AS WE STEP INTO OUR 8TH YEAR

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the inaugural edition of MEICOM CONNECT, a newsletter for our graduates. It will be published on the Meicom Alumni Association website, with an extra hard-copy edition for the December issue. Our editor is Angela Castro, our former Programme Manager who is now based in Melbourne, Australia.

We hope to bring you up-to-date with the latest news and events, information and happenings on the Programme, as well as those organized by the Alumni Association. In the first edition, some of the content has been produced by the Programme Office, but our aim is that you will become active contributors and make this your own newsletter. I very much look forward to receiving your contributions on-line for the second issue.

Up to now, we have 598 graduates, and it is our wish to contact you through this newsletter to ask you to keep in touch by first updating your contact information on the Programme Office website, and then participating in the events organized by the Programme Office and the Alumni Association. We hope you will re-establish your professional network with them and others.

The MEICOM Alumni Association is turning six years old in December 2006. We are a young association but an active one within the HKU community. With the support and dedication of our members throughout these years, we have grown from strength to strength.

Each year a board of directors and officers is elected at the AGM to manage the affairs of the Association with the support of Professor Paul Cheung and the helpful staff at the Programme Office. I am delighted that this year we have 17 members elected to the Board. (see page 2)

Our goal for 2006-07 is to provide all of our Alumni and current students with more networking opportunities and benefits. We are going to have fun whilst at the same time sharing professional know-how, keeping abreast of the trends and developments in the e-commerce field, and staying fit, active and healthy.

To this end, we have a programme that ranges from professional development to sports, from social activities to site visits, from mentorship to members’ benefits. We have interesting and informative seminars lined up. We have enjoyable social activities planned throughout the year – monthly luncheons/Happy Hours, training and marathons ... just to name a few. We have a series of popular seminars for runners to share their interests and generate awareness about sport. We also have a mentorship programme for new student members and access to course material for members. We invite your active participation and welcome you to join in the fun. Just watch out for event announcements, visit the MEICOM website for details or contact us directly for more information. We need new blood to join the Board each year. I urge you to consider nominating a fellow member or two at the next AGM.

If you are not a member yet, you are welcome to join. Membership is for life. Please contact membership@meicom.hku.hk for more details. We shall enjoy hearing from you. Please feel free to contact us with any comments, questions or suggestions. With your support and participation, our Alumni Association will grow even stronger!

Letitia Ngan
President
MEICOM Alumni Association
DECEMBER 2006 ISSUE

TEAM CHALLENGE 36

MEICOM alumni are extraordinary men and women: we embrace challenges, both intellectual and physical. Having commanded the Programme, a challenge in itself and one of the utmost difficulty in balancing the competing demands of studies with family and job, many of us have set ourselves new goals. Taking part in sports such as cycling, diving and marathon races has become a new challenge for some of our desk-bound members, with Professor Paul Cheung joining us enthusiastically.

Individually, we participate in many running and hiking races year after year. In 2006, however, a 39-member marathon team was assembled for the Hong Kong Marathon. This initiative inspired the rest of the University community to join us, and the HKU team competing in the 2006 grew in size to number 1,102. In the summer of 2006, five of us from different cohorts went one step further: we formed a “HKU MEICOM” team to compete in a very special race, namely Team Challenge 36. The five were: Vins Fong, Patrick Chan, Angela Pang, Adrian Ho, and Alex Chan.

Team Challenge 36 is an adventure-based race promoting team spirit and problem solving ability. Participating teams have to complete such tasks as long-distance hiking, stream-trekking, swimming, orienteering, rafting and climbing an undisclosed route of over 60 km within 36 hours in the hot and humid month of July. The most challenging aspect was that many of these tasks were new to us.

We came together in March and started training in April. Things were somehow not as smooth as expected. It was difficult to arrange full team training because one member had just moved to a new job, another one was on frequent business trips, and the rest were engaged in some other activities. One member even had a surgical operation four weeks before the day of the race, which worried us all. But somehow we overcame all these hurdles, and a number of MEICOM alumni also volunteered to be our supporters. Everything was ready at last.

