PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE
The MEICOM Alumni Association has grown bigger this year with more new members. On behalf of the executive committee, I am proud to state that our alumni association is one of the most active alumni bodies in the University of Hong Kong, if not the most active. I also take this opportunity to congratulate our recent graduates.

Our key missions are to provide a regular forum for all our students and alumni, to network with each other and to stay in tune with e-commerce developments. Towards this goal, the alumni committee had a busy half year. Below are some recent activity highlights:

- The seminar series continued throughout the year. For example, we invited Ben Kwong, a popular stock market commentator to share his wisdom with our alumni at a high table dinner night in November 2007, just before the recent crash. Crash warnings were widely discussed in the dinner but, unfortunately, some of us ignored those warnings, including myself.

- A BBQ night at the Aberdeen Yacht Club in May – All guests had a good time and exchanged gossips with old and new friends. The weather was unexpectedly hot which gave all of us an excellent excuse to drink more beer and wine.

- A Bowling fun night in October - we discovered a few bowling talents among our alumni while most of us had a great time mingling with one another.

- A golf tour to Mainland China in November – Most of us were not excellent golfers but all enjoyed the game.

- There was a Melcom trailwalker team in November consisting of four married men who trained hard a few months before. They finished in 28 hours and all created new personal records. Of course, they would have been slower without our committed support team from the Alumni Association, the support team turned up at one of the check points at 5am in the morning! The article in the issue describes this event in full, and I hope you enjoy reading about it.

- Our Monthly Happy Hour Events are getting more popular - it is normally held on the third Thursday of each month.

- We have also designed a very nice meicom pin and will be distributing them to all alumni members soon. This pin will also be used for some of our members’ benefits, the first members’ benefit being finalized is a special discount for buying running gear.

There will be more activities to come in the next six months including indoor rock climbing, boating etc. Needless to say, the next quarter’s coming month focus would be our Marathon exercise. With Paul Cheung’s encouragement and leadership, there have been many alumni and students starting to enjoy running in the past two to three years including an over-weight man like myself. I would urge you to join either as a runner or supporter in the coming event.

Please check the MEICOM Alumni website http://www.meicom.hku.hk for event announcements and members’ benefit details. We also need new blood to join the Board each year. I urge you to consider nominating a fellow member or two at the next AGM. With your support and participation, our Alumni Association will grow even stronger!

If you are not a member yet, you are welcome to join. Please contact membership@meicom.hku.hk for more details.

Michael Tsui
President 2007-2008
MEICOM Alumni Association

There was a Melcom trailwalker team in November consisting of four married men who trained hard a few months before. They finished in 28 hours and all created new personal records. Of course, they would have been slower without our committed support team from the Alumni Association, the support team turned up at one of the check points at 5am in the morning! The article in the issue describes this event in full, and I hope you enjoy reading about it.

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MEICOM ALUMNI ASSOCIATION DIRECTORS 2007-08

Michael TSUI - President
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Patrick CHAN - VP, Sports
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Maria BONG - Director, Sports
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Shirley CHUNG - Director, Professional Development
Vins FONG - Director, Sports
Matthew IP - Director, Professional Development
Bernard LEE - Director, Sports & Membership
Algae MA - Director, Website Maintenance
Letitia NGAN - Immediate Past President
Richard TO - Director, Social Activities & Membership
Pauline TSE - Director, Social Activities
TRAILWALKER 2007 – HKU MEICOM ALUMNI TEAM

One of the alumni activities, two of our members, Vins Fong and Adrian Ho, who participated in Trailwalker 2006, shared their experience with us describing not only the weekly training sessions at the Centre for Sports Medicine and Physical Education but also some interesting and touching stories, such as an experienced self-volunteer, who carried loads of water uphill and served hot ginger tea to participants in the cool of midnight, also the delicious noodle served in lead Mine Pass. Their experience greatly inspired Nelson Chung and me so much so that we decided to form the "HKU MEICOM Alumni Team" for Trailwalker 2007.

We started our training in June 2007. The weather was surprisingly good this summer, fine and clear with white sky and almost no smog from June to August. The visibility was so good that the tall buildings of Hong Kong Island East seemed near when viewed from Sai Kung. We enjoyed our training and the splendid scenery in such nice weather that we wished the blue sky in HK would never go away!

