, Chairman, BCS Sussex Branch

BCS, Sussex Branch - Autumn Programme Meeting Reports

21 October 1998

Java: This time it's personal - *Rob Bamforth, Sun Microsystems Ltd*

A report of this meeting will appear shortly on our branch website.

16 November 1998

The Sussex Community Internet Project - *Mark Walker of SCIP*

Working from their office within the Community Base centre in Queens Road, Brighton, the Sussex Community Internet Project (SCIP) is providing help and technical support to people who would not otherwise be able to afford it. One of the aims of SCIP is to prevent a situation where there exists two groups of society, the "Information Rich" and the "Information Poor"; the "Rich" controlling the "Poor". By working with existing voluntary groups, SCIP is able to inform people of how the Internet is able to help and create opportunities to everyone in the community.

SCIP's current website covers the new area of free Internet Service Providers (ISPs), demonstrating that anybody can have their own email address. An interesting feature on how to view web pages, download files via FTP and how to perform searches, all through a simple email account goes to show that users with only an email account can still have full access to the resources that can be found on the Internet.

They aim to open the Internet to "ordinary people", raise awareness provide training and public access, and inform people about the advantages of the Internet and understanding the possible dangers. Discussion within the community of both technical and local issues around Sussex has been made available by the SCIP mailing list.

Stephen Ticehurst, Newsletter Editor, BCS Sussex Branch.

9 December 1998

Post-Relational Databases - *Chris Hoskin of Intersystems.*

Chris provided an introduction to the next step on from relational database systems, outlining how these systems can lack performance and scalability when used within mission-critical, transaction intensive applications. For many years we have been attempting to model a three dimensional world within the two dimensions of tables with a relational database system. While it could be said that this is an easy way to model data, it also a simple and often restricting view.

We were introduced to Cach, a database system by Intersystems that goes past the conventional relational view. Cach is a post-relational database that can be modelled with ease, enabling performance and scalability while also keeping backwards compatibility. Objects are used throughout the system in order to allow designers maximum flexibility to model data in a more real-life way that people

would normal perceive it. Objects interact with Cach's "Transactional Multidimensional Data Model" which can be accessed by existing databases and applications using an optimised SQL. This new architecture, we were informed, is able to perform up to 20 times faster than a conventional relational database.

Objects can be placed within Visual Basic, Java, ActiveX, C++, and other popular GUI development tools. The system does not include any user interface tools, allowing the main focus to remain on the performance of the database engine while giving good resources to the front-end development environment. Tools are available to aid in website and Visual Basic connectivity.

Object Orientation is the theme behind this system, providing full inheritance, advanced data types (ADTs), complete object modelling, support for OO languages, transparency from the actual database engine for performance and connectivity to relational systems such as Oracle and Microsoft SQL Server. The Cach database engine has been proved to support thousands of concurrent users while performing operational functions such as incremental backups, transaction integrity, and server shadowing. Usage of the new object technology and the existing conventional relational approach concurrently has shown that such a database is suited for today's enterprise systems.

The talk concluded with a brief look at where this technology is already in use throughout the world. It was noted that while not many people had heard of the Intersystems and Cach name, most of us had used an application that was being powered by such a system.

Stephen Ticehurst, Newsletter Editor, BCS Sussex Branch.

20 January 1999

Solving the Euro Problem - Tricia Drakes from Syntel Inc.

January 1st 1999 launched the Euro to the majority of the European community. So far we have not heard of any major problems and "Euroland" is looking like a success. The talk showed that even though the UK is not taking part in this project, companies are having to make sure that they are able to cope with a new currency, with the possibility that one day we will be walking around with Euros in our pockets too.

The introduction of a new currency so close to home is not only a major business project, but for many financial companies, a major IT project as well. A parallel was made many times between the introduction of the Euro and the Year 2000 issue. Both projects being a time where business and IT has never had to work so close in order to meet strict and, in the case of Year 2000, static deadlines. At

present, the Euro issue mainly affects financial companies, but because it was thought of as “when the UK joins” instead of “if the UK joins”, all companies and their IT systems will one day be affected.

It will be a little while until anybody will actually see a physical Euro coin or note. For the time being Europe is working with a “virtual” currency that only exists within computer systems transferring money from computer to computer, from company to company. When the Euro does become something that people can physically put in their pockets it will take time for the old currency to disappear, resulting in countries running on dual currencies. Such a situation has to be handled by our computer systems.

