Laboratory for Foundations of Computer Science

Research Committee Meeting

10-12am Thursday 27 June 2002
Room 2511, JCMB, King's Buildings

General information about the Research Committee

Agenda

1. Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising.
2. Arrivals and departures; accounts; grant portfolio (Monika Lekuse).
3. Theory chair and other appointments (Colin Stirling).
4. TPG course report (John Longley).
5. South Bridge (Stuart Anderson).
6. Interactions with the rest of Informatics (Colin Stirling).
7. Any other business.

For information: figures on research income and computing staff

Collected papers for the meeting are available to members of the committee.

Laboratory for Foundations of Computer Science

Research Committee Meeting

Tuesday 12th March 2002, 10am
Room 2511, JCMB, King's Buildings

General information about the Research Committee

Minutes

Present: David Aspinall, Julian Bradfield, Peter Buneman, Javier Esparza, Stephen Gilmore, Dyane Goodchild (Minutes Secretary), Martin Grohe, Jane Hillston, Paul Jackson, Martin Lange, Monika Lekuse, John Longley, Don Sannella, Alex Simpson, Ian Stark (Chair), Perdita Steven, Colin Stirling.

1. Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising.

(a) Ian Stark reported on the progress of the Milner Lecture 2002. Professor Abadi would be our speaker and Ian asked if anyone had a more up-to-date photo of him than the one we currently have on the lecture web pages. Ian reported that videos of the Milner Lectures for 2000 and 2001 were now available on the web and that MALTS would be providing a high-quality digitised version of the 2002 lecture.

(b) On the subject of user-IDs Ian reported that he had set up redirection from the LFCS web site for students to avoid them having 7-digit addresses for their home pages. Only 2 students had taken this up. If anyone else would like a shorter URL from LFCS to their web pages please contact Ian.

David Aspinall reported that he had not yet brought the subject before the Computing Committee; unfortunately its meeting times clash with his teaching commitments.

ACTION CARRIED FORWARD: David to raise complaint about numeric userids for PhD students at Division Computing Committee.

(c) Colin Stirling said that he had not yet spoken with Vince Osgood, EPSRC programme manager for IT&CS, about whether a platform grant would make sense for the whole of LFCS, rather than groups within it.

ACTION CARRIED FORWARD: Colin to open discussions with Vince Osgood

Ian reported that Alan Bundy had put in for a platform grant, to continue his rolling grant, and says that EPSRC had been flexible in their response. However, the funds available are less than the rolling grant, and the monitoring regime seems more onerous.

(d) Ian reported some statistics for the LFCS web pages, in particular for the new pages listing recent publications. These had received 700 requests since being set up ten weeks earlier, of which about 10% were from search engines. The most popular content page on the web site is the restaurant guide, with 6500 hits over the same period.

(e) Colin Stirling spoke about the proposed mechanism for handling infrastructure charges on grants. He had raised the objections of LFCS members at the Division Planning and Resources Committee, and Gordon Duckett was to arrange a meeting with Monika Lekuse to discuss this. Ian suggested that this should also include one or more members of the research committee, who had expressed concern about the loss of flexibility in grant management.

Monika reported that EPSRC have lately refused to allow infrastructure charges on grant awards, but we are contesting this.

2. Arrivals and Departures; Accounts; Grant Portfolio

(a) Monika reported that we had lost John Longley as an RA and gained him as a lecturer. In July Ian will begin a 5-year EPSRC Advanced Research Fellowship. Peter Buneman took up his chair in January. We have three new RAs: Catherine Canevet; Kenneth MacKenzie; Lennart Berringer. We presently have 9 visitors: Bartek Klin; Gonzalo Genova; Paolo Ballarini; Wenfei Fan; Kundan Misra; Linda Brodo; Rod Downie; Kaoru Katayama; Marek Karpinski.

(b) Monika reported that we have almost £4M in grants, which is a significant increase. We have two grant applications and two visiting fellowships pending, as well as a number of small conference applications.

(c) Monika reported that the mid-year institute accounts looked healthy. We have brought in slightly more overheads than expected, £10,000 so far, and are on course to balance our budget for the financial year. Infrastructure charges from grants this year are in the region of £10,000.

Ian asked the committee to pass on to himself or Monika suggestions for equipment we could buy that would be useful for LFCS.

Don reported that there was a problem with buying computers at the moment. Division computing support cannot offer any supported portable computer, as their preferred model is no longer available to buy. They told Don that something would be available by the summer.

(d) Monika reported on conferences. We are running CSL ’02 in September followed by a Games workshop. Javier has a small workshop (ADVANCE) in March 2002.