We decided to adopt a "tortoise and rabbit race" strategy as our tactic, which was to walk consistently without stopping, with the aim of overtaking the rabbits resting at the checkpoints. We had set a target of 20 hours to complete the 100 km. Nevertheless, it was difficult to arrange training sessions for the full team as one member had started his MBA programme and was not available at all the weekends, another member had to arrange for his son to study in Canada, and a third member also went on an expedition to Kilimanjaro in Africa before the Trailwalker event. What was more unfortunate was that my knee was also injured during training. We were also worried whether we would be able to complete the trail within the target that we had set. However, we received great support from our families and other members who promised to prepare food and other necessities at different stages of the trail.

We all looked forward to the challenge of the D-Day: November 9, which turned out to be warm and dry, and was extremely good for hiking. We started at Pak Tam Chung at 12:30pm after lunch. Initially we were able to keep our pace as planned. Pauline Tse, our athletic alumni, accompanied us from the 2nd checkpoint Pak Tam Au to the 3rd checkpoint Shui Long Wo. Throughout the journey, we stayed close to each other and constantly checked to make sure that we were all present.

At each checkpoint, we had our food and then left immediately without taking a rest until we reached the support point at Tai Po Road Shing Mun Reservoir, which was then around 5:00am the next morning. The wild monkeys on the trail were roused up by us, and they also tried to steal the food carried by our support teams. Thanks to our Alumni President, Michael Tsui and Algae Ma, the warm and delicious macaroni was kept safe from the monkeys, so that we were able to enjoy it.

After a sleepless night, we suffered momentary "downtime" the next morning. We felt tired and exhausted and found it difficult to keep up the pace we had set so that we almost gave up on achieving our target. Vins was a very caring and organised team leader who constantly kept us going and encouraged us to keep going, and we were able to recover our motivation and morale.

In order to meet our target, we had to give up a meal of some favourite noodle in Yuen Long Au, and only took a short rest at the 8th checkpoint Tsuen Kam Road at noon. We turned on our internal "turbo" engines to accelerate our pace from the last two checkpoints. Towards the end of the trail, some volunteers were standing up to cheer us on but we found that we were still a few hundred metres from the finishing line. These last few hundred metres seemed to be the longest distance I have ever experienced. We finally reached the finishing point after 28 hours 17 minutes with the warm greetings from our families. Our team finished 232 out of the 941 teams which completed the Trailwalker.

We were all proud of our team. Without a team leader to urge us on, a caring alumni teamwork system for support, and a commitment on our part with the love and backing of our families, we would not have been able to complete this task. It was a memorable experience, joy mixed with perseverance, pain and perseverance, which was, in a way, reminiscent of our effort to complete the MSC(ECom&IComp) programme!

Our team had successfully raised over HK$40,000 funding and was able to secure a place in the 2008 race. If you are interested in taking part in Trailwalker 2008, please email us at sig_sports@meicom.hku.hk or contact any of the alumni directors.

Patrick Chan
2004 ECOM Graduate

MY TRIP TO MT. KILIMANJARO

The name Kilimanjaro comes from a Masai word meaning "Large Rock". It is also called "Shining Mountain" in Swahili. Being the highest point in Africa (5,895 metres) and the world's highest free-standing mountain (i.e. not being part of a mountain range or chain), Kilimanjaro towers above all that surrounds it.

It is widely believed that Kilimanjaro belonged formerly to Kenya and that it only became part of Tanzania because Queen Victoria presented the mountain as a gift to her grandson, the German Emperor Kaiser Wilhelm, when these two African countries were colonies of Britain and Germany respectively.

Kilimanjaro has been known throughout recorded history for its altitude as well as for its famous "snows". Its huge snow-capped summit, towering high above the surrounding savannas, is one of Africa’s all-time iconic images. You may have already seen it as the backdrop in Walt Disney’s famous movie “Lion King”. What we don’t want to see is the fact that the white cap of glacial ice is rapidly disappearing, probably owing to global warming. According to NASA’s research, the ice cap volume has dropped as much as 80% in recent years. Al Gore showed, in his bestselling book “An Inconvenient Truth”, pictures of Kilimanjaro taken in 1970 and 2000, and cited a mountain glaciers expert’s prediction that within 10 years there would be no more “snows” of Kilimanjaro. This was how I first heard and knew about Kilimanjaro.