It was shown that this could be an interesting time that may help boost electronic commerce. The use of cards, e-cash, and any other “virtual” method of spending money are the only way to use your Euros at present. This position may well demonstrate that the actual physical currency is of little importance today and could be something that is watched by countries around the world.

For IT departments, the introduction of the Euro, both the electronic version and the physical version, is a hardware as well as a software problem. The new Euro symbol is not supported as standard on many computer operating systems and a patch will have to be applied to each computer. Such a simple exercise could become a major rollout program within a large company. “Hole in the Wall” ATMs will have to accept and give out both local currency and Euro currency, while vending machines all have to be adapted.

Stephen Ticehurst, Newsletter Editor, BCS Sussex Branch

The Lovelace Medal

The Lovelace Medal is intended to be presented to individuals who have made a contribution which is of major significance in the advancement of Information Systems or which adds significantly to the understanding of Information Systems. It is generally anticipated that there will be one medallist each year, but the regulation does not preclude either several medallists or no medallist. Nominations for the medal need to be sponsored by a Corporate Member of the Society, made in the name of a properly constituted Board or Committee of the Society and submitted with the relevant minute of that Board or Committee.

Any suitable candidates should be submitted to the Sussex Branch Hon. Secretary Gavin Ritchie. It is important that "the contribution of major significance" is very specific, and this must be readily apparent in the submission. The essence of the award is to recognise people who may not have been widely recognised before, and these may include international candidates. Equally, the committee will be pleased to consider those who may have made a managerial, as opposed to a purely technical, contribution.

BCS, Sussex Branch - Winter and Spring Programme 1999

All meetings 7.15pm for 7.30pm except 17/2/99 & 12/5/99 - buffet 6:45
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17 February 1999

Banking on the Internet and Electronic Commerce*Presented James Cronk of F.I.C.S (buffet in F block, then B317)*

Electronic banking systems have allowed forward-thinking banks to gain a competitive edge in their market and to realise savings on operational costs. EDI systems enable banks to provide sophisticated electronic banking, insurance, leasing and factoring services to business customers. New delivery channels, such as the Internet, TV set-top boxes, Personal Digital Assistants and Smartphones are opening up opportunities for home banking and armchair commerce. In the retail sector, technology enabling online marketing and purchase orders, invoicing and payment. FICS is a specialist consultancy, design and delivery organisation providing electronic services delivery-related products and services to clients all over the world.

17 March 1999

Emerging Wireless Internet Technologies*Presented by speaker from Symbian (Asa Briggs Hall)*

New global standards (Bluetooth, HomeRF, WAP and WRTA) will empower mobile users with wireless devices, giving them instant easy access and interaction with information and services. This talk explains and compares the competing technologies, and points out the implications for consumers and ICT professionals.

