



BCS

THE BRITISH COMPUTER SOCIETY

Capital

News from BCS Edinburgh Branch, September 2005

Letter from the Branch Chairman

Dear Colleague,

The branch committee has assembled a varied programme of talks for the winter season. I hope that every member will find at least one talk that interests them and I look forward to meeting you there. Our first meetings up to the end of 2005 are:

- The first meeting addresses a problem that has been with us since the time of Turing - "Can I be sure my program is correct?". Dr Andrew Ireland will tell us about one of computing's "Grand Challenges" - the verifying compiler - in his talk on "Software without Bugs".
- At the end of October, Dr Henry Thompson will expose us to the Semantic Web.
- The Scottish Parliament building has been controversial for its ever increasing costs, for once, of the building, rather than an IT project. A visit there is scheduled for November, with a talk on the IT systems associated with the Parliament. Note that tickets are required for this event and must be requested from the Branch Secretary.
- The final talk for 2005 is about the Digital Design Studio at Glasgow College of Art.

The Sidney Michaelson lecture, as part of the Science Festival, will be given by Baroness Susan Greenfield, entitled "The Private Life of the Brain". With such an eminent speaker, an entertaining evening is assured. A resume of the talk is in the adjoining column.

In addition to the lecture series, Professional Awareness Courses are being arranged. The first addresses Accessibility of web sites and will run on four Tuesday evenings in October. For details see over. A course on Software for Mobile Devices is being arranged for November. Further details can be found on the Branch web site.

The committee is always looking for ideas for the programme and topics for courses. Suggestions for future events can be made to any committee member.

You will receive two copies of the programme card in this mailing. Please pass the extra copy to a colleague who might be interested in our activities.

Yours sincerely,

Peter King
Branch Chairman

Private Life of the Brain

Consciousness is now attracting the attention of scientists as well as philosophers. Despite the attempts of physicists and mathematicians to model consciousness in artificial systems, there is a need to understand consciousness in a way that caters for the diverse range of chemicals operating in the brain; how else might one explain the various mood modifying and consciousness changing effects of specific drugs? We also need to account for disorders such as depression and schizophrenia, and explain how they could arise from the neurochemical context of the holistic brain.

In this talk we shall develop a way of describing consciousness, that on the one hand caters for different momentary states of the physical brain, whilst at the same time respects the subjective phenomenology that is all too often ignored by scientists.

We shall explore a list of properties that would be required of the physical brain, to cater for the subjectivity of consciousness. It might then be possible to test this 'Rosetta Stone' model, in various scenarios of everyday life, and see how such scenarios might be interpreted in terms of functioning of the physical brain.

Susan Greenfield

Branch Course

As part of our series of Professional Current Awareness Courses we are offering a course on the design of web sites to provide Accessibility as required by Disability Discrimination legislation.

Details of the course content are overleaf, and an application form can be downloaded from www.edinburgh.bcs.org/courses. Venue details are at

http://www.napier.ac.uk/campusmaps/merch_05.asp

Branch web site www.edinburgh.bcs.org

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