I am pleased to take this chance to congratulate 2008 graduates on their excellent achievements. Though I was unable to join the Graduation Dinner on 14 Jan, I shared your happiness by looking at the photos on our website. I was surprised to know that Roman Cheng, our current ICOM student, is an amateur magician who brought laughter and fun to the dinner.

As you may be aware, we will have our 10th batch of graduates by the end of 2009. As a consequence, Professor Paul Cheung has recommended that we should have our 10th anniversary celebration in late 2009. I would like to further recommend a special publication to mark the occasion, an issue which carries news of those who “blazed the trail”, so to speak, especially our first graduates. To start the ball rolling, as one who has been associated with the programme right from the beginning, I would like to tell you a little about what I did on my departure from the programme in late 2004.

I have continued to work as a part-time curriculum consultant for the Programme, working online with the Programme Office and the instructors. As my husband and I make it a point to visit my elderly mother in Hong Kong every November, I also spend a lot of time back in my old Graduate House office working with Programme Office staff and occasionally meeting up with professors Paul Cheung and Francis Lau. It feels as though I had not left!

My life is now more relaxed, and as I look out of our balcony to see our plants and trees, and the blue sky and the glorious sun, I feel peace and contentment. Yes, our superannuation fund has suffered and our lifelong savings have dwindled, like everyone else’s in this financial tsunami, and it looks like it will continue for the best parts of 2009. But such is life, and I am sure we will learn how to bounce back, but meanwhile not forgetting to count our other blessings.

It is also interesting to note though, that our new way of life has also led us to appreciate more the predominance and benefits of e-commerce, which is far more prevalent here in Australia than in Hong Kong. I suspect that this is as a result of many factors: cultural, social and geographical distance between people. We now use Skype to meet online our daughter in the UK and her baby son once a week, we will not dream of buying anything expensive without comparing all the prices online first, and checking out the track record of companies before investing in their stocks is almost routine.

In this issue, there is an article by Professor Norman Sadeh about some research connected with privacy issues of social networking, and Dr. Renato Iannella also has a wake-up call paper to the importance of an interoperable framework to social and professional networks. Regarding social networking, I have a small confession to make: I also have a Facebook account, but I have only been forced into using it by family and relatives! So I only use it to access photos and videos and do not open it to anyone except the closest of families and friends, and I totally agree with Renato in his comments about “semi-spamming”, cluttered interfaces, and confusion of such social networks.

Now, I have said my piece, and I hope to receive your dispatches for the next issue of Meicom Connect. Do tell us what you have done since you graduated from the Programme. I really look forward to renewing our acquaintance from the early, heady days of the Programme when we were struggling to get the curriculum right and you were curious to learn what e-commerce was all about. We have all come a long way, so let’s us continue to stay connected through this little publication.

Angela Castro

*Angela and Fred Castro at their 2008 Yellowstone National Park trip*

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**2008 Graduates**

Master of Science in Electronic Commerce and Internet Computing

- Mr. But Ho Leung Alex
- Mr. Chan Bun
- Mr. Chan Nga Yu
- Ms. Chan Yiu Yuki
- Mr. Chan Yung Sang Patrick
- Mr. Cheuk Kong Yung
- Mr. Cheung Fung
- Mr. Cheung Ka Ho
- Mr. Choi Hok Lai
- Miss Choy Shuk Mei Vera
- Ms. Chu Ka Ying
- Mr. Collins Stephen Edward
- Mr. Haiboom Christopher Aris
- Mr. Ho Wing Yin
- Mr. Huen Chi Fai
- Mr. Hui Chun Tung
- Mr. Koo Allison
- Mr. Kwok Kam Wing
- Ms. Lai Mei Lee
- Mr. Lai Sze Kit
- Mr. Lai Wang Hon Ivan
- Mr. Lau Ho Yin
- Mr. Lau Kwai Wah
- Dr. Lee Ke Yarn Denny
- Mr. Lee Tak Wai
- Miss Lee Yan Yan
- Mr. Leung Chun Sing Albert
- Miss Leung Pik Chi
- Mr. Leung Wing Lun
- Miss Li Min
- Miss Lo Long Yee Christine
- Mr. Lo Tin Che Kei
- Miss Ma Lin Lin
- Miss Marinovic Martina
- Mr. Ng Wai Kei
- Mr. Or Wun
- Ms. Poon Nga Wan
- Ms. Qiu Cheng
- Mr. Si Tou Chi Fai Raymond
- Mr. So Hing Yu
- Miss Tam Siki Fung
- Miss Tam Suet Ying
- Miss Tan Jean
- Mr. Teng Lam
- Mr. Wang Min
- Mr. Wong Chi Hon Eric
- Ms. Wong Ho Yee Jane
- Mr. Wong Ka Wai
- Miss Wong Sin Ting Cynthia
- Mr. Yeung Wai Kin
- Mr. Yip Yun Kwan
- Mr. Yu Ka Kei
- Mr. Yu Yuen Wing
- Mr. Yuen Siu Tsun