Then Angela Pang, our alumni member and running/hiking mate, informed us in the summer of 2006 that she would climb Kilimanjaro in the autumn, and she really achieved it. She said that it was an unforgettable experience though it was the toughest trip she has ever had. I envied her for her achievement, and at that same time I was inspired to consider taking this challenge.

I ran my first 10km race in 2005 in the Standard Chartered Hong Kong Marathon. Then I finished my first full marathon and first Oxfam Trailwalker in 2006. Climbing Kilimanjaro seemed to be a difficult yet attainable challenge for 2007. Compared to other mountains of similar altitude, the ascent to the peak of Kilimanjaro does not require any rock/ice mountaineering skills or specific equipment. It is merely a hike taking 6 days. I told myself that if I could withstand the cold weather and high altitude sickness, I might have good chance to tackle it.
JARO, THE ROOF OF AFRICA

My dream did come true! One evening in September 2007, I found myself sitting in an aircraft bound for Tanzania amongst a group of 18 trekkers. Being the first time in Africa, we were busy taking pictures of the vast expanse of land, the primitive villages, the friendly people and the strange-looking plants even before the trek began.

There are a number of routes that trekkers can take to climb Kilimanjaro. We chose the Machame Route, which was the second most popular one. It was neither the easiest nor the shortest one. But the initial steep ascent and the extra trekking time helped with altitude acclimatization and thus improved the chance of reaching the peak. And it offered spectacular scenery, from the tropical rain forests then bushlands below 3,000m, to grasslands and moorlands at higher altitude, then alpine desert at 4,400m, finally a zone of permanent ice at the peak.

The ascent from Machame Gate (1,800m) to Barafu Camp (4,600m) took 4 days. It was not a route going uphill all the way. We did once reach the point of 4,600m on the third day and descended to the campsite at 3,800m. This followed the climbers’ adage “climb high, sleep low”, and reduced the chance of suffering from high altitude sickness. After a brief sleep at Barafu Camp, we set off excitedly at midnight on 2S September to attempt an astonishingly big and bright moonrise. And the moon viewed from that altitude was like doing slow motion in a normal altitude.

We were cold and dizzny under the freezing strong wind. We also felt extremely exhausted by having to traverse the loose gravel on the slope. Similar to what Angela had mentioned, after passing 5,000m, I ran out of breath easily and had to stop for recovery every 30 steps. The peak was just there but it seemed that I had been climbing for decades without reaching any closer. The sun rose and the moon set. I would have no hesitation to say that this final 5km of trekking was the toughest time in my life so far. At 5:01am on 26 September, I finally reached Uhuru Peak (5,895m, the “Roof of Africa”) and stared blankly at the glacier over the crater rim. It was not as exciting as I had expected. I was exhausted, so I quickly took some pictures in front of the large signboard and hurried down the return journey. And I noticed the same reaction of my teammates.

The trip is unforgettable, not only because of the satisfaction of “conquering” the peak, but also many new experiences earned in the journey. For example, at high altitudes we had to move at a very slow and steady pace. This was like doing slow motion in a normal altitude but it was essential strategy for beginners to guard against altitude sickness. And trivial things like packing the sleeping bag and tying shoelaces were no longer easy tasks.

Camping for 6 days without having a shower was a new record for me. With the intention of killing time at campsite, I brought a book and a MP3 with me. However, they were never used because we all went to bed at 8pm immediately after the dinner. And because of the tough exercise during the day, I used to fall asleep within seconds of lying down. It was freezing at night, with the temperature between 0°C to -15°C. Making toilet trips at midnight was unavoidable, but it might take as long as 20 minutes to put on the outer layers of clothing before leaving the tent and taking them off afterwards.

