Informatics Research Institute (IRIS) December 2003 newsletter

Rezgui, Y

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The recent Government White Paper on Higher Education, the expected recommendations of the Roberts Report and the changes to the Research Quality Assessment funding formula have led to changes in University of Salford Research Policy.

This has led to some form of restructuring and expansion of our research institute with the creation of a new research centre, namely the Future Workspaces Research Centre, and the inclusion of the following research centers:

- Advanced Robotics Research Centre.
- Computer Science Research Centre.
- Centre for Networking and Telecommunication Research.

Given the research portfolio of the new members that provide a broad coverage of the hard / Computing dimension of the Information Systems discipline, it was decided that the name of the institute be changed to Informatics Research Institute, with the acronym IRIS.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome all our new members. I hope that we will all be able to get our act together and work towards sustaining our high quality research.

Yacine Rezgui
Director of IRIS

Who’s doing what?

Prof. Alison Adam is to serve on the 2003-04 Programme Committee for ETHICOMP, Athens. She will also serve on the CATAc Programme Committee 2004, Stockholm.

Mr. Tom McMaster is a member on the Programme Committee of IFIP 8.6, Ireland 2004, and IFIP 8.2 UK 2004.

Gordon Fletcher is Joint Managing Editor of the Journal of Information and Society (JOSI).

Joanne Perrot has been recruited as the Research Secretary of IRIS.

Congratulations

Earlier in the year it was announced that PERMIS X.509 authorisation infrastructure, developed by Prof. David Chadwick and his team, was released as part of the US National Science Foundation Middleware Initiative. PERMIS is the first non–US software to make the Grid and Internet 2 software release.


Publications

Books:


Book section:


Journals:


Burke, M. 2003, ‘Relationships Between Scalar Chains and Information Fulfillment: Towards a New Epistemology’, JASIST.


Fletcher, G. 2003, ‘Cargo Cults In Java: Virtual Objects In The Teaching And Learning Environment’, Journal of Information Technology Impact.


Conference Papers:


Recent Projects

Prof. Alison Adam and Ms Helen Richardson have been awarded two European Social Fund (ESF) projects:

Project 1: Regional ESF Project - Women in the IT Industry in the North West
Project 2: National ESF Project – Women and IT

These projects will undertake an in-depth survey of women in the IT industry in the Northwest and compare this to national data. It will investigate why women are poorly represented in the IT sector as a whole, in particular senior levels, and also causes of the 'female IT brain-drain'.

Ms Janice Whatley and Ms Frances Bell have secured funding for a European MINERVA project entitled 'Collaboration Across Borders (CAB)'. This venture is being undertaken by a partnership of six institutions across Europe, helped by a grant of almost £300,000 Euro over two years. Salford is the co-ordinating Institution.

The CAB Project involves developing a web site to enable teachers to identify student groups anywhere in Europe who are willing to collaborate with their students in a short collaborative activity. We are going to investigate whether this collaboration enhances the learning experience of students, by encouraging discussion using online tools, also enabling cultural exchange, without the need to travel. The part played by learning strategies and emotions will also be studied.

Prof. Ruth Aylett has been awarded funding form EU Asia-Europe IT&C ‘Empathic Learning with Virtual Interactive Synthetic Characters’. She has also been awarded funding from ESA for a 6 month project ‘On Board Interactive Planning and Scheduling in Space’.

Prof. David Chadwick has been funded by JISC to integrate PERMIS, his authorisation infrastructure, into the Globus Toolkit release 3. Globus is the primary software used by all UK e-Science Grid applications. Once this integration has been achieved PERMIS will be in a prime position to be used by many grids the whole world over. The title of the research is ‘Grid Authorisation API phase 2 and will last until March 2004.


Completed Projects

eCognos was a 3 year EU funded project to examine the nature of knowledge transfer within and between construction companies. The aim of the project was to develop a web services based knowledge management portal which allowed the contents of a variety of proprietary and bespoke applications to be abstracted into a common representation for subsequent interrogation and exploitation. The model attempted to mirror the social process of information retrieval - the notion of 'ask a friend', then ask a more 'knowledgeable friend' before finally consulting external information sources. The project was driven by the industrial partners' commercial requirements, the ISI were tasked with implementing those requirements by developing a scalable, commercially robust knowledge management portal. Thanks to the efforts of James Cunningham, Matt Wetherill and Brendan Berney we developed the e-CKMI - the eCognos Knowledge Management Infrastructure. The project passed its final review with the commission at the end of September with flying colours. Now the aim is to continue the development of the technology in other research council and commercial funding endeavours.
New Staff

DR. ELENA ZAITSEVA

Dr. Elena Zaitseva will be working as a Research Assistant on the MINERVA CAB project. Elena previously worked in Russia as a researcher in the area of Open and Distance Learning. She has organized a number of Russian-Japanese international educational projects for secondary school pupils and university students aimed at multi-cultural, multi-language education. Elena’s PhD is in Educational Technology, obtained from Moscow People Friendship University, Russia.