Postgraduate Diploma in Science

- Mr. Ng Kwok Bo

**Congratulations to all 2008 graduates on meeting their challenge!**

Graduation Dinner on 14 January 2009

INDUSTRY CHALLENGES FOR SOCIAL AND PROFESSIONAL NETWORKS

Renato Iannela, whom many ICOM graduates will remember from attending his module on XML and Metadata, is a leading international member of the W3C group. He is a Principal Scientist and Programme Leader of National ICT Australia (NICTA), Brisbane. Here he briefly outlines the work being done to bring some interoperable standards to the chaos created by social and professional networks.

1. INDUSTRY CHALLENGES

Social Networks and Professional Networks have been a true phenomena of the Web era. Capitalizing on the “Web 2.0” buzz, they have provided innovative spaces for web users to interact and share personal and professional information and experiences. Social Networks, like FaceBook and MySpace, have attracted tens of millions of dedicated global users and provides compelling tools to enable them to digitally recreate social needs such as sharing photos, keeping up with the latest gossip, and forming groups of personal interests. Professional Networks, like LinkedIn and Plaxo, have also attracted tens of millions of dedicated global users and provides powerful tools to enable them to digitally recreate their professional needs such as sharing professional details, linking with colleagues, and forming networks of business interest.

However, there are still a number of unresolved Industry Challenges to Social Networks and Professional Networks:

- They behave as “walled gardens” and lock-in users to specific service providers. Even though they are generally free to join, the amount of effort in maintaining multiple profiles, data, and relationships information across these sites is significant and factored into the social and professional network.
- They allow limited functionality to find and maintain friends and colleagues, usually based on explicit name search or parsing your personal address book. The latter resulting is semi-spamming from “friends & colleagues” to join a plethora of networks.
- They provide complex and indeterminate mechanisms to specific privacy and other policies for protecting access to personal information, and allow information to be shared that typically would not follow social and professional norms.
- They provide cluttered and confusing interactive interfaces to the myriad of information snippets, requests, and actions, resulting in “useless information sharing”.
- They don’t match and transform services appropriate to mobile users nor exploit the geo-location of the user for additional services.

2. INTEROPERABLE FRAMEWORK

We envisage that future Social & Professional Networks will address these Industry Challenges (listed above) and provide advanced services that integrate and federate the Network Providers into a user-centric “mesh network”, as shown in Figure 1.

The Social Network & Professional Network providers will continue to expand and grow with new players entering the market with niche and specific business models. An Interoperability Layer in this framework supports new services by abstracting the common features and allowing these to be integrated across providers. This supports Request management and from the providers to many individuals and the Discovery of new friends and colleagues from activities in the various networks. Additionally, the Interoperability Layer supports managing multiple and different policy regimes for privacy, sharing, and rights management.

The Delivery Layer utilises the outcomes from the Interoperability Layer to massage the outputs for optimal delivery to the end user. This includes Usability factors conforming to the user preferences, and consistent with the Context information related to the action or event. Mobility services are deployed to support mobile users to capture geo-centric related actions and features.

3. NEXT STEPS

The wider Social Network & Professional Network communities will benefit from interoperable standards for data portability, policy expression and accountability, and network migration. These standards need to be developed which addresses both the technical requirements and the business models that drive the service providers to attract the end users. A W3C “Social Networks Interoperability Roadmap” Incubator Group (XiG) would be the best mechanism to drive forward the planning processes, requirements gathering, and establishment of the scope and range of technical standards to address the communities needs.

Renato Iannela

Acknowledgments

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For more information about Renato, please visit http://renato.iannela.it/

FIGURE 1 - Federated Interoperable Framework
Does Social Networking Mark The End of Online Privacy?