Having no experience in a real mountainous landscape, I found it easy to lose my sense of judging distance. I had the first sight of the peak on the second day of the journey when we left the bushlands. It seemed to me that it was just as tall as Tai Mo Shan. Of course I was wrong. In the next two days until reaching Barafu Camp, although we had gained an altitude of 2,000m, the peak still appeared to be the same distance from me! And because it was so open with nothing to use as a reference point, a “short” trail leading to Karanga Valley was actually several kilometres long.

Also, I never imagined that we would be served a hot lunch everyday. The chefs were so considerate to prepare a sit-down hot lunch for us every day even though the original arrangement was for a packed lunch only. I must also thank the guides and porters who helped us along the trek, not only for leading us by singing for us. I still clearly remember their smiles and greetings like “Jambo” (hello), “Karibu” (welcome) and “Hakuna matata” (no problem).

There are too many things to include in such a short article. Those who are interested in finding out more about visiting Kilimanjaro, please feel free to email us at sig_sports@meicom.hku.hk or join the monthly happy hour to have a chat.

Vina Fong
2004 ECOM Graduate
Our curriculum has undergone some changes to stay abreast of new developments in business technologies. Three new modules will be introduced in the second and third semesters 2008. They are:

**ECOM6024 Mobile and pervasive commerce** - This module will be taught by Professor Norman Sadeh, from Carnegie Mellon University. It introduces participants the technologies, services and business models associated with mobile and pervasive commerce. It also provides an overview of future trends and ongoing research in this new and fast growing area.

**ECOM6025 Technology convergence and digital entertainment** - This module will be taught by Mr. Peter Looms, from Danish Broadcasting Corporation. It provides an overview of theory and methods allowing participants to critically analyse and discuss key technical, business, ethical and regulatory issues associated with the commissioning, planning, production, distribution, payment for and use of digital entertainment by a variety of target groups.

**ECOM6032 Data mining with applications in business and electronic commerce** - This module will be taught by Professor Alan Montgomery, from Carnegie Mellon University. It focuses on how data mining techniques can be applied to solve managerial problems in marketing and electronic commerce. The emphasis is on understanding and applying existing techniques using computer software tools.

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, and given by our visiting instructors around the world.

**Prof. Roger Clarke** started the series off for the new academic year of 2007-8 by presenting on 25 October on mobile payment. His presentation highlighted the risks that consumers face, and asked whether the perception of riskiness will impede the adoption of M-Commerce.

In November, **Dr. Renato Iannella** gave the talk “Web 2.0: From the Hype to the Reality”. He tried to deconstruct the Web 2.0 phenomena and look at the real challenges of the future web.

Upcoming seminars:

Prof. Michael Shamos will give a talk on “A Formula for Innovation” on 29 January. His talk will look at the situations in which innovation has paid off or failed in some corporations.

In February, Prof. Bebo White will present his talk on “Computational Science and Engineering”. He will describe the elements of computational science and engineering and research methods that take advantage of these elements.

The slides and video recording of most of the addresses are available on our web site: [http://www.ecom-icom.hku.hk/seminar/](http://www.ecom-icom.hku.hk/seminar/)

We are now inviting applications for 2008 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.

Graduates are welcome to enroll in MSc(ECom&IComp) modules for continuing and professional development purpose. We will offer the new modules as CPD courses to our graduates if enrolment quota allows. 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!

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.

DELIVERING AN EFFECTIVE ONLINE BUYING EXPERIENCE

How many of our graduates are in the on-line sale business? If you are, I wish to share with you the findings of a recent investigation of some 13 websites in China which might come as a surprise.

Making your customers “feel good” during their online experiences is (going to be) one of the primary concerns of business executives, especially as more “e-Bay like” transactions take place online. To a large extent, the challenge of online is similar to retail and call center touch-points—how to deliver a differentiated experience given severe competition and limited resources.

Complying with the quality level set by renowned standards organizations or achieving high customer satisfaction scores are proving more and more irrelevant in delivering a differentiated experience. Nobel prize-winning psychologist Daniel Kahneman found that people remember really only two things during an experience: how they feel at the peak (the best or worst point in the process) and how they feel at the end. I apply that “Peak-End Rule” in Figure 1 by mapping the level of emotional feelings on each sub-process in a natural-time sequence into an “emotion curve”, for an on-line sale transaction.