21 April 1999

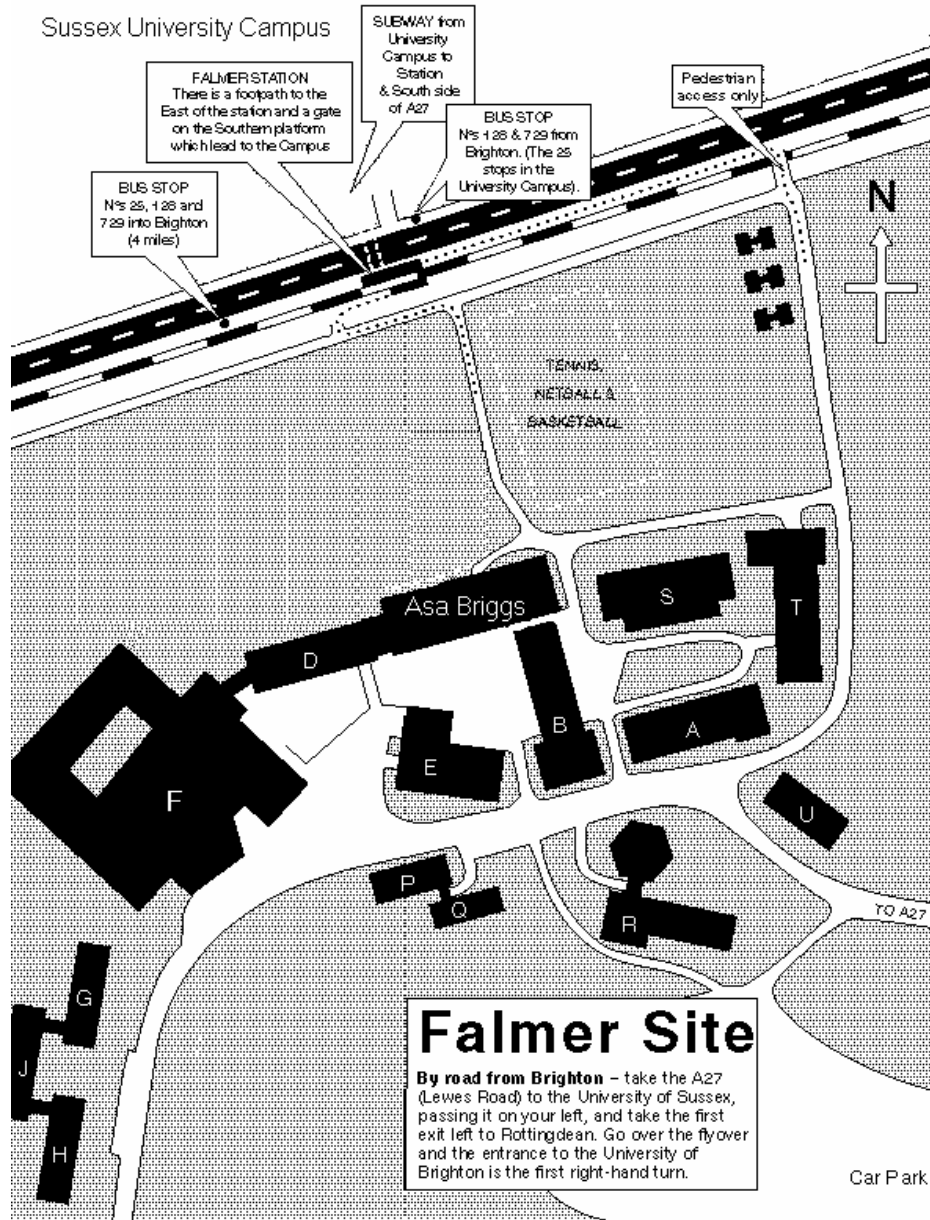
Unlocking the Power of Geographic Information Systems*Presented by Paul Summerfield, Chris Corbin & Gale Gander from the Association for Geographical Information. (B317)*

The use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) for mapping the complex infrastructure of London, and their potential application to Sussex and Brighton & Hove.

12 May 1999

AGM & Presentation on The Future of Computing (Asa Briggs Hall)*Presented by BCS President Ian Ritchie*

AGM and buffet, followed by presentation. How far has computing got? Industrial revolution vs. information revolution. Gradual or catastrophic development? Ian Ritchie examines current trends and predicts the future.



Notice of the holding of the BCS Sussex Branch AGM 1999

Notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of the British Computer Society Sussex Branch will be held at 7.30pm on Wednesday 12th May 1999 in the Asa Briggs Hall, University of Brighton, Falmer, Brighton immediately prior to the Future of Computing talk. A finger buffet will be served at 6.45pm. The AGM normally lasts about 20 minutes.

Agenda

- 1. Apologies
- 2. Minutes of the previous AGM
- 3. Chairman’s report
- 4. Treasurer’s report
- 5. Election of Branch Officers: Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer
- 6. Election of Committee Members (there are at least three vacancies)

(Note there is no provision for Any Other Business in the Rules, but any further items of business for the agenda should be notified to the Hon. Secretary, Gavin Ritchie no later than 5th May 1999.)

Nominations for Chairman, Hon Secretary, Hon Treasurer and Committee Members should be sent, in writing, signed by a Proposer and Seconder who are members of the Society and the Branch, to the Hon Secretary, to arrive no later than 31st April 1999. The nominee should agree to his/her nomination. A suitable form on which to nominate Officers/Committee Members is provided below, (you may photocopy and enlarge it if required).

.....
British Computer Sussex Branch

Election of Officers and Committee Members

We hereby nominate (print name).....as

Sussex Branch: Chairman/Hon Secretary/Hon Treasurer/Committee Member*
at the election to take place at:

The Annual General Meeting on Wednesday 12th May 1999.

Proposer (print name)

Membership number

Signature

Seconder (print name).....

Membership number

Signature

I agree to be nominated as indicated above

Nominee (print name)

Membership number

Signature

Y o u r C o m m i t t e e

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