Norman Sadeh is our newest instructor from Carnegie Mellon University, teaching an ECOM elective on mobile and pervasive commerce. In the article below, he shares some interesting findings from one of his many research projects. For more detailed information about Norman and his other projects, please visit http://www.cs.cmu.edu/~sadeh/

Social networking sites such as Facebook, MySpace or LinkedIn each have tens of millions of active users. They thrive on the exchange of personal content such as pictures, opinions, marital status, activities or professional qualifications. While the privacy settings they offer users are usually adjustable to the subject of controversy, these sites continue to attract large numbers of new users. This growing popularity has led some to wonder whether online users truly care about their privacy and to what extent we are not witnessing a significant shift in attitude. Over the past several years, my research group at Carnegie Mellon University has been trying to better understand these and related questions.

Our work has been conducted in the context of a location sharing application originally called “PeopleFinder” — the application has also been developed on Facebook under the names of “Locyoution” and “Locacino”. It allows mobile users with location-enabled devices such as GPS-enabled cell phones or laptops with WiFi-based location tracking to specify conditions under which they are willing to share their location with others. Specifically, users can invite friends, organize them in groups (e.g., colleagues, family, close friends, etc.), and specify conditions under which they are willing to share their location (e.g., “Only let my colleagues see my location during working hours on weekdays and while I am on company premises”). Our work has involved observing the types of preferences people specify, whether they can be generalized, and whether the preferences they specified, how often they change them and in what particular way, how much time they spend refining their preferences, etc.

One interesting observation is that people’s privacy preferences when it comes to sharing their locations with others are quite rich and tend to vary significantly from one individual to another. Allowing people to simply control the dissemination of their location based on lists of individuals or social relationships, while useful, is often insufficient. People generally seem to want more expressive mechanisms to control the sharing of their location. Through work in mechanism design, we have been able to define metrics that evaluate how well a particular set of attributes captures people’s location sharing preferences. These metrics enable us to quantify the benefits of introducing richer privacy settings such as allowing people to qualify their location sharing preferences based on where they are. By emphasizing this part of the design, we have been able to empower users to more closely control the sharing of their location. As settings become richer, they also place a greater burden on users as they frequently need to update the settings more than users are willing to devote to configuring their application. In one of our studies, we showed that an important number of users were quickly reaching a plateau. It did not matter how much time they spent refining their preferences: they remained equally unhappy with the results. We also showed that this had nothing to do with the user interface, which users thought was pretty good. Instead, people were just struggling articulating their preferences. In addition, because social networking applications such as Facebook sharing are completely new, people just did not know how the application would be used by their friends. Would they constantly be asking for their location? Under which conditions would they try to find out where they are and for what purpose? In other words, it was unrealistic to assume that these users would be able to set their preferences right on day one. In a subsequent study, where we divided users into two groups with people in one group able to see who had requested their information and the other unable to do so, the group with the added visibility over time grew distinctly more comfortable with the application than the other. While everyone had originally defined fairly restrictive preferences, people in the group with more visibility gradually and selectively started to relax their preferences.

These and many other results suggest that the success of social networking sites will not mark the end of online privacy, as some had prematurely announced. Instead, they indicate that, as people become more aware of the privacy implications of some of the applications made available through these sites, they will likely be looking for more effective ways of controlling how their information is shared with others. This will involve giving users more visibility into how their information is being shared, richer sets of options, and more effective interfaces to configure these options. Some promising solutions in this area include dialogue technologies to help users better understand how their preferences actually work in practice. We have also been developing functionality that leverages user feedback to suggest ways in which they could improve their current privacy settings.

For further information, you can access our project’s webpage at http://www.cs.cmu.edu/~sadeh/user_controllable_security_and_privacy.htm It includes links to the following publications:

A fully redesigned version of PeopleFinder will be released on Facebook in early 2009 under the name of “Locacino”.

Joining MEICOM sporting activities

The second MEICOM bowling fun night of the year, held on 21 October, was well received by alumni members. It was such an enjoyable evening that most participants threw themselves into the spirit of the games and enjoyed tremendously the dinner as well as the opportunity to chitchat and catch up with the latest news.

We also had a competition among the players. Anthony Law scored 235 and won the prize for top player for the second time. Alumni members are encouraged to try and beat Anthony’s record at our next bowling fun night. For those who are not fond of bowling, it is still a valuable gathering to catch up with alumni friends.

If you would prefer outdoor events, some interesting activities are being planned.

Joining the activities is a great way for all alumni and current students to have a welcome respite from our busy day jobs, and enjoy quality time by taking our family along, as well as networking with fellow professionals for greater business insights and news. Stay tuned.

