Complexity Theory and information management

Dr Bonna Jones

“What is information?” and “what is life?” These are two crucial questions, for they are common to both the information management and information systems disciplines in our school. It is exciting that these are also the questions being asked at the leading edge of complexity theory. They serve as the local/global connection for us on more than one level.

What is Complexity Theory?
If we take a global view we see that there are several complexity theories. One complexity theory has developed in computer science and the mathematics of dynamical systems, and another in the study of complex systems including chaos theory, artificial life and the kind of work being conducted at the Santa Fe Institute. A third offers a systems approach to complexity, and this can be seen in engineering, biology, ecology, and philosophy.

The last involves the study of large systems, which are collections of objects or processes, and it is this approach that is deeply interested in the question of life. For example an organisation has life as a system through its business processes. But two business processes that operate to constrain each other (in a positive way!) end up being productive for the organisation: they add more than the sum of what they bring to the organisation individually.

It is a testament to our interest in these questions in the school that they are still being asked. What does this say? To me it says we are not only building a new life for the school, it also says we are asking similar questions to the leading edge complexity theorists: those in philosophy; history of science, human ecology, environmental science, theoretical biology, sociology, systems engineering and literature. Like them, we do not have to follow the two mainstream ideas, and their culture: that life is either an object or is subjective. We can be part of a tradition that asks about life in systems and ecologies, and as we do this we can answer the question ‘what is information’?

Globally, it is being argued that we need a global view of life through a science of complexity; and that to evolve to this we need a new postmodern grand narrative. This can also be thought of as an epic, a myth or a scientific explanation, based on our knowledge of the Big Bang and its energy. No-one has stopped asking our knowledge of the Big Bang and its energy. No-one has stopped asking

Thumbs up Doncare and homeless world cup

SBIT student works on ICT community projects - Doncare & Homeless World Cup Databases

Bachelor of Business, SBIT student Minh Vu has been undertaking database projects that link in with some of our largest growing and important areas – community well-being & homelessness, amongst many other projects undertaken over his cooperative education year.

Doncare

Doncare is a service provider based in Manningham and aims to enhance the quality of life for people residing within the area through the provision of community services including family services and counselling.

As Doncare is concerned with the wider community it is essential that their website can be easily accessed and read by all. To ensure Doncare's website was delivering this vital service, a RMIT School of Business Information Technology student Minh Vu - as part of his many ICT projects undertaken throughout his work placement year - undertook a redesign of the Doncare website. This combined with research of other similar sites has culminated in the development of a website that provides essential and useful information which can be more readily accessed by all people within the community.

Homeless World Cup

Melbourne has been fortunate to be selected to host the 2008 Homeless World Cup (HWC) in early December. The HWC is an annual event, which commenced in 2003, and is designed to give people who are homeless or excluded from society a once in a lifetime opportunity to represent their country and hopefully change their lives forever. The first tournament consisted of 17 national teams, with the last in Copenhagen in 2007 having over 500 competitors from 48 nations taking part. Melbourne's event is expected to exceed 2007 figures with 56 teams scheduled to compete.

The event is staffed primarily by volunteers (approx 500) and there are a large number of events being run simultaneously a database needed to be developed to ensure that through effective data management everything happens in the right place and at the right time.

The database has been a collaborative venture between RMIT and the University of Melbourne. The basics for the database were designed by UM and SBIT student Minh Vu who has worked extensively on the database, attending many requirements elicitation meetings plus further testing and fixing before going live.

Trigger text messaging trial

The spirit of the times in university course administration

Interchanges of text messages now make the mundane tasks of course administration less of a chore for students and staff alike.

The unanticipated linguistic renaissance afforded by SMS has spurred the development of the Trigger system. “We designed Trigger – a SMS tool that enables ‘push and pull’ access to student administration information, like: reminders for work, exam times and location, as well as exam results and class times,” said Dr Joan Richardson, Senior Lecturer with the School of Business Information Technology, who designed the system in association with Cameron Craig, Innovation Manager for Pearson Education Australia.

Headeed by Dr Richardson, an extensive trial and evaluation of the system is currently being undertaken within RMIT University, funded by Pearson Australia and RMIT. Text messaging has become the spirit of the times and, as a consequence, the Trigger system was heralded widely in press coverage during the early part of 2008 with articles appearing in The Australian, The Age and the Australian Financial Review.