It was cool and wet on the day of the race, yet not too bad for hiking. We started at 8:30am as the last one among the 63 teams. 11 hours later, we were the 27th when we met up with our lovely support team. After a delicious dinner and in a better shape, we continued our journey to Tai Mo Shan. The higher we climbed, the thicker the mist became. We could see nothing and no one except ourselves. At the hilltop, we were greeted by a downpour of rain and had to force our way through the fierce gale. The hour we spent there could possibly be the most difficult time in our days of hiking. Finally we managed 20th place when we reached the checkpoint at the foothills. We were delighted because the wind had stopped, the sky had cleared, and there were no more steep slopes to be climbed. An hour later, we overtook another team before reaching the next checkpoint. When we were doing orienteering, mother nature showed us her power again. Thunderstorm was non-stop, and the mountain torrent was ankle deep. The race was then terminated due to a black rainstorm warning, one that broke the Hong Kong record of the last 16 years. We would be lying if we told you we had no regret.

At that point, we were ranked the 19th and were only 10km away from the finish point. Should the race have been terminated, we would definitely be able to finish it in 24 hours. But the experience of climbing down the Tai Mo Shan rocky trail in zero visibility and amidst strong winds, doing orienteering at midnight in a forest under thunderstorm, abseiling down a dam, pushing a bike uphill for 3km, etc. are all unforgettable. Our joy had also come from the sense of being supported, being members of a close-knit alumni community, and being able to share. This is what we want to share with you, a story of “Successful Failure” in a race emphasizing “team” and “challenge”.

A member said after the race: “It is great to be able to demonstrate how very good teamwork kept us together and helping one another, in particular during the Tai Mo Shan rocky trail under extremely bad weather conditions. All of us were confident right from the start that we could complete this tough race! Our thanks to the wonderful support team. In return, I will definitely volunteer to support any one joining this race in 2007.”

If you are interested in taking part in the 2007 race, please emailing us at sig_sports@meicom.hku.hk as we will have to start training early in the year.

by Vins Fong (2004 Graduate)

MEICOM ALUMNI ASSOCIATION
DIRECTORS 2006-07

Letitia NGAN – President
Michael TSUI – VP, Social Activities
Angela PANG – VP, Student Affairs and Programme Office Liaison
Patrick CHAN – VP, Membership
Wai Wai LIM – Secretary
Clare WONG – Treasurer
Pauline TSE – Director, Special Interest Group:
Adrian HO – Director, Website Maintenance
Bernard LEE – Director, Membership
Ernest LEE – Director, Membership
Shirley CHUNG – Director, Social Activities
Eddie CHAN – Director, Social Activities
Algae MA – Director, Social Activities
Nelson CHUNG – Director, Professional Development
Eddie LING – Director, Professional Development
Richard TO – Director, Professional Development
Maria BONG – Immediate Past President, Website Maintenance

HKSAR Marathon Team at Standard Chartered Hong Kong Marathon 2006
RICH MEDIA ON THE MOVE — THE BATTLE FOR THE POCKET

When the MSc(ECom&IComp) programme first started at the University of Hong Kong seven years ago, the focus of nearly everyone’s attention was the rapid growth of the Internet and the increasingly ubiquitous nature of the personal computer at work and at home. In debates on convergence at that time, television as a device and medium was forecast to be the loser in a two-way battle. But while the PC and the TV were battling it out, largely unnoticed another device was gaining ground — the mobile phone. It has gone from strength to strength to become the most ubiquitous ICT device on the planet: according to the ITU ([ITU [2006]], there are more than 2 billion mobile phone subscribers worldwide, just over twice the number of PC Internet users.

After the burst of the Dot Com bubble - the rapid demise of start-up companies set up on the basis of a good idea rather than a sustainable business model in early 2000 - those disenchanted with the Web shifted their attentions elsewhere. The “next new thing” was the mobile phone and using the Internet and WAP to deliver content and services. The stampede into WAP was in many ways reminiscent of the Web investment binge 2-3 years earlier, with the noticeable exception that this time it was the telcos who were doing most of the spending.