The MEICOM Alumni Sports Activity Team
A MEICOM Trailwalker

The record of 100 kilometres in 43 hours 39 minutes may not mean anything to you, but to the 2008 MEICOM team it meant unity, determination and perseverance. The trailwalker distance of 100 kilometers was from Sai Kung to Tuen Mun, which is equivalent to going round the Hong Kong stadium 250 times. The route was very hilly - there were about 20 hills with the highest being about 1000 metres (to give an idea of the scale, the International Finance Centre, or the IFC, is 415m tall). In fact at least six of the hills we climbed were taller than the IFC.

This is the second year that a MEICOM Team has joined the Trailwalker event and the team members this year were Algae Ma (Captain), Patrick Chan (coach), Michael Tsui and myself. The coach in charge was Vins Fong. This was Michael’s and my first attempt, Algae’s third and Patrick’s second. The team finished the walk, surprisingly, without any injuries or cramps but understandably in a state of extreme exhaustion!

To me, accomplishing this walk was a miracle. I am a person who is not too keen on sport. I remember at the end of my first training session, which was a four-hour walk of an easy route, I could barely walk and it took me a few days to recover. In my second training session, which was a six-hour walk, I thought I had broken my thigh bone towards the end of the walk. I was just too tired! After I finished the 100 km trailwalk on November 9, I was able to attend a business function in a hotel ballroom wearing high heels the following evening. Wasn’t that amazing?

In the last mile of our walk, we had to walk by a ditch. Vins constantly reminded us to walk on the left hand side to avoid falling into the ditch, which was on our right. There were accidents in previous trailwalker events as people were so tired that they stepped into the ditch, hurt themselves and had to be hospitalised. I said to Vins, “In case I fall into the ditch, don’t send me to the hospital. Let me climb back up to the road, crawl to the finish line, and have my number registered with the organiser first. And only then dispatch me to the hospital!” We were that determined to finish the walk!

The distance covered by our five months of training was more than 400 km. I have to pay tribute to Vins and Patrick for not giving up on me, to Algae who walked with me and encouraged me all the time during training, and to Michael for giving me tips and support to carry on.

Training is important. Having a great coach is even more important. Vins designed the training program and developed the strategy of who, when and where to provide food, to replenish supply and to walk with the team in certain routes. Both Vins and Patrick taught us the techniques of trailwalking, what food and drink to bring for the walk, the gear to take along, the kit for the walk. The training focused on our physical fitness for the walk and built up our psychological readiness. This was not just a walk but an endeavour involving a wealth of knowledge (I know this sounds grand, but I really mean what I say).

We also had a windfall from this event - the team lost over 50 lbs in five months. Look at the picture and guess who lost the most weight!

If you are interested in experiencing this unforgettable once in a lifetime opportunity, you may contact the MEICOM Board at sig-sports@ecom.hku.hk. There will be another MEICOM team participating in the trailwalker event in 2009. See you there! A converted Maria Bong!

PROGRAMME OFFICE UPDATES

NEW MODULES TO BE OFFERED

Two new ICOM modules will be introduced in the third semester 2008-09. They are:

ICOM6036 A practical introduction to business intelligence - This module will be taught by Dr. Joachim Hammer. It will cover the technology pillars of BI namely data collection and transformation, data warehousing including master data management, and reporting & analysis.

ICOM6037 The new telecommunications landscape: convergence to Internet protocol, seamless mobile communications, and new services - This module will be taught by Professor Fouad Tobagi. It exposes students to advances in telecommunications, encompassing new technical solutions as well as new services.

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, and given by our visiting instructors around the world.

Mr. Sampson Lee started the series off for the new academic year of 2008-09 by presenting on 16 October on experience science management. He explained how experience science management used time-tested theories and uncommon principles in a structured approach for experience design and innovation.

In November, Professor Roger Clarke gave the talk “An eCommerce Perspective on Carbon Trading”. His presentation provided a preliminary examination of the nature of carbon trading, from the perspective of electronic commerce theory and practice.

Mr. Peter Loomes gave the talk “E-Inclusiveness - IT for some or for all?” on 3 December. He focused on a number of key terms to do with inclusive design, outlined the main challenges facing work of this kind and suggested approaches that can be followed to move from exclusion to e-inclusiveness.

Upcoming seminar:

In February, Professor Bebo White will present his talk on “The Emergence of Web Science”. He will discuss how the technology might evolve and how we can be prepared for the future Web.

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

ADMISSION 2009

We are now inviting applications for 2009 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.

CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (CPD) COURSES

Graduates are welcome to enroll in MSc(Com&Inform) modules for continuing and professional development purpose. We will offer the new modules as CPD courses to our graduates of 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!

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/