3. Deputy Director post

Colin Stirling reported that next week Division Planning and Resources Committee (PRC) will discuss Deputy Director posts within institutes. He gave a brief history of this: before the creation of the Division, LFCS had a full-time Assistant Director, Gordon Duckett; since forming the division we have had an academic staff member as Deputy Director with a half time teaching load. Ian’s three-year term as deputy director is about to close, and PRC are unlikely to approve the continuation of this arrangement. Colin proposes to ask PRC to approve LFCS appointing a new deputy director, with this as a full administrative task but with no reduction in teaching load. To make this possible, Colin, Monika and Ian have identified ways to lighten the load of the deputy director. Colin asked for the meeting’s opinion on the subject.

Stephen Gilmore supported the proposal for a new deputy director, and said that it seemed a sensible arrangement. Don said we should be looking for more secretarial support: we gave up a whole post and got a half time deputy director in its place, which has been nibbled away as time goes on. Ian suggested that any new deputy director should have discretion in selecting which tasks they are willing to do in the limited time allocated for the job. Monika stated she would be interested to see how other Institutes deal with these tasks; PRC have now provided figures on administrative support through the division. She also pointed out that none of the other Institutes have a part-time service manager. Don suggested PRC should be made aware of the fact that the number of support staff has gone down while the number of academics has increased.

Colin will take this to the PRC meeting next week. If there is anyone in LFCS interested in being Deputy Director, or with other suggestions, please speak to Colin.

4. Institute Appraisals

Javier Esparza reported on institute appraisals, which have recently been discussed at the Research Advisory Committee. He gave a brief summary: in 2000 LFCS and ICSA held appraisals; the plan was for CISA and ICCS to do this in 2002; CISA are happy with this, but ICCS strongly object; accordingly the research advisory have cancelled appraisal (although CISA may go ahead anyway). Instead a "research retreat" was proposed.

Javier asked for comments from LFCS members, in particular what the goals and consequences of institute appraisal might be.

Colin and Don said that the LFCS appraisal was a positive experience, and they would like to see it happen again. On the question of results, Colin stated emphatically that there had been significant benefits, particularly through gaining the support of external assessors in influencing the Faculty and the University. This was agreed to be a worthwhile outcome.

Some other institutes are unhappy about external participation; however several people expressed strong opinions that external commentary on LFCS was the most useful part of such a process. Similarly, being jointly appraised with another institute added breadth and we benefited from outside opinion.

Ian said that an away-day retreat would be completely different to an appraisal. The effort and number of people involved for away-day would be immense, and they should be seen as completely different things. What were people’s thoughts on an LFCS get-together?

Stephen Gilmore, Jane Hillston and Perdita Stevens all said that previous reviews of LFCS research activity, involving everyone, had been extremely productive. They would welcome a return of such reviews.

5. Interaction with Informatics.

(a) Colin reported that there is still lobbying going on for the new building.

(b) Colin mentioned the Curriculum Committee / Teaching Committee Meeting tomorrow, and encouraged anyone with an interest to attend.

6. Any Other Business.

(a) PhD Applications. Colin reported LFCS has 2 EPSRC studentships available, which can be given to any EU candidate. We are short of applications: he will advertise further, and everyone should encourage folk to apply. Please let him know if you know of anyone who is thinking of applying.

(b) Don asked about the LFCS summer studentships. Ian will put out a call for proposals this week. He asked for suggestions of project work suitable for 3/4 year students.

(c) Ian reported on the appraiser training day, and thanked Monika for arranging it. Monika reported that Gordon had said individual appraisals would be organised by Divisional Office. No RA's have expressed interest in being appraised.

(d) Ian mentioned the new LFCS mailing lists. Dyane Goodchild is administrator, please contact her if you have any questions about them.

(e) We still have a vacancy for a PG assistant to work on the web site.

The meeting ended at 11.20.

LFCS Research Committee 27 June 2002

Figures provided by Gordon Duckett for Informatics Computing Committee about grant income and funding of computing staff in the Division. Historical figures were promised but have not yet appeared.

------------- Original Message -- 11 June 2002 -------------

To date this year ie periods 1-9 recharge

Income	period1-9	estimate for year
Clerical	74,966.72	100,000
Technical	21,307.75	28,000
Computing	116,135.39	160,000
	=======	=======
Total	212,409.86	288,000

Expenditure periods 1-9	
Admin/Computing staff charged to S2	160,129.88
Clerical and CD staff	148,047.24
	==========
Total	308,177.12

Overspend of 95767.26 needs to be charged to overheads

Total computing staff
CD1 = 0.5
CD2=2.5
CD3=2
======
5 CD staff at a total cost of approx 75,000
======

AD1=1
AD2=2.4
AD3=8.5
AD5=4
=====
15.9 AD staff at a rough total cost of 608,570 GBP
=====

As can be seen from above figures recharge for computing only brings in 23% of total cost of computing staff

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[Staff] Advertisements for new staff positions

Bonnie Webber bonnie@cogsci.ed.ac.uk
Tue, 18 Jun 2002 17:52:43 +0100

- Previous message: [Staff] Kousha Etessami
- Next message: [Staff] Edinburgh Convention Bureau Presentaton - 3rd July
- **Messages sorted by:** [date] [thread] [subject] [author]

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John Kingston's message made me realise that we should
point out to members of the Division when new staff
positions are being advertised.

