

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

BY DESMOND BOKŠAN-CULLEN

I am the new chairperson of the BCS Sussex branch taking over from Jon Robinson. Jon had a very successful year building on the work done by Peter Lappo, his immediate predecessor. I would like to take this opportunity to wish Jon every success in his career. I would also like to register my sincere thanks on behalf of all the members of the Sussex Branch for the sterling efforts made by David Braund, our departing Branch Secretary.

I come from a Human Computer Interaction background, but I have interests in all sectors of information technology and mathematics. I have been working in the usability and accessibility area for several years and I am also involved in assistive technology research. I have been interested in technology throughout my career since learning computer science on ICL 1900 and Commodore PET computers.

Amongst my duties as chairman is to construct a varied programme of speakers and events. Last year this branch organised a programme to suit all IT disciplines; I intend to continue this trend. I am also keen to develop opportunities in IT for women, so I hope one day to organise an event with the BCS Women's Group. Other events that I'm planning include one on Geophysical Surveying (as seen on the television archaeology series *Time Team*) and one on how software fixes can avoid the costly replacement of space satellites (an example of this is how the Hubble telescope has been maintained). I would like to remind members of the BCS and IET that attendance at our lectures earns Continuing Professional Development (CPD) points.

Many people think that Computer Science and Applications begin and end with university training and research. I disagree with this. I am keenly interested in how IT is taught from primary school, through secondary to further education and modern apprenticeships. IT is different from computer skills (using the keyboard and common applications such as MS Office) and this confusion has led to a skills shortage. This is especially evident in a recession such as we are experiencing at present. Nowadays IT is the foundation on which many industries, professions and work disciplines depend. The BCS, being *the* Chartered Institution for Information Technology, can work with everyone involved with IT, not just its own membership.

Beyond our profession, technology has become a part of everyday life. Examples include the embedded computer in a washing machine, interactive mobile phones, personal computers and the internet. With many traditional sources of community information such as post offices, libraries and government offices closing or having restrictive opening times, much of today's information is now only available via the internet.

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2009 – 2010 PROGRAMME

14th October '09
Symantec UK

11th November '09
Arrow Geophysics

10th February '10
Google UK

10th March '10
Astronomy Night

14th April '10
BCS Learned Society

12th May '10
BCS President / AGM

Meetings are held in the Chichester 1 lecture theatre at the University of Sussex, Falmer, Brighton.

7:00pm for 7:30pm.

Free admission. Non-members welcome.



We are giving away a fabulous prize to one lucky person at each of our meetings. Our prize draws are free to enter, but you can only win if you are a BCS member at one of our meetings.

See our branch website for full details and more information about our talks.

Many people, especially amongst the retired population, may not have access to the internet and are therefore becoming disadvantaged. This is the new digital divide. I believe that we, as a profession, must remember that not everyone is online. Many pensioners are living on low fixed incomes and they cannot afford to pay for broadband connections. Many are housebound and cannot get to a local library or internet cafe. It is a paradox that these are the people who could get the greatest benefit from the internet. Being able to order groceries online for home delivery, for instance, could allow them to stay in their own homes instead of having to move into care. A care home might cost the taxpayer £800-1600 per month per resident, yet £10 per month for broadband connection is not generally offered to these people who might otherwise remain independent.

Computing has come of age. It is up to us in the profession to meet the challenges. Remember that we form the basis of many aspects of modern living. We must take that responsibility seriously.

Desmond Bokšan-Cullen
BCS Sussex Branch Chairman

CHANGES TO OUR NEWSLETTER

We send this newsletter to BCS Sussex members using details from membership records. Mailings are occasional and we do not share members details with third parties. If we have your email address on record, you will receive this newsletter by email, otherwise you will receive the printed newsletter through the post.

Due to rising postal and printing costs, and to reduce our carbon footprint, this is the last edition of the newsletter that we will send in printed format by traditional post. We urge our members who have not yet done so to give us their email address so that we can keep everyone informed about our future activities. We will continue to make a printed version of the newsletter freely available at our public meetings. Of course, you can always view and download our newsletters in PDF format via our website at: www.sussex.bcs.org.uk/news.

THE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Desmond Bokšan-Cullen: Chairman, Disability Support.

Neil Winfield: Secretary.

Norman Sansom: Treasurer, Education Liaison.

Roy Newell: Congress Representative, Universities Liaison.

Steven Ward: Newsletter Editor, Webmaster.

Veronique Pradalier: Young Professionals Group Representative.

Blay Whitby: Meetings Coordinator, Professional Development.

Adrian Thomas: Committee Member.

Contact details can be found on our branch website at: www.sussex.bcs.org.uk/contact.

EDITORIAL

Some exceptional changes are taking place this year, both at our branch level and to the BCS as a whole. The goal is to improve the services we provide to our members, as well as the way we interact with, and are perceived by, outside bodies, employers, the profession and the community.

At a local level, you may have noticed that our branch website has undergone a major overhaul. The modifications address a number of issues that were in need of attention. Several key design features have been implemented that will enable us to better maintain the site in the future. As a result, our site is not only more intuitive and easier to use, but it can be kept fresh, up-to-date and relevant.

A facility has been added to allow non-members to subscribe to our mail shots. A dynamic link to Google Maps will help visitors find where we meet. We have introduced a graph showing the age groups of our members each month. To enhance the usability of the site, we have incorporated a simple (but powerful) search facility on each page. This will greatly assist visitors who are looking for a specific topic, event or speaker.

