PhD Student News

Our congratulations go to the following students for successfully defending their theses:

- AL-RASHED Maha (supervisor: Nige Blackie)
- KASRAN Mohd (supervisor: Simon Goodchild)
- McWHINNIE David (supervisor: Elaine Ferneley)
- MIT Edwin (supervisor: Farid Meziane)

We also have new IRIS students to welcome. Registered in January 2009:

CAMPION Simon (Supervisor: Dave Roberts)
CAULLEY Elizabeth (Supervisor: Elaine Ferneley)
DOWD Michael (Supervisor: Alison Adam)
DUCKWORTH Toby (Supervisor: Dave Roberts)
MAMHENDE Vitalis (Supervisor: Alex Heinze)
MOORE Carl (Supervisor: Dave Roberts)
RIADI Indra (Supervisor: Samia Nefzi Meziani)

Visiting Student from July to December 2008
GUJAR Aijaz (HERC Visiting student)

This is the first newsletter following the outcome of the Research Assessment Exercise which confirmed IRIS as one of the leading multidisciplinary research institutes that brings together expertise in social, technological and computational aspects of information systems.

New IRIS / HERC Members

Jaye Mtsiaca: Education Development Coordinator in ILS
My role in the Learning Development Unit is to develop, deliver and support the personal and professional development of postgraduate and early career researchers with an emphasis on teaching and learning. I coordinate and deliver an in-service teacher training programme for all new Graduate Teaching Assistants. Research Interests: I am an early career researcher, with emerging research interests. I have undertaken some small-scale research that clusters around the process of learning and teaching. I am interested in the development of academic identity for early career researchers, with an emphasis on ‘learning as becoming’ in the teaching development of neophyte teachers Higher Education.

Dr. Ela Beaumont: in the Student Life Directorate
I am presently in the Student Life Directorate and I support students and advise academic staff on academic learning across the University. I was a Research Fellow in the School of Art and Design, Altrincham Research Institute, University of Salford. My PhD is Family Learning and Contemporary Art and I have conducted research in Labour Market Intelligence: Unemployment in North Derbyshire, High Peak College & TEC (95, 95R) and the retention and retrieval of North West Creative Arts and Design Graduates, Liverpool and Manchester.

Sophie Hill
I have been a lecturer in prosthetics and orthotics in the School of Health Care Professions for almost 11 years. Currently I'm studying for a PhD in the Department of Educational Research at Lancaster University. My thesis is on difficult concepts within a discipline using threshold concepts and theories of difficulty to explore these.

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RAE puts IRIS in the top two in the UK

The UK Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) outcomes, announced today, show that 75% of the research activities of the Informatics Research Institute are at international level, with 25% at world leading level. The reviewers were particularly impressed with the Research Environment, which was highlighted as having 50% of activities at world leading level. I’d like to thank all members of IRIS whose commitment to pursuing high quality research has contributed to this success.

This newsletter highlights some activities immediately following the RAE, showing that we are not content with the excellent RAE results but building further on our successful research. It includes examples of important research events that we are organising, publications in major outlets, funded projects and students who have successfully completed their PhDs.

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Dr Marie Griffiths, Dr Alexi Heinnie and Professor Ben Light have succeeded with a KTP award with Cetus, an IT network solutions provider. The project will run for 3 months and is worth £137K.

The project will develop an Enterprise 2.0 enabled relationship-management web portal. Working with Cetus Solutions, one of the growing IT infrastructure companies that have amongst their clients Media City UK, are academics from FOD research group Dr Marie Griffiths, Dr Alexi Heinnie and Professor Ben Light.

Marie Griffiths (FDS), Ben Light (DSG), Paul Kewal (Cetus), Mike English MD Cetus, Vicky Russell (Enterprise and Development Salford), Aleksej Heinnie (DSG) and Fiona Nightingale (KTP Advisor).

Dr Gordon Fletcher, Professor Elaine Ferneyhell and Professor Ben Light have also won a KTP award on the ‘The Foundry’. This project is over 24 months and is for £107K.

The company: The Foundry are a modern and very effective design company, with the emphasis on design innovation for which they have various awards. They are involved in all areas of branding and marketing for their clients, from designing and building creative and effective websites through advertising campaigns to point of sale (POS) material.

Their impressive client base is made up of world leading blue chip organisations including Mars, Proctor & Gamble, Scotch & Newcastle, Bulmers, Molson and Goldilocks.

The project: The project is in the area of POS material. The Foundry have designed and prototyped a web-based system that allows independent retailers to access, design and tailor POS material to fit their needs. Currently independent retailers are relying on generic material designed and distributed by the large suppliers and manufacturers (i.e. Mars, Scottish Courage, Proctor & Gamble) this is cumbersome and expensive as well as limited and ‘un-targeted’. This system overcomes this and allows the retailers access to the branding and the campaigns devised by the suppliers and manufacturers but with the ability to tailor the material to their individual needs.

The KTP will take this prototype to completion as a product that can be used by and sold to any of their major blue chip clients for use by independent retailers.

Professor Nigel Linge, Professor David Parsons, Dr Kate Booth EPSRC Partnerships for Public Engagement Funding

An important part of the work of a University is to motivate and encourage the next generation of undergraduates and to reach out into the community. The Family Telecommunications Days are one such vehicle and provide public engagement for a family audience. These events are intended to demonstrate, enthuse, educate and entertain the public by illustrating the importance of telecommunications to everyday life, how modern day technology actually works and putting its evolution into historical context. The development of telecommunication is intimately linked to the development of modern day society but equally importantly, is a story of scientific breakthrough, engineering endeavour and research achievement.

Telecommunications technology is a familiar part of our lives and the younger you are, an ever increasing necessity. However, despite this importance and the widespread adoption – there are more mobile phones in the UK than people - the general public do not fully appreciate the engineering that makes the technology work and the youngest don’t even anticipate that there is any engineering within devices such as mobile phones. Our Family Telecommunications Days are designed to address this issue. Comprising an exhibition of telecommunications artefacts acquired by the University and a set of interactive demonstrations designed by academic staff, the public can learn how hard it was to send messages by semaphore flag or Morse Code, find out how the telephone works, learn about fibre optics and see how the internet is able to support high quality video communications. Supported by a comprehensive range of posters, information sheets and educational activities the Family Telecommunications Days have grown in popularity since their inception in September 2006. Each event is hosted at the Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester and facilitated by academic staff and postgraduate students. To date a total of 10,130 people have had the pleasure of participating in a Family Telecommunications Days and judging by the feedback received, have had a most rewarding, enjoyable, motivating and educational experience.

Funded Projects

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Invited Seminars

David Kreps was invited at a Bath University ‘Code in Action: Closing the Black Box of WCGA 2.0’ Dec 3rd 2008.

David Kreps has been invited to make a presentation on Web Accessibility in The Arts for Ambition event in London, March 09 (http://www.getambition.com).

Ben Light was joint plenary speaker (with Dr Peter Wheeler of Edge Hill University), at the Disability and the Internet Workshop held December 2008 by the Department of Critical Media Studies, Liverpool John Moores University. Their presentation was entitled: “VAT 2.0? Disability, Technology and Disadvantage in Digital Culture”.

Ben Light has been invited to speak at the University of St Andrews’ Disability, Technology and Disadvantage in Digital Culture”.

Sunil Vodara gave a seminar to the Chinese Academy of Science in Beijing on his research on cost-sensitive machine learning and the use of the family resemblance principle and Bayesian networks for learning exemplars.

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