In Europe, in particular, numerous sums of money were paid for 3G licenses to offer mobile broadband services to handheld devices. Debt of this magnitude to pay for licenses and build 3G infrastructure meant that there was an incentive to look for “killer applications” that would deliver a marked increase in average revenues per user (ARPU) compared with plain vanilla voice services on GSM.

I remember Year 1 of WAP. At one point that year there were more WAP servers than WAP users in Denmark! The services that were being offered were simplistic, unreliable and difficult to use. The compatibility issues were such that a WAP service for one handset manufacturer would not necessarily work on another. Clearly, WAP was not going to be the “killer app” to help bring down debt levels.

Things have got better since then, and in addition to mobile portals and e-mail, the Internet on mobile devices is also being used to deliver SMS, MMS, photos, videos and Java games. In spite of the valiant work worldwide by handset manufacturers and operators such as Hutchison and PCCW, the take-up of rich media on mobile phones is still relatively modest. Voice and SMS are still the cash cows of mobile operators. Why is this the case?

WHY ARE THINGS MOVING SO SLOWLY?

The launch of 3G services around the world brought with it the promise of video, sound and other audiovisual services accessible on handheld devices. 2003 saw the first offerings of video clips and other services streaming content to users over their 3G connection. Early experiences were mixed: content needed to be reformatted on the fly so that users could make sense of what they saw and heard on screens with quarter the spatial resolution of VGA (VGA is 320 x 240 pixels). While there was some thrill to watching major events, sports, news, adult content and even user-generated “soft porn”, the absolute numbers were far from satisfactory.

Where operators were successful, the one to one nature of streaming meant that live streams rather than downloads suffered from congestion at cell level.

Now 3G is being joined by a new digital push mechanism - IP datacast - that allows for a plethora of services to be delivered to such devices. Hybrid handsets use IP-Datacast for push services, while 3G is used for conventional Internet, the delivery of on-demand content and for billing services.

Vying for attention are competing standards for IP datacast: the European DVB-H, the World DAB Forum S- and T-DAB and Qualcomm’s MediaFlo.

In my public address in October, 2006 (Looms [2006]), I presented a review of current trials and services offering IP datacast to mobile phone users. The examples reviewed included trials in Finland, Spain, the Oxford DVB-H and the Greater London IP DAB trials, as well as 3 Italia’s commercial DVB-H May 2006 launch in Italy, NRK and Telenor’s experience in Norway and the S-DMB and T-DMB services in South Korea.

Reviewing the published findings throws up some surprising results. With the possible exception of the BT Wholesale trial in Greater London and the DMB services in Korea, the services offered are usually based on intuitions about who the early adopters are, where they will use mobile TV and other forms of rich media and what kind of content is required. As a result, mobile operators have ended up providing services based largely on existing television channels with a number of radio channels thrown in for good measure.

The audience research figures indicate that this may be a simplistic approach.

WHAT CAN BE USED AS THE BASIS FOR SELECTING RICH MEDIA FOR MOBILE PHONES?

There are three main contexts in which people use rich media on mobile devices: while on the move, at home and at work. In Korea, “on the move” accounts for a sizeable proportion of total media consumption followed by “at work” and then “at home”. In European trials, the order is different: at home, on the move and at work.

The needs and gratifications of IP datacast services are largely dictated by the context in which the device is used. When people are on the move, media consumption has to co-exist with what is termed tracking — the conscious or sub-conscious monitoring of where the traveller is in relation to where he or she expects to be at any given time. With the advent of advanced public transport, the main needs are keeping in touch, killing time and keeping up to date. Typical sessions are 6-7 minutes in duration, so mobile content needs to make sense when used in relatively short chunks.

In the “at work” and “at home” contexts, IP datacast services are in competition with a range of media on stationary devices. In fact, the most challenging aspect of the European research is that we have very little idea why users should choose to watch TV on a small screen rather than on one of the three TV screens in family homes or on a PC or laptop with a broadband connection.

