



A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN – Dr. Peter Lappo

Judging by the number of phone calls I've been getting in the last few months there is no doubt in my mind that the job market for IT professionals has improved despite the outsourcing to countries like India. We seem to be getting slowly over the worst excesses of the technology bubble which has resulted in a paltry 1% increase in shares since 1997, but whether my PEPs and ISAs will ever be worth what I paid for them remains to be seen. How long this will continue will depend on how well the business economy remains reasonably buoyant. Notice I'm carefully differentiating business from the consumer economy as these are quite distinct as far as IT is concerned. Most IT practitioners are employed in the business sector and not the consumer market and therefore factors like the level of general employment and consumer inflation don't have much bearing on the IT job market, as some of you will sadly know. What matters the most is business profitability and business investment.

This improvement in the job market doesn't mean we should be complacent as individuals and assume negative factors such as off-shoring won't have a negative impact on UK IT employment rates in the long term, as I am sure they will. In order to "live long and prosper", to paraphrase Star Trek, we need to ensure our skills are in demand in the marketplace. The BCS

programme we have arranged for you this year will, I hope, improve your knowledge, but I doubt if it will make the difference between getting a job and being unemployed. However, it will show prospective employers that you are willing and able to learn.

The programme this year starts off with a talk on wireless networks which I hope will be quite popular. Wireless networks are a bit of a black hole for me as its one technology I haven't kept abreast of. I have particular concerns about security and overlapping conflicting networks and I'm sure Dave Phelan will be most enlightening. Later on in the year we will have a couple of talks focused on agile software development which as some of you know is a subject I am keen on. There will also be a talk about BBC radio, novel human computer interfaces, and of course the BCS presentation and AGM at the end of the year. A full programme is presented elsewhere in aBaCuS.

Each talk will earn you half a CPD point. You're probably asking yourself what a CPD is, well to be honest I didn't know until quite recently. CPD stands for Continuing Professional Development, a programme devised by the BCS to help its members demonstrate they are developing themselves professionally. When you come to the meetings you will have the

continued overleaf

2004 - 2005

20th October
Community Wireless LANs

10th November
Pair Programming under the microscope

16th February
Programming at BBC Radio

9th March
Introduction to XP Stories

27th April
eSPACE, A Novel Interational workspace

18th May
BCS Information Evening and AGM

Meetings held at:

School of Engineering & Information Technology,
University of Sussex,
ENGG Stage 1,
Falmer, Brighton.

7:00pm for 7:30pm

Drinks & light refreshments provided

option to take home a CPD certificate as proof of your attendance which you can add to your CPD records. You can also earn CPD points by completing training, gaining certification, present papers, and other activities outside of normal work. Full details are on the BCS website www.bcs.org and I encourage you to take a closer look. In my opinion it is things like CPD that differentiates you from the average.

I hope you enjoy the talks and the opportunities to network. If you would like to contact me with your views, ideas for talks or articles to publish in Abacus you can contact me, Dr Peter Lappo on 07767 784452.

One concern I have is that we have 729 members but only 552 with an email address, most strange for a computer society. Now I am sure most of you do have an email address and it is simply an administrative detail or perhaps you are reluctant to give an employer's or personal address because you

fear spamming. Well, what ever the reason you can take advantage of the one provided by the BCS, which is your.name@bsc.org.uk. From what I can gather this is a forwarding address only which means you still need an address to receive email, however, it does mean you can keep your email private. The reason I'd like everyone to have an email address is to reduce our aBaCuS costs to let us spend money on other more valuable things like talks or social activities.

This is my first year as president and I feel the emphasis as a branch has to be on improving our knowledge. I would also like to see more online interaction and feedback perhaps through a email discussion group, and more co-operation with other local societies, but these are just ideas for now. However, I hope CPD will be one positive way that your local BCS branch is helping you to live long and prosper!



We email aBaCuS to BCS Sussex members using details from membership records. This mailing is occasional, read-only, and details are not shared. If we have your email details on record, you will be reading this newsletter online as an email, otherwise you will be reading the standard paper-based newsletter. If you would like to change this, or if you would like to receive both versions, please email abacus@bcssussex.org.uk with your preference. Alternatively you are able to download print-ready copy in PDF format from our website at <http://www.bcssussex.org.uk>.

Notice is Hereby Given - *BCS Sussex AGM 2005*

“Notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of the British Computer Society Sussex Branch will be held at **7.30pm on Wednesday 18th May 2005** in Engineering 1, Lecture Theatre 2, University of Sussex”

Agenda

- Apologies
- Minutes of previous AGM
- Chairman’s report
- Treasurer’s report
- Election of Branch Officers

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. 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. The nominee should agree to his/her nomination. A suitable form on which to nominate Officers/Committee Members is provided here.