New Staff Cont’d...

MR. PETER LANGLEY

Peter Langley is a PhD research student, supervised by Prof. Chadwick, sponsored by Nexor Ltd. His research topic is ‘Role Based Secure Messaging’. Peter graduated from Salford in July 2003 with a BSc (Hons) Information Technology. Peter also has a Mechanical Engineering degree, conferred by Salford in 1971.

GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANTS

MR. ALEXEIS GARCIA PEREZ

Alexeis has been awarded a University of Salford GTA Scholarship to conduct his PhD research in the area of ‘Knowledge Management and Open Publishing’, under the supervision of Prof. Grahame Cooper. His first degree in Computer Sciences was from the University of Havana in 1996. He then became a lecturer in the Department of Librarianship and Information Sciences of the same university. There he taught ICT for Information Management to undergraduate and postgraduate students for 6 years. He completed an MSc in Librarianship and Information Sciences at the University of Havana in 2002, and with a grant from the Chevening Scholarship offered by the British Council, he came to the UK to do an MSc in Information Management at Manchester Metropolitan University.

MR. ANDREW SCHOFIELD

Andrew is a recipient of a University of Salford GTA Scholarship to conduct his PhD research in the area of ‘Resource Sharing in Open-source Environments’, under the supervision of Dr. Mitra. Mr. Schofield graduated with a BSc (Hons) in Computer Science and Information Systems course in the School of Sciences, at Salford. He has an MSc in Managing Information Technology from the Information Systems Institute. Whilst studying for my MSc, he worked as a teaching assistant for the Advanced Databases module, assisting students with their lab work and teaching them the Oracle database system and SQL.

ALEKSEJ HEINZE

Aleksej’s is an ESF Graduate Teaching Assistant, under the supervision of Chris Procter. His PhD topic is ‘Future of Higher Education – Blended Learning’.

HELEN FERRIS

Helen is an ESF Graduate Teaching Assistant. She is also studying for an MSc in Managing Information Technology in the ISI.

POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDENTS

New Postgraduate Research Students

Ms. Johria Norfizlina (Fizlin) ISMAIL, MSc
(Supervisor: Prof. Aylett), April 2003

Mr. David McWHINNIE, MPhil
(Supervisor: Dr. Ferneley), April 2003

Ms. Rachael MURPHY, MPhil
(Supervisor: Mr. M. Jones), April 2003

Ms. Polly SOBREPEREZ, PhD
(Supervisor: Dr. Ferneley), July 2003

Ms. Lisa WORRALL, PhD
(Supervisor: Ms. Bell) July 2003

Mr. Hamed AL-HAJIRI, PhD
(Supervisor: Prof. Rezgui), October 2003

Mr. Robert APSIN, PhD
(Supervisor Prof. Fernando), October 2003

Mr. Athman Ahmed ATHMAN, PhD
(Supervisor:: Dr. Mitra) Octobr 2003

Mr. Alexis GARCIA-PEREZ, PhD
(Supervisor: Prof. Cooper), October 2003

Mr. Alex HEINZE, PhD
(Supervisor: Mr. Procter), October 2003

Mr. Chen-hung (Max) HO, PhD
(Supervisor: Prof. Fernando) October 2003

Ms. Lucy KYLE, MPhil
(Supervisor: Ms. Bell), October 2003
New Postgraduate Students Cont'd...

Mr. Peter LANGLEY, PhD  
(Supervisor: Prof. Chadwick) October 2003

Ms. Mei Yii LIM, PhD  
(Supervisor: Prof. Aylett) October 2003

Ms. Naomi PEMBERTON-BILLING, MSc  
(Supervisor: Prof. Fernando) October 2003

Mr. Raja Ahmad Iskandar RAJA YAACOB, PhD  
(Supervisor: Dr. Campoy-Gomez) October 2003

Ms. Sarina Maria SAIGER  
(Supervisor: Ms. Richardson) October 2003

Mr. Andrew SCHOFIELD, PhD  
(Supervisor: Dr. Mitra) October 2003

Mr. Martin Anthony SMITH, MSc  
(Supervisor: Prof. Fernando) October 2003

Mr. Robert STONE, MSc  
(Supervisor: Prof. Fernando) October 2003

Mr. Gary TAYLOR, PhD  
(Supervisor: Dr. Rae) October 2003

Mr. Joseph TELLES, MPhil  
(Supervisor: Ms. Richardson) Oct 2003

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Paul Spedding and Chris Procter are co-organising an LTSN Event

Work Based Learning in Information & Computer Sciences, at the University of Salford on 23 January 2004.