The emotion curve in red represents the conventional approaches aimed at making all aspects of an experience ideal. The emotion curve in blue reflects a new way to reallocate resources, to focus on the peak and the end, while leaving the performance of the remaining sub-processes below average standards. The less efficient one (the blue emotion curve) generates a more effective experience (a higher level of positive emotions and memories at the peak and the end) than the more efficient one (the red emotion curve), while it consumes the same or even a lower amount of resources.

To illustrate this with a real-world example, I use the recent research findings from the Customer Experience X-VOC Research—Online Experience (eCommerce) in Mainland China, jointly conducted by GCCRM (www.gccrm.com) and US-based Web Analytics Association (www.webanalyticsassociation.org), with 2,015 valid responses. We categorized the entire online buying experience into 22 sub-processes, assessed respondents’ emotional feelings and mapped the emotion curves of surveyed websites to derive the drivers of positive and negative online experiences. Unlike most conventional satisfaction surveys, this research adopted the natural time sequence from beginning to end of the entire online buying experience. It was experience-centric instead of focusing on process and efficiency.

The online buying experience was categorized into 22 sub-processes in sequential order:

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<td>Visual design</td>
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<td>Search functionality</td>
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Thirteen popular eCommerce websites were included in the survey. 51.91% of survey respondents said they “most liked” Taobao (www.taobao.com) while 19.77% “least liked” eBay China (www.ebay.com.cn). Below (Figure 2) are the emotion curves which match the emotional feelings at the 22 sub-processes of the entire online buying experience between Taobao’s “most liked” curve and eBay China’s “least liked” curve. (Note that we compare only the “love” curve of Taobao and “hate” curve of eBay China for this illustration. There are also 8.08% of respondents who chose Taobao as their “most liked” site and 12.2% who chose eBay China as their ‘least liked’ eCommerce website.)

Comparing these two emotion curves, you will notice that Taobao (the orange emotion curve) is far more efficient and effective (in an absolute sense) over all the sub-processes than eBay China (the navy emotion curve) is. This may explain why most survey respondents characterized their online buying experience with Taobao’s as “most liked.” But in a relative sense, Taobao is no more effective than eBay China. Neither of them optimizes resource effectiveness; their emotion curves are too gentle. What I mean by that is they are performing “too well” (or badly) and “too average” in all aspects of an online buying experience; they are not delivering target brand values and memorable pleasures at the peak and the end; and Taobao is not creating enough pain (yes, pain). I imagine, by now, that, although you find my idea interesting, you may have some questions. How do you select and verify the right peaks? How do you deliver target brand values and branded experience? Where—and to what extent—are you wasting and/or not allocating adequate resources? How do you create the optimal threshold of pain?

You can address these concerns in systematic and quantifiable ways through branded CEM (customer experience management). The easy part is to evaluate, design and implement a branded experience with the assistance of the branded CEM models. The harder part is for an executive to propose creating more pain for customers (much more than what the industry would tolerate) so that spared resources would be reallocated to create a higher level of pleasure at the peak and, as a result, deliver a more effective (memorable) and differentiated (branded) online buying experience. Well, you could figure what kind of response (resistance) that executive would face if he/she were to do so, taking a paradigm shift from “efficient” to “effective”!

Sampson Lee teaches for our programme at the HKU on ECOM module on Customer relationship management: business strategies and techniques. He is the President and Founder of GCCRM. He invents the Branded CEM (Customer Experience Management) Method (U.S. patent-pending). Graduates interested may write to him at Sampson@gccrm.com.

Sampson Lee
SOCIAL NETWORKS MEETS THE SEMANTIC WEB VIA THE POLICY-AWARE WEB

The Semantic Web undoubtedly has developed an impressive collection of technologies for supporting sophisticated information representation and reasoning on the Web. Social Networks have also taken the wider web community by surprise with such rapid uptake and widespread content sharing via the innovative use of Web 2.0 features. The recent uses of such networks leading up to the Australian election on November 24 showed that even politicians have woken up to their vast outreach potentials to especially the younger population.

