Welcome to the first edition of the School of Computer Science and Statistics (SCSS) Newsletter

I hope that you find our first newsletter both informative and interesting. The news items describe some of the recent developments in teaching and research within the School and highlight some of the major events of the 2012/13 academic year. This newsletter focuses mostly on what we have done, but I hope that next year you will share some of your stories and successes with us to make for an even more interesting read.

SCSS is now one of the largest Schools in Trinity, with over 60 academic staff, 60 Research Fellows and approximately 1,200 students with slightly more undergraduates than postgraduates. Undergraduate student interest in Computer Science and Statistics is very strong and we are happy to report that our courses are once again full this year. We have more than 150 Ph.D. students researching into a wide range of topics including: Computer Systems, Intelligent Systems, Software Systems, Information Systems, Statistics, Technology and Learning, Intelligent Content, Future Cities and Data Analytics. Each September we hold an MSc Showcase where students display their work and interact with industry participants from all sectors.

One recent and important development within our Computer Science degree programme is that we now offer students the option to study over a four year (honors degree) or five year programme which leads to a Master in Computer Science Degree. Students opting for the five year Master’s programme undertake a six month industry internship in year four. The introduction of this five year programme was driven by Engineers Ireland as a five year master’s level accredited degree is now a pre-requisite for Chartered Engineer status.

In the past year we have held many events to strengthen our alumni relations including a major workshop in April on Educating Computer Scientists and Engineers for the 21st Century, our MSc Technology and Learning event in November and our most recent MSISS event last June. Following feedback from these events, we plan to continue expanding the engagement with our alumni in the coming year.

I hope you enjoy the newsletter and I look forward to hearing more of your stories over the course of 2013/14.

Professor Jeremy Jones
Head of School
Alumni Workshop - Educating Computer Scientists and Engineers for the 21st Century

“Our Alumni matter” was the message from Professor Jeremy Jones as he welcomed the many familiar faces who turned out in large numbers both from home and abroad to interact with academics at the Computer Science/Computer Engineering alumni workshop event held on Friday 12th April.

Annrai O’Toole, co-founder of Iona Technologies and CTO at Workday chaired the workshop. Many topics were raised at the workshop which included: science vs craft; gender balance in the discipline; MOOCs; delivery modes and methods; flipped classrooms; a possible TCD X prize for a grand challenge; value of internships; and the ‘teaching’ of creativity and innovation. The feedback received will guide the future development of academic programmes at the School.

Participants adjourned to the Dining Hall, where the after dinner speaker, Antony Courtney, reflected on the uniqueness of the Trinity Computer Science courses and how, through the building of networking events, Alumni can and are most willing to help in reaching out to audiences locally, nationally and internationally.

MSISS Graduates

On Friday 6th June, MSISS graduates gathered in the Lincoln’s Inn for an alumni reunion event. Graduates from 1991 onwards as well as numerous staff involved with the MSISS programme attended the event. MSISS was originally set up in 1980 to provide a degree for engineers that would have a greater emphasis on management science and quantitative methods than found in traditional engineering degrees. More recently the focus of the degree has shifted to information systems and the course now includes a mix of business, quantitative and IT subjects. Since the MSISS programme began, nearly 500 MSISS graduates are employed in a wide range of roles including management consultants, business analysts, accountants, actuaries, traders, marketers and researchers across the world. Plans are already underway to organise future events and build a network that will be of continuing social and professional value to alumni. The alumni committee would welcome suggestions for future events. If you would like to get involved, contact the MSISS Alumni Committee at: bamsiss-alumni-cmttee@scss.tcd.ie

M.Sc. Technology and Learning event

On Friday 9th November 2012, graduates of the M.Sc. in Technology and Learning gathered for their first ever alumni get together. The event began with a social evening on Friday in the O’Reilly Institute and continued on Saturday, with a focus on learning and professional development. Lord Puttnam, a multi-award winning film producer who has, in recent years, become a leading advocate for education reform, held the alumni to rapt attention as he spoke of education not as one of the priorities for Ireland in the coming years, but the priority. This generated discussions on the role of technology and its importance in learning over the next ten years. Some lively debate ensued throughout the rest of the morning as the event concluded with a plenary discussion. There are now almost 200 M.Sc. in Technology and Learning alumni scattered across the world. For further information on future events or networking opportunities contact mite.tl.alumni@gmail.com
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€10.5M Funding Award for TCD-led CNGL Centre for Global Content Technologies

The CNGL centre for digital content technologies, led by Trinity College Dublin, has secured €10.5M in funding from Science Foundation Ireland to conduct ground-breaking research in the field of Global Intelligent Content. When combined with a strong industry contribution, this represents an overall research investment of over €15M and is facilitating the creation of up to 100 research and operations positions.