The Work Based Learning event aims to address the practicalities of this approach to learning in terms of managing, assessing and supporting 'off campus' students. It will also tackle the issue of delivering the curriculum in the work place as well as reflective practice and personal development planning. In addition the event will highlight the importance of student employability and what employers may require from HE institutions in order to cooperate in the WBL strategy.

To obtain more information on this event, please consult http://www.ics.ltsn.ac.uk/events/wbl/

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Research Newsletter Submissions:

The next issue of the IRIS Newsletter will be published in March 2004. Submissions to the Newsletter must be sent to Joanne Perrott at-mail: j.e.perrott@salford.ac.uk by 7th February 2004.

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Graduated Postgraduate Research Students

BERNEY Brendan, PhD  
(Supervisor: E Ferneley)  
Exploration Of Social Information Seeking In Knowledge Management With The Socialiser Engine, A Software Tool Supporting Information Seeking Behaviour.

BRIZLAND Ray  
(Supervisor: B. Wood)

IQBAL Javed  
(Supervisor: T. Wood-Harper)  
Learning From The Radical Change Initiative In British Aerospace, Military Aircraft

LIGHT Ben  
(Supervisor: T Wood-Harper)  
An Interprotive Field Study Of Packaged Software Selection Processes

NOLAN Terry  
(Supervisor: B Wood)  
Virtuality, Community And Individuality: Developing New Insights Into Learning And Knowledge In The Small Business

WILSON Ian  
(Supervisor: Y Rezgui)  
Digitally Enabling The Construction Virtual Enterprise
Having recently embarked on the process of further study for an MPhil and progression to PhD status, I was accosted by a close friend who, in all seriousness, thought I’d lost the plot.

“But why?”, she asked, “Why put yourself through another two years or more of that sort of stress? Just to be able to put a few letters on the end of your e-mail and chequebook?”

My friend’s question, so innocently asked, actually made me stop and take stock of the path I am on.

If it was for prestige or recognition then any position I took with the research would invariably be tainted by some attempt to appeal to or placate a specific interest group.

This statement in itself might raise a few eyebrows, so I’ll explain.

A few years back I completed an Honours degree Dissertation looking at IT Skills provision within Private, Public and Education sectors.

In the case of a High School case study, there was a significant discrepancy between the perceived skills of white English and non-white English students.

At the time I considered this nothing more than an interesting anomaly with potential links to Peter Senker's theory linking achievement to overcoming stereotypes and the more distasteful attitudes expressed by some groups in society.

But the growing trend to outsourcing in Industry, especially of software and call centre work to India, that the Indian Tata Group generates over $11 Billion in revenue, that the Indian Government has a dedicated Ministry of Technology and that small Indian villages are able to wirelessly access Government officials and services weekly, made me reconsider.

How often do you or I access Government Services or Officials, wirelessly or otherwise? It's a rhetorical question, but you begin to see my point.

Despite the view of a developed West and a still-developing East, it is increasingly the case that our society appears to be developing, struggling with the roll out of such “E-enabled” services and access points.

But the question is "Why do some groups adopt and embrace technology quicker than others?"

This line of thought gave rise to a second cause for reticence. Not withstanding that the software industry is highly skilled, would I be inadvertently promoting the disquieting notion that one race or ethnic group are better suited to a particular industry or type of job? That thought un-nerved me for many personal reasons.

Generalisations of or discussions of ethnic/race issues are fraught with dangers of causing offence, a ‘hot potato’ if you will.

Yet I find myself inexorably drawn to discussing these apparent trends and the fundamental reasons that underpin them, a beguilingly simple explanation of Culture. This opens up a whole host of interesting theories about what influences culture, how far individuals are influenced by culture in their attitudes, interactions and development and whether such cultural influences extend beyond nominal boundaries such as geography and time without substantial changes to the core concepts.

Why am I doing this? Because I need to know.

Joe Telles
MPhil Student