What we have learned is that we need to move away from discussing mobile TV, radio, mobile games and music services to thinking about personal, pocket media.

For the overwhelming majority of the users of hand-held devices, they are kept in a pocket. Consumers usually go around with one such device in their pockets, not two or more. The implication is that, depending on the relative importance of the control button, being able to kill time and to keep up to date, different devices will find their way into that one pocket.

The mobile phone will be competing with devices like Zune, the iPod and the PSP games console for time-killing and with handheld radios, TVs and wireless-driven pocket computers for keeping up to date.

What this means is that mobile phone operator needs to be very clear in his own mind who his strategic partners are in terms of content production and aggregation. Having sorted out the content issues, he will then have to decide how to price “time-killing” services so that his offering is perceived to be competitive in the face of alternatives offering a combination of free podcasts and purchased music and video content bought from the likes of I-Tunes or Microsoft. Last and not least, the solution chosen will have to make money!

As rich media move from the PC to mobile devices in a concerted fashion in the next few years, we will all be able to witness the battle for control of the pocket. If the mobile operators do their research well, the mobile phone will be one of the best-placed contenders.

References


DECEMBER 2006 ISSUE

FROM LEAFY MELBOURNE

The earlier graduates would know me as the person who helped Paul Cheung start the Programme in early 1999, but perhaps not many know that I retired six years later and moved back to Australia with my husband Fred in mid-October 2004. We have an apartment near the Melbourne University, so we go nearly every week to concerts, gallery exhibitions, films, and museums in the city. We have taken up painting and I have become a member of the Plant Craft Cottage group within the famous Royal Botanic Garden, and so I am able to do a lot of indoor craft activities with my three grandchildren. Fred and I have also bought a tent, fishing gear and two bicycles, so we are really having the time of our life. If you don’t think I am boring you, you are welcome to see a small number of family snapshots taken in the last two years by going to this site: http://picasaweb.google.com/fredericoE.castro/CastmpImages. But I am also learning a lot about e-commerce, as Australia is quite advanced in this aspect.

I have kept up my contact with Paul Cheung, Francis Lau, and all the instructors, the Alumni Association, and of course, the Programme Office staff: Sonia, Keric, Martin, Ellen and Priscilla, who are doing a great job in helping Paul manage the Programme. On my last visit to Hong Kong in July 2006, Paul and Francis asked me to help them launch a newsletter for graduates, and to conduct a curriculum review under the chairmanship of Francis. I am very delighted to be asked to undertake the two tasks, so I would really like to invite you all to help me by taking part in the evaluation, and by sending me your latest news so that I can include them in the newsletter.

AN UPDATE ABOUT YOURSELF

In this section, we ask our graduates, instructors and teaching assistants to share with us interesting events and projects that they have undertaken, which might have nothing to do with their teaching or studies. We encourage graduates to send us your items and also to contact the contributors if you are interested in following up any aspect. To begin with, here are two contributions.

I am the Chief Executive Officer of Titanium Technology <http://www.titanium-tech.com>, I am responsible for formulating business and growth strategies for the Group. I also spend a fair amount of time on the capital market and investor relationship areas as we have recently been publicly listed in overseas markets. Our company deals with many areas related to identity management and authentication. We have become known worldwide for our development and research products in face recognition, fingerprint authentication, and RFID solutions.


AN UPDATE ABOUT YOURSELF

In this section, we ask our graduates, instructors and teaching assistants to share with us interesting events and projects that they have undertaken, which might have nothing to do with their teaching or studies. We encourage graduates to send us your items and also to contact the contributors if you are interested in following up any aspect. To begin with, here are two contributions.

I am the Chief Executive Officer of Titanium Technology <http://www.titanium-tech.com>, I am responsible for formulating business and growth strategies for the Group. I also spend a fair amount of time on the capital market and investor relationship areas as we have recently been publicly listed in overseas markets. Our company deals with many areas related to identity management and authentication. We have become known worldwide for our development and research products in face recognition, fingerprint authentication, and RFID solutions.