Innovation

Innovating new life into courses

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College of Business
SBIT Emerging research prize winners

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Awards ’08

Top of their class

Page 5
In 2008 the School made good progress with research. We succeeded in securing a number of grants from competitive schemes, have increased the number of higher degree completions and we achieved a higher quality of publications. The School proudly supports 3 Australian Research Council funded projects, 3 Public Sector funded projects, 1 Cardiac Centre, and 3 Early Career Research projects.

This year the School has 12 higher degree completions, who will graduate December 17. Staff and PhD students attended major conferences on Information Systems to present papers, and promote research to the international community. We presented at the E-Government this year at the RMIT University Storey Hall. The conference chair was Professor Brian Corbitt, and the program chair was Professor Mohini Singh. Participants from other Australian Universities and PhD students attended the conference along with a large number of our colleagues from other Australian Universities. The Vice-Chancellor Professor Margaret Gardner, AO, welcomed the delegates and introduced the Hon Evan Thomley, Parliamentary Secretary in the Premier’s office who delivered the key note address and declared the conference open. The second keynote address was delivered by Professor Miriam Lips, Professor of E-Government from Victoria University, New Zealand.

The School hosted the International Conference on E-Government this year at the RMIT University Storey Hall. The conference chair was Professor Brian Corbitt, and the program chair was Professor Mohini Singh. Participants from other Australian Universities and PhD students attended the conference along with a large number of our colleagues from other Australian Universities. The Vice-Chancellor Professor Margaret Gardner, AO, welcomed the delegates and introduced the Hon Evan Thomley, Parliamentary Secretary in the Premier’s office who delivered the key note address and declared the conference open. The second keynote address was delivered by Professor Miriam Lips, Professor of E-Government from Victoria University, New Zealand.

This year the School of Business Information Technology at RMIT celebrates a ten-year relationship with Linköping University in Sweden taking the form of a staff exchange program pioneered by academic Bill Davey, who ventured into Sweden and started teaching a database subject into the Linköping information systems degree. Information Systems academics from Linköping University who have visited us in Melbourne include Mikael Johansson, Ulf Melin and Stefan Cronholm.

Since Bill Davey started the database module back rolling back in 1998, many Business Information Technology academics have made the database pilgrimage to Linköping, Sweden, including: Arthur and Francisca Adamopoulos, David Kelly, Vince Bruno, Hossein Zadeh, Ian Searle, Ian Storey, and this year Patrick Poppins, who has just returned from his database sojourn. BIT academic, Professor Mohini Singh, has been producing videos to include in a learning objects repository for educational purposes for all RMIT campuses, including Vietnam. "I have been working on a project funded through the Learning and Teaching Investment Fund. It involves local and international industry practitioner interviews that are structured to be reused across the University," Mr McCrohan said. "Ross's project matched perfectly, as we both want to produce video interviews of industry practitioners.

The next step is to measure the quality of the interview and its relevance to the curriculum, says Rod.

Innovating in teaching and learning
Introducing electronic media, including blogs

Interactive teaching has come to life this year as students come face to face with industry experts in a new teaching approach. The School of Business Information Technology is introducing electronic media including blogs, online assessment, rapid audience response systems and animation, giving students industry-relevant samples of the material being taught. Professor Ross Smith, School Director of Teaching and Learning, Professor of Information Systems and currently Acting Head of School, said new teaching and learning initiatives would enhance the School and enliven content for students by integrating online learning tools. "It strengthens the design and development of course materials and offers delivery approaches that utilise and model the full functionality and potential of RMIT’s Learning Hub tools," Mr Smith said. We are incorporating interviews with industry representatives and RMIT alumni from companies such as IBM and CSC, said Professor Smith. "Each interview segment is integrated into a specific area of the course, such as user interface design in the systems analysis and design subject. We wanted to make it clear to students that the material we teach is vocationally relevant, and it’s a good way to keep up with industry," he said. Preparation of the material involved collaboration with academic and media production staff, particularly Rod McCrohan of the Media Production Unit. Mr McCrohan has been producing video interviews to be included in a learning objects repository for educational purposes for all RMIT campuses, including Vietnam. "I have been working on a project funded through the Learning and Teaching Investment Fund. It involves local and international industry practitioner interviews that are structured to be reused across the University," Mr McCrohan said. "Ross's project matched perfectly, as we both want to produce video interviews of industry practitioners.

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Link with Linköping
Database with an Australian accent

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The business of