We have included a profile page for every member of the committee. Our aim is to present a friendlier face, whilst offering visitors an insight into the backgrounds of those who serve on the committee. And there is now a slideshow of portraits so that everyone can see who's who!

Following in the footsteps of David Braund, I have taken on the mantle of webmaster. Have you seen our website lately? If not, you can find it at www.sussex.bcs.org.uk. I hope you will agree that it looks contemporary and professional. Whatever your opinion, please tell me what you think. I would also like to hear if you have any suggestions for further improvements to the site.

Beyond the website, our branch would benefit from building associations with local businesses and industry. In recent years, we have focused perhaps too much on the academic world. To redress the balance, we are hoping to negotiate an affiliation with a leading representative of the business community in Sussex. Watch this space!

We are also investigating how we might use online communications tools and techniques, such as social networking, to promote our branch. These are broadly covered by the term *Web 2.0*. As part of a computer society, it is right that we should embrace this technology.

Due to cost and environmental factors, this is the last edition of this newsletter that we will post to members in printed format. Now that over 90% of our members receive the electronic version, it is no longer viable to print and send paper copies by traditional post. Also, our newsletters are freely available to read on our website. Moving away from a printed format will allow us to develop a better style of newsletter in the future.

On a global scale, the BCS is embarking on a journey to become more relevant to its members, volunteers, the academic community, industry, government and the wider public. Its mission is to enable the information society, not just in the UK but around the world. It is determined to create an IT profession fit to lead an information society.

We can learn from the example of established professions such as accounting, law and medicine. We *will* become effective and integrated as a profession, and the BCS intends to lead the way. Between now and the end of 2010, a brand new BCS will take shape. To appeal to a global market, we are no longer a *British Computer Society*; we are simply the BCS - The Chartered Institute for IT.

Starting with a rebranding of the BCS in September 2009, a wide range of new qualifications, products and services is being rolled out, supported by a completely redesigned website. In fact, Sussex is one of the first of the regional BCS branches to adopt and promote the new corporate identity.

To become truly world-class it will be necessary for all our members, volunteers and employees to work together. We also need government, industry and academia to get involved and support our profession. The transformation has already begun. The time is right, the industry is ready and the BCS is stepping up to the challenge.

Steven Ward
Newsletter Editor

THE CHAIR'S REPORT

BY JON ROBINSON, OUR FORMER CHAIRMAN

I wish to thank all of the committee members for their help in the smooth running of the branch between 2008 and 2009. During that period, the committee met four times, plus a final AGM in May 2009. In 2008, Norman Samson took over as our Treasurer from Adrian Thomas, who did a sterling job over the past couple of years. I would like to thank Norman Sansom, Steven Ward, Neil Winfield, Veronique Pradalier, Desmond Bokšan-Cullen, Adrian Thomas, Roy Newell and David Braund for all of their help on the committee over this time.

When I took over the chair position from Peter Lappo at the beginning of 2008, it was on the basis that I could only stand for one year as I will be moving on to another institution. I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude and thanks to all of the committee members for their support and encouragement during this time and wish them luck in my absence. Sadly, David Braund stepped down as secretary this year. I would like to thank him for all of his hard work over many years and wish him well in whatever his future endeavours are.

We provided our regular series of lectures and enjoyed a higher number of research talks given by staff at the University of Sussex to showcase some of the research within the Department of Informatics. We have also tried to encourage a greater student participation which has increased our average attendance levels.

2007–2008 Programme Summary

This year we continued to offer our programme of public meetings held at the University of Sussex. We had a varied set of events which incorporated a workshop on climate change, a talk on teleconferencing and other talks highlighting some of the research that is being undertaken within the Department of Informatics at Sussex University.

17th September 2008 - Community Action for Climate Change and Carbon Management Issues. Roy Newell acted as host to a workshop on climate change which brought together guest speakers from different fields of expertise. Jeff Moine provided the main talk which introduced us to climate change, how it can impact on businesses,

and some of the current initiatives that are under way to tackle global warming. This was followed by talks from Bob Brooks, Conrad Taylor and Keith Taylor.

15th October 2008 - Audio-Visual Conferencing and its Implications for SMEs. Neil Johnstone, of Technilink IT Ltd, gave an interesting talk on conferencing technology and how it can benefit business by reducing costs with less site visits to customers. This in turn lowers their carbon footprint. This was aptly relevant to our workshop about climate change in the previous month

12th November 2008 - Optimising Code. Dr Des Watson from the Department of Informatics, University of Sussex, provided an interesting talk on compiler design which was well received, especially by the students within the audience. The talk started off with an introduction to compilers and then focused on optimisation strategies for a variety of processor architectures.

18th February 2009 - Video Games Usability and User Experience. Dr Graham McAllister from the Department of Informatics, University of Sussex, talked about using HCI approaches in evaluating the usability and user experience of video games.

11th March 2009 - Designing New Interactive Systems for Care at Home. Dr Geraldine Fitzpatrick from the Department of Informatics, University of Sussex, talked about a research project that has been undertaken within the Interact Lab at Sussex University where new devices and systems can be used to help care for the more elderly members of the community.

22nd April 2009 - Pervasive Computing: The next big step? Dr Jon Robinson from the Department of Informatics, University of Sussex, talked about pervasive computing, what the challenges are and what is needed to realise this and some of the applications of such technologies.

20th May 2009 - The Future of the Internet - Good or Evil? Alan Pollard, President of the BCS, asked us to question where we are headed with the Internet, the benefits, risks and implications to society: are we becoming devoid of human contact or are we furthering world harmony and cooperation?

More details can be found on the branch website.