Led by Professor Vincent Wade, CNGL is pioneering ‘Global Intelligent Content’ as a means of revolutionising the way digital content is created, analysed, transformed and delivered. Its research is empowering the way digital content technologies can meet the ever-growing demands of corporate and individual users across global markets. The Centre has a strong pipeline of collaborations with industry partners across multiple sectors. Current partners include Microsoft, Intel, Symantec, Cisco, Xanadu, Alchemy, DNP and Welocalize.

In October 2013, CNGL launched its exciting new research programme which is building on key areas of expertise within the School including content analytics and adaptation, personalisation, multilingual search and discovery, W3C standardisation for content technologies, and systems interoperability and analytics.

CNGL is a collaboration across TCD, DCU, UCD and UL and builds on five years of academic-industry collaborative research. CNGL is internationally renowned for its strong, strategic mix of leading researchers in language, adaptive content, interaction and knowledge engineering technologies and its tight engagement with innovation-driven companies that work with content at a global level.

CNGL has established five commercial and one not-for-profit spinouts. Already in 2013, CNGL spinout companies have raised €1.25M in venture capital which will allow for the creation of 25 new high-value jobs for Ireland.

CNGL spinouts from TCD include Emizar: www.emizar.com and Wripl: www.wripl.com
For more on CNGL’s exciting research programme, visit www.cnngl.ie

This information is correct at the time of printing.
DISCUS

CTVR, the Irish telecommunications research centre headquartered in Trinity College Dublin, is leading a €8.1m project that will revolutionise broadband provision in Ireland and Europe. DISCUS (The DiStributed Core for unlimited bandwidth supply for all Users and Services) explores new ways to use optical fibre to build a simplified broadband network that will provide ultra-high speed internet to both urban and rural areas that is economically viable, environmentally sustainable and capable of supporting all current and forthcoming services for the foreseeable future.

The three year European project includes 13 collaborative partners across Ireland, Belgium, Germany, Spain, Italy, UK, Sweden and France where CTVR will be working with major European telecom operators and equipment vendors such as Telefonica, Telecom Italia, Alcatel-Lucent and Nokia-Siemens as well as universities and SMEs. The DISCUS project represents a major success in raising Ireland’s profile on the international scene as over a third of the EU funding will support research work at Trinity College Dublin, University College Cork and Tyndall National Institute.

Dr Marco Ruffini, the project manager for the DISCUS project claims that “the heart of the DISCUS project is the Long-Reach Passive Optical Network technology, which allows an increase in the distance covered by current fibre-to-the home networks from 10-20km to over 100km, while greatly increasing the number of users per network. This reduces the capital and operational costs, as well as energy consumption, extending the service availability also to rural areas. For example the over 1,000 telecom local exchanges that we have in Ireland today could be consolidated into about 20 central nodes”.

The latest DISCUS workshop on “Ownership, usage and regulation in next generation fibre access network” is part of the suite of activities that CTVR – the telecommunications research centre – uses to help bridge the gaps between the disruptive innovation seeded in academic research, the product development of industrial research, and the strategic development of government bodies’ national policies. For further information, visit www.discus-fp7.eu
Edtech industry in Ireland benefits from dedicated research centre

The Learnovate Centre is a TCD hosted research centre of excellence for innovation in learning technologies. The focus is to provide competitive advantage to the Edtech industry in Ireland through technology transfer from research output. The Learnovate Centre is dedicated to developing technology solutions where improving the learning outcome is the primary driver. This requires a multi-disciplinary approach including software development, pedagogy, user experience and informational design.

To date the Learnovate Centre has completed 12 projects and is currently working on four new research projects. An example of this is the My Pace homework help portal, which delivers personalised learning unique to a student’s needs, preferences and abilities. The portal supports and develops problem-solving skills and applies novel game-like techniques to motivate students. From the publisher’s perspective the portal identifies trends in open content usage and gaps in formal content.

Remember.
The power of a legacy to Trinity

There’s an old saying that the true meaning of life is to plant trees under whose shade one does not expect to sit. When you leave a legacy to Trinity however big or small, you’re planting a tree which will grow to provide shelter to many. You’re empowering ground-breaking research which will benefit people in Ireland and all over the world. You’re supporting students from all backgrounds to access a Trinity education. You’re helping preserve our unique campus and heritage for new generations.

When you remember Trinity in your will, you join a tradition of giving that stretches back over 400 years – and reaches far into the future. For more information about leaving a Legacy to Trinity, please contact Eileen Punch.

Phone +353 1 896 1714
Email eileen.punch@tcd.ie
www.tcd.ie/development
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mHealth in Sierra Leone

Earlier this year Frédérique Vallières (Centre for Global Health) and PJ Wall (Knowledge and Data Engineering Group) spent three weeks carrying out fieldwork for their respective PhD research projects in Bonthe District, Sierra Leone. They are currently working on the implementation of a mobile health (mHealth) project that integrates a mobile app as a job aid for community health workers (CHWs). Part of a five-country, Irish Aid funded, mother and child health programme led by World Vision Ireland, the mobile app allows CHWs to receive reminders about household visits, make emergency referrals to health centres, and collect real-time health data from over 22,000 households in Bonthe District.

Under the supervision of Dr Eilish McAuliffe, Frédérique’s research interests are in the introduction of mobile job aids and how the introduction of a human resource for health management tool could help mediate against CHW attrition over time. Under the co-supervision of Dr McAuliffe, Dr Dave Lewis and Dr Lucy Hederman, PJ’s research objective is to examine how the technology impacts the social and cultural aspects of the mHealth implementation.

In collaboration with the Sierra Leone Ministry of Health and Sanitation and the University of Sierra Leone, these projects have attracted additional research funding from the World Health Organization to explore the pathways and barriers to scale-up of this intervention across Sierra Leone.

www.global-health.tcd.ie
M.Sc. Showcase 2012

Computer Science postgraduate students present leading-edge research to industry at M.Sc. Showcase

More than 100 industry guests joined some 60 SCSS postgraduate students and academics at our September 2012 Showcase of M.Sc. Dissertations in the O’Reilly Institute.

Projects included the development of techniques to map facial movements on different virtual characters, a location-aware safety application for pedestrians, innovative wireless architectures for patient health monitoring systems, cloud based model checkers, a system for home energy use optimisation, use of teamwork and technology to teach without teachers, and the demonstration of mobile and web projects at the intersection of technology, art and design.

Further details available at M.Sc. Showcase 2012

Future Cities: Trinity Centre for Smart and Sustainable Cities

In July, the Lord Mayor of Dublin, Oisin Quinn, officially launched Trinity’s new multi-disciplinary Research Centre, ‘Future Cities’, which will drive and inspire new ways of thinking about smart and sustainable cities.

The Future Cities Director, Professor Siobhan Clarke (SCSS), emphasised the importance of research into smart and sustainable cities, speaking of startling statistics which predict that up to 70% of the world’s population will be living in cities by 2050.

Unlike other research centres focussed on distinct elements of a Future City such as the energy grid, autonomous transport or assisted living, the Future Cities Research Centre is taking a holistic view addressing all aspects of the challenge facing emerging urban centres and involving researchers from computer science, statistics, information systems, engineering, natural sciences, social science, chemistry, arts, nursing and midwifery, business and law. The availability of a wide range of expertise will facilitate the development of technology advancement and societal change leading to more sustainable and inclusive urban environments. The launch followed a dynamic ‘Future Cities’ workshop with representatives from 25 different companies and government agencies, the output of which greatly informs the research agenda and priorities for the Centre.

Professor Clarke added “Our industry and agency relationships are crucial to allow us to identify industry and city needs, so that we can collaboratively set the research agenda for the Centre, and foster collaborative actions between industry, government agencies and academia.”

www.tcd.ie/futurecities

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www.tcd.ie/futurecities
Industry Internships

The Computer Science degree programme now offers students the option to study for an honors Bachelor’s degree over four years or for a Master in Computer Science degree over five years which includes an industry/research internship.

Twenty-four students completed an industry internship this year with SAP, MasterCard, DemonWare, First Derivatives, Accenture and others. Feedback has been excellent.

“We are proud to have worked closely with the School of Computer Science and Statistics at Trinity. We have recruited a number of their talented students as interns and hope for this fantastic relationship to continue”, said Elizabeth O’Hanlon of First Derivatives.

The School expects to see a rise in the numbers taking the Master's option in the coming years as student demand continues to grow. New industry hosts this year include: Amazon, AOL, Popdeem, Susquehanna International, Bullet, Casala, Bragbet, Bearing Point and Incognito. Enquiries are welcome at internships@scss.tcd.ie

The Down Survey

The Down Survey project (www.downsurvey.tcd.ie) a remarkable online historical atlas of the 17th-century Down Survey of Ireland was officially launched in May by Google’s Chief Geospatial Technologist and head of Google Maps, Ed Parson. This Digital Humanities project is the result of ongoing collaboration between researchers from TCD’s Department of History and the Knowledge and Data Engineering Group (KDEG) in the School of Computer Science and Statistics.

Conducted between 1656 and 1658, the Down Survey of Ireland was the first detailed land survey on a national scale undertaken anywhere in the world. The title of the survey has nothing to do with Co. Down but meant merely that the maps were “laid down by admeasurement”. The survey formed a crucial part of the transfer of land ownership in Ireland after Oliver Cromwell's victory over Charles II and the Catholic Confederacy. Soldiers who had fought in the campaigns, and adventurers who had funded them, had been promised Irish land in return. The aim of the survey, led by William Petty, was to measure all the estates which were to be forfeited by Irish Catholics.

Used in conjunction with the “books of survey and distribution”, Petty's detailed maps show every townland, parish and barony in Ireland, the acreage of each townland, the type of land, the owner in 1641, when the devastating Irish war began, and the owner in 1670, when the transfer of land was complete.

Part of the TCD project, developed in collaboration with the EU-funded CULTURA project, was to track down the copies of the maps that survived in dozens of libraries and archives in Ireland, Britain and France. So far, more than 2,000 maps have been digitised and brought back together for the first time in 300 years as a remarkable atlas of 17th-century Ireland. Collections such as this, and the previously transcribed 1641 Depositions, have enabled the KDEG team to perform world-class research in the fields of personalisation, entity uplift and personalised search.
Bridge 21

www.bridge21.ie

The Bridge21 programme had another exciting year of interaction and collaboration during the recent school year 2012/13, with over 50 secondary schools, approximately 2,000 students and 250 teachers taking part in the programme. Highlights of the year included the piloting of two teacher computer science workshops on Scratch Programming and Project Maths.

The annual SCSS computer science workshops also took place throughout the school year. More than 100 students from second level schools participated and activities included building and programming Lego robots, animation and game design using Scratch, blogging and web design, sound recording, podcasting and multimedia work.

Students who participate in these workshops must study higher level Mathematics and have an interest in the study of computer science or engineering at third level. Further information is available at events@scss.tcd.ie

The major highlight of the year was Google’s donation to Bridge21 and the Trinity Access Programmes. Under the three year initiative, which will involve the School of Computer Science & Statistics, the School of Education and the Trinity Access Programmes, 1,000 places will be offered to teachers on training courses in the teaching of Computer Science topics using the Bridge21 model of collaborative technology mediated learning. 1,000 Raspberry Pi devices will be supplied to participating schools and the initiative includes a national computer programming competition. There will be particular support for schools in disadvantaged areas.
Stop Press / Other News


- Professor John G. Byrne and Michael Fewer have launched a book entitled “Thomas Joseph Byrne - Nation Builder”. Thomas Byrne was John’s grandfather and an architect whose work, vision and quiet influence had far reaching results in a broad range of aspects of Irish life in the first half of the 20th century. The book is magnificently produced and is available for €12.99 from South Dublin Libraries.

- The School is currently advertising for two new Professorships – a Chair/Full Professor of Intelligent Systems and a Chair/Full Professor of Computer Systems. The posts offer exciting opportunities to provide innovative academic leadership in research and teaching, and to exercise a leading role in building up the academic activity of the School. Details can be found by following this link and this link

Scholarships

Congratulations to the two new scholars in the school, Gerard Keogh, B.Sc. (Hons) Information Systems and Laura O’Malley, B.A. (Mod) Management Science and Information Systems Studies.

Other alumni news

- Dr David Madigan (Ph.D. Statistics, 1990 under the supervision of Dr Kris Mosurski) has been appointed Executive Vice President and Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at Columbia University, New York.

- Dr Frank Kelly B.A. Computer Science 1994 came along to our SCSS Alumni Coffee Morning on Friday 23rd August, 2013. Frank has lived in the Boston area since graduation, has a Ph.D. in Cognitive and Neural Systems from Boston University and now works for Nokia. Frank shared memories with Arthur Hughes (Assistant Professor, SCSS) and Dan Crowley (Alumni Committee) who are also B.A. Computer Science 1994 graduates.
Want to contribute?

If you have an interesting story to share or would like to contribute to the next newsletter, please contact the School’s Global Officer catherine.mcdonald@tcd.ie

Stay in Touch

Get connected with Front Gate Online. Update your details, search and contact fellow alumni, register for events, join the career network and other groups, all in one place!

Register today!

www.tcd.ie/alumni/frontgateonline