British Computer Society 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 18th May 2005.

Proposer (print name) Mem number

Signed

Seconder (print name) Mem number

Signed

Completed form to be sent to **David Braund, BCS Sussex Branch Hon. Secretary, 17 Coopers Close, Burgess Hill, RH15 8AN.**

BCS Sussex

2004 - 2005 Programme

7.15pm for 7.30pm @ Engineering 1 Lecture Theatre
University of Sussex, Falmer, Brighton

Free to members and non-members. Each meeting earns half a CPD point.
Further details from the Meetings Coordinator. Updates listed at <http://www.bcssussex.org.uk>

20th October 2004

Community Wireless LANs

As well as finding out about wireless LAN and related wireless technologies. Dave Phelan will discuss the whys and wherefores of community wireless networking - what is it, who is doing it, and how. Dave will give a history of piertopier.net, a community network on the beach in Brighton, and how it uses MeshAP. He will also give a highly opinionated view of the future for community wireless LANs.

Links: <http://www.piertopier.net/>
<http://www.locustworld.com/>

talk to be presented by
Dave Phelan, PierToPeir.net, Brighton

10th November 2004

Pair Programming Under the Microscope: Is Adding a Second Resource Really Worth While?

Programming in pairs is growing in popularity, and is one of the key practices of the eXtreme Programming methodology. Sallyann Bryant from the University of Sussex will give a general overview of how pair programming is practiced in industry, including identifying some of the key skills required. She will then review some of the costs and benefits associated in an attempt to ascertain whether it is really worth while developing software in twos.

Links: <http://www.cogs.susx.ac.uk/ideas/>
<http://www.xprogramming.com/>

talk to be presented by
Sallyann Bryant, IDEAS Laboratory, University of Sussex

16th February 2005 Programming at BBC Radio

Mark's talk will be about programming, but not as we know it, at BBC Southern Counties Radio. He will talk about how radio programmes are put together and the process involved. This will be an interesting and informative talk and a chance to learn how a radio station works. This talk will be held at the radio station in Brighton and advanced booking will be required.

Links: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/southerncounties/>

*talk to be presented by
Mark Carter, Editor News & Programmes, BBC Southern Counties*

9th March 2005 Introduction to XP Stories

This talk is about how to write stories for development in the eXtreme Programming method. Most books on XP are written from a developer perspective, the role of the on-site customer is defined around interactions with the development team. This session aims to explain what a story is, where the analysis activities that lead up to writing them fit in the process and how stories differ from use cases. When using XP, acceptance tests for stories should be written prior to planning out development. The session also talks about how acceptance criteria is defined and how to involve testers to support the customer.

Links: <http://www.xprogramming.com/>

*talk to be presented by
Rachel Davies, Independent Agile Coach & Facilitator*

27th April 2005 eSPACE: A Novel Interactional Workspace to Support Sales Transactions

eSPACE was a 2.5 year research project dedicated to finding new ways of supporting sales transactions that involve collaborative planning of complex products. I present an overview of the entire design process, from observation of the problem space, through requirements capture and prototyping, to in-situ evaluation of the resulting system, a shared interactive workspace with multiple screens and information visualizations.

Links: <http://www.cogs.susx.ac.uk/interact/>

*talk to be presented by
John Halloran, Interact Laboratory, University of Sussex*

18TH MAY 2005 BCS INFORMATION EVENING AND AGM

This is an opportunity to find out what the British Computer Society (BCS) does and how it could benefit you. It is an evening for anyone thinking of joining the BCS or for existing members to find out more. The meeting will include a short AGM as required by our constitution. Nominations are required for the committee and officers.

Links: <http://www.bcs.org.uk>

*talk to be presented by
David Morris, President of the BCS*

EDITOR'S LETTER



We see some changes for this new BCS Sussex year. For quite a time it has been our aim to make more use of our online resources, we are after all a Computer Society and it seems right to keep up with technology and where we can be a showcase for others. We will now use our website to publish aBaCuS and then use this as the basis to create a "conventional" paper-based aBaCuS at least once a year. The online aBaCuS will be more than just a static page of text and will instead take the form of a number of articles on the website with an option for readers to add their own comment and indeed submit their own work. aBaCuS issue numbers will become more blurred, articles can be published online at anytime and not just once every six months as we are currently restricted to with a paper-based newsletter. I am sure this is the biggest change that aBaCuS has had certainly in the twelve years that I have been a BCS Sussex member. It will bring aBaCuS alive.