* For those interested, you can visit the new, Putongua-fluent Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd’s Facebook page at http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=511373977

Both the Semantic Web and Social Networks (via Web 2.0) have been successful in their own right, but have not directly benefitted from each other cooperation and technologies. This was not a deliberate move from either side but was the natural evolution of the two communities. A major lesson from Social Networks is that by offering “simplicity and efficiency” we can attract mass audiences. Equally, a major lesson from the Semantic Web is that we can “deliver information directly to people for whom the information was relevant” by adopting a semantically-aware social networking stack across Social Network services.

We can now start to see where technologies from the Semantic Web can begin to play an important role in the Social Networks. This has been driven by some of the still unsolved technical challenges from user activity and needs in the Social Networks. In particular we are investigating the issues generated from sharing content within Social Networks and their impact on policy decisions, such as privacy and rights management. These issues have now become even more relevant as Social Networks have empowered the end user to share even more content with even more global reach. Additionally, the organisations that offer these services have an immense database of personal information at their disposal. The lack of a policy accountability framework in Social Networks for such activities is needed and must be based on what baseline privacy rules need to be supported.

The move towards the Policy-Aware Web is destined to provide support for policy expression and management in the core semantic web layers. One of the most promising areas that can drive this new technology adoption is through Web 2.0 Social Networks. With so much user generated content being shared by these sites, there is the real danger that the implicit sharing rules that physical communities have developed over time will be lost in translation to the digital communities. This will lead to a loss in confidence in Web 2.0 sites. The Policy-Aware Web attempts to turn the implicit into the explicit with a common framework for policy language interoperability and awareness.

We believe that the Policy-Aware Web will be a driving factor to enable the Web 2.0 Social Networks to expand and support true social experiences and will place it in context with current Semantic Web technologies. In particular, the key functions of policy-awareness - privacy, rights, identity - will be the driving force that will give a significant boost to Social Networks and Web 2.0 in general.

INTRODUCING TWO OF OUR NEWEST FACULTY

**PROFESSOR NORMAN SADEH**

Norman Sadeh is the Director of the Mobile Commerce Laboratory, Director of the e-Supply Chain Management Laboratory, and Co-Director of the School’s PhD Program in Computation, Organizations and Society, and Co-Director of the newly created MBA track in Technology Leadership launched jointly by the Tepper School of Business and the School of Computer Science at the Carnegie Mellon University. He teaches the new ECOM module on “Mobile and pervasive commerce” in the summer semester in 2008.

Norman teaches, conducts research and provides consulting services in the areas of Supply Chain Management, Planning and Scheduling, Agent Technologies, Automated Negotiation, Workflow Management, the Semantic Web, Mobile Commerce, Pervasive Computing and Internet Privacy and Security. He is also interested in the broader business, social and policy implications associated with the emerging Information Society.

Over the past six years, Norman has conducted pioneering research in pervasive computing and semantic web technologies for privacy and context awareness and is currently extending these techniques to inter-enterprise collaboration scenarios. Other recent accomplishments include the design and launch of the international Supply Chain Trading Agent Competition (TAC-SCM). In its first 5 years, the competition has attracted over 120 entries from 60 teams hailing from 21 different countries.

Norman has authored around 150 scientific publications and serves as editor-in-chief of “Electronic Commerce Research Applications” (ECRA) and is on the editorial board of several other journals, including the “International Journal of Web Services Research”.

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**DR. ROY HO**

A graduate of The University of Hong Kong, Roy recently joined the Department of Computer Science, where he is able to pursue his research in operating systems and parallel and distributed computing. He teaches the ICOM core module on “Website design and management”.

Apart from academic research, Roy has been actively involved in R&D of distributed software systems for ten years while working in the IT industry. For instance, he was a main designer of the WhizzBee web server, the first cluster-based web server with an embedded cooperative caching support. He also has extensive experience in website development, and has been providing consultancy services to a web solutions provider, where he co-supervised numerous web development projects for local companies and institutions.

Roy is a Linux/Unix fan; he has developed a low-latency transport protocol, a parallel disk I/O subsystem, and a fast process migration support on Linux apart from using it as his desktop OS. He was also the one from Hong Kong to win the first Google Summer of Code programme for developing two congestion control mechanisms and an API for bulk data transfer in Internet2.

Roy enjoys the challenge of teaching and looks forward to meeting our students in the second semester in 2008.