PROGRAMME OFFICE UPDATES

ECom&IComp Experts Address

The ECom&IComp experts address series is designed primarily to keep students and alumni of our programme up-to-date with the information technology and electronic business trends around the world.

Peter Loomis started the series off for the new academic year of 2006-7 by presenting on September 27 his recent work on mobile TV in Denmark. He gave a critical review of some of the findings of JP datacast trials and services in Europe.

In November, Professor Roger Clarke presented his talk on “What’s google up to?”. His presentation outlines Google’s many lines of interesting businesses, commencing with the content-discovery cluster, moving onto the content services cluster, and culminating in the accumulation of data about Google’s users.

Dr Renato Iannella gave the talk “Moving Towards the Policy-Aware Web”, which was about his new project in National ICT Australia (NICTA) on November 10.

We posted the slides and video recording to our web site. http://www.ecom-icom.hku.hk/seminar/

CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (CPD) COURSES

Graduates are welcome to enroll in MSc(ECom&IComp) modules for continuing and professional development purpose. Information about CPD courses is published on the programme web site in September, December, and May. Watch out for our email notification if you are interested!

GRADUATE DIRECTORY

To stay in touch with the Programme and with your fellow graduates, the Programme Office provides a graduate directory for you to update your contact information and look for other graduates. So don’t forget to tell us if you have moved, changed your telephone number or email address. You could check to make sure that your information is correct and up-to-date.

http://www.ecom-icom.hku.hk/graduate-info/

ADMISSION 2007

We are now inviting applications for 2007 September admissions. Updated information can be found in the programme web site and brochure. If your friends or colleagues are interested in our programme, please ask them to contact the Programme Office.

MSc(ECOM&ICOMP) 2006 GRADUATES

Congratulations to 2006 graduates on meeting their challenge!

Mr Cai Dongjun
Mr Miss Chan Siu Fan
Mr Cheng Man Hay
Mr Cheng Yee Chung
Mr Cheung Ning
Mr Chiu Sin Fu Aries
Miss Choi Ho Wan Nancy
Ms Choi Lai Wan Ross
Mr Choi Shun Him
Mr Chong Chit Ming
Mr Chu Siie Wai
Mr Ho Wai Kel Ricky
Mr Kong Fu Sing Louis
Mr Kwan Cheuk Shing Jackson
Mr Kwong Pui Ming
Mr Lai Sang Keung William
Mr Lam Wai Fong
Mr Lai Shu Tung
Mr Law Yuet Wing
Mr Lee Ka Wai Spencer
Mr Leung Chin Hung Antonio
Mr Leung Eric
Mr Leung Kwok Kuen
Mr Leung Yiu Keung
Miss Li Hing Wai
Mr Ling Chun
Mr Lo Chung Yin Gary
Mr Lo Mun Tak
Mr Ma Man Kin
Ms Ma Yin Hing
Mr Ming Chi Pang
Mr Mok Chi Chiu
Mr Mok Shek Kwan Johnny
Mr Ng Kong Lam
Mr Ng Tsz Chiu
Mr Ngal Yuen Keung
Mr O’Young Tszien
Mr Poon Tsz Kin
Mr So Yat Hung
Mr Sum Siu Cheong
Mr Tang King Sum Kevin
Mr Tang Wing Chung Billy
Mr To Cheuk Ming
Mr Tsanat Sui
Mr Tsang Tak Lun
Mr Tsui Che Sui
Mr Wai Man Lok Geoffrey
Mr Wong Chi Wai
Mr Wong Cheung
Mr Wong Wai Hang Clare
Mr Yau Chiu Wai
Mr Yeung Chung Keung
Mr Yip Bun
Mr Yip Kai Yue Eddie
Mr Yip Wing Tat
Mr Yue Wing Cheung
Mr Yung Wo Mo

Contributions and comments on MEICOM CONNECT are welcome. Please contact the editor by email at msc@ecom-icom.hku.hk.

Case #1