This may not be good news to everyone and so we will continue with our normal paper-based newsletter alongside which will now benefit from the extra content taken from the aBaCuS website, or certainly parts of it (we may not have room for all the content from the website to be published on paper). The paper version will also be available for download as PDF which allows members to print their own newsletter. We will also continue to post out aBaCuS issues via our email mailing list, which can then be used as a stepping stone to further content on the website. There will be access on our website for members to specify their preference for aBaCuS delivery.

We understand a number of BCS Sussex members do not have online access or have not added their email address with their membership details. For those who have not registered their email address with the BCS I urge you to do so not only to receive correspondence from BCS Sussex but also from BCS HQ as well. I can say that all activity on BCS mailing lists is very low volume and details are not passed on to anyone else. For those who have no online access then we remain committed to all our members and the introduction of our online features will make for a more in-depth issue of aBaCuS offline.

Changes to aBaCuS come along with a new BCS Sussex website. Its main aim will be to keep members

up-to-date with meetings and to allow for membership feedback via the aBaCuS pages. We always want to encourage members to come to meetings but it is understood that coming to your first meeting is a bit of an unknown. Members may know that they are friendly meetings attracting IT professionals from throughout Sussex, starting with an informal free buffet followed by an informative talk and finishing with a Q&A session which can become the main event. Sometimes, the meetings continue in an informal fashion at the local village public house, serving real ale. But we know that members may be a bit nervous about being the "new boy" and so we hope to put more into our meeting reports including photos and even video. This along with discussions within aBaCuS online. I hope by the time you read this part of our new website will be available.

Not only changes within BCS Sussex with our new chairman, new aBaCuS, and new website, but on a personal level there are changes. Regular aBaCuS readers will know that last year I became the proud father of two baby boys. Well this gave us a bit of a space problem and this summer we moved to a larger house near Shoreham Beach. Once we had got settled in I had to inform all the services of our new address, get electricity, gas, phone all updated. Amazingly, the house did not have a phone line and so we had to put an order in for a new line to be installed. All of this meant, no Internet, for over a month! It seems strange that over the last five years the Internet has become such a part of our life and we depend on it so much. Certainly I am able to go to my bank's local branch or use phone banking, but banking online where you can see all our transactions on the screen is a lot more practical. Moving to a new house means new furniture and fixtures, all of which can be found at a good price on the Internet - but not if you don't have a phone line. I wonder how long it will be until Internet connectivity is treated as an essential service such as electricity and gas. A fast Internet connection can be seen in the same light as private car I suppose. Private cars bring convenience and personal freedom in the same way that fast Internet does the same. None of us need a car, we could walk, use public transport, or change our way of life. It may be impractical, but it is possible. The same goes for the Internet as well, no-one needs it but I believe for some of us it would require us to change our way of life without it.

COMMITTEE PROFILES

Get to know your committee, we start with one or two members and will continue the series on the website.

Dr. Peter Lappo

As Chair of the Branch I am responsible for chairing committee meetings, introducing speakers and ensuring the branch is run properly. I am keen that the branch improves our professional lives and to this end I've introduced CPD points for each talk. I'd also like to see more co-operation with other societies, but this is a mid term objective for now. I am keen on agile methods which I use as part of my job as a programmer analyst in the City and make presentations on the subject at international conferences. My main interests outside work are music and food. Currently I'm learning how to use a sequencer and discovering its not a simple as I thought, and hopefully I will find someone to speak on the subject next year.

Sallyann Bryant

A PhD student at the University of Sussex where she is studying the psychological aspects of pair programming. She is interested in understanding the processes and behaviours evident when a pair of experience programmers work together and how these might assist collaborative software development. Prior to starting her PhD, Sallyann had an eight year career in IT, where her roles included analyst/programmer, designer, systems analyst, business analyst and project manager. She has worked on many different types of project, including real-time process control systems, computer-telephony integration, human resource management (HR), customer relations management (CRM) and eGovernment. Sallyann is mainly interested in object-oriented development and is currently even doing a bit of pair programming herself!

Stephen Ticehurst

A software test engineer for seven years after a background in software development. I am currently working towards systems to enable test report automation combining the results of any test in any format, both manual and automated within a central data repository – supported by tools to mine and analyse the data in order to automatically detect and learn patterns. I am a great believer of open source software and currently use in-depth Bugzilla and TWiki for my work. Life outside of work is taken up with our two baby boys, but sometimes I get chance to work on cars of which we have at sometime owned a number of Trabants and VW Beetle/Campers. I have a great interest in sustainable living, which would seem a bit strange for someone who loves old cars so much.

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