All staff positions are advertised on Personnel's jobs
web site

  http://www.jobs.ed.ac.uk

and at the UK-wide jobs website.

In addition, all new positions SHOULD be posted at

  http://www.informatics.ed.ac.uk/events/vacancies/

but haven't been recently because I didn't realise that
they weren't being sent to Diana. That will not happen
again: the two current searches (one for a readership
or lectureship in database systems, the other for the
same in neuroinformatics) have now been posted.

Finally, I hope within the next two weeks that we will
be able to post an advert looking for readers/lecturers
in algorithms; cognitive systems; computer systems
architecture; knowledge rep and reasoning; machine learning;
robotics, vision & graphics; and software engineering.
We hope to be able to hire at least three new staff
members from among these areas.

  Regards, B.
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- Previous message: [Staff] Kousha Etessami
- Next message: [Staff] Edinburgh Convention Bureau Presentaton - 3rd July
- **Messages sorted by:** [date] [thread] [subject] [author]

Report on TPG course, 2001-02

This year's TPG course has recently concluded. Within a week or so, I expect to have all the marks in from the TPG exam, and to circulate a summary of the results on all courses to students and their supervisors.

Overall I feel that this year the first term was a great success, while the second term was less satisfactory. In the first term we ran more or less the usual selection of core courses (some of them updated in content), in which all the students participated with enthusiasm. A larger than usual number of visitors and other hangers-on also contributed to the success of the courses. In addition, at the beginning of the first term I held a short individual meeting with each student and their supervisor, to discuss their selection of courses in relation to their planned research programme. I feel this was well worth doing and helped to give a more "personalized" feel to the course - even though in almost all cases the recommendation was "you should do all the core courses". I believe this exercise helped students to see the value of the courses they were doing and had a significant psychological effect on the group ethos; I hope I (or my successor) will continue this practice next year.

The second term was unsatisfactory because I had difficulty in persuading enough people to offer courses on their specialist areas (or else I did not try hard enough, or more likely was not organized far enough ahead). Moreover, all the courses that did run were heavily biased towards hardcore theory and did not represent a balanced selection. The consequence was that two of the students (Jennifer and Alin) did not feel it was worth their while taking any of these courses, and (hence) did not sit the exam. I'm not sure how much of a problem this was. I think that both these students felt that the first-term courses were "both necessary and sufficient" for their needs, and they were happy to devote the time in the second term to their research interests in any case. On the other hand, I would have preferred to have at least *offered* a wider and more balanced choice of courses.

My vision for the TPG course, in any case, is that the second-term courses should be more spontaneous and opportunistic, varying from year to year and reflecting the current research interests of the people who happen to be around. Perhaps we can discuss

(a) what can be done to make it easier to persuade people to offer courses?
(b) should students be forced to take a quota of optional courses irrespective of whether the courses on offer match their own interests?

John Longley, 26 June 2002

[Staff] SRIF Planning

Michael Fourman grd@informatics.ed.ac.uk
Tue, 25 Jun 2002 18:13:46 +0100

- Previous message: [Staff] DICE News 2002-06 #2
- **Messages sorted by:** [date] [thread] [subject] [author]

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Dear All,

Over the past few weeks, a lot of work, ( due primarily to David Wyse, Gordon
Duckett and Stuart Anderson, plus estates and buildings, arhitects etc.) has
gone into the potential SRIF bid discussed at the General Meeting.

We now have preliminary feasability plans which indicate that there is enough
space to make the moves feasible from this perspective. The team is moving on
to develop robust costings.

We need much more consultation on detailed configuration of the space
available to produce an environment conducive to our work. LFCS Lab Lunch
visited SB today to look at some prelminary drawings and look around. I will
be setting up a project group for each of the three sites affected by the
plan.  The drawings are available for consultation at the Division Office.

We need to work quickly on refining our proposals for the SRIF bid, as this
opportunity for funding must be siezed soon, or lost.  I believe we can
produce a proposal that brings benefits for both Informatics and other parts
of the Faculty.

I would like to view this as a first exercise in planning our spaces for the
future.  All members of Informatics are invited to contribute comments and
suggestions as to how we should balance private and public spaces, closed
offices and open plan areas, formal and informal meeting rooms, and so
on. What environment do you need to work effectively?

Reply please to Gordon Duckett grd@dcs.ed.ac.uk with the subject as
above:

SRIF Planning

Many thanks,

Michael
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- Previous message: [Staff] DICE News 2002-06 #2
- **Messages sorted by:** [date] [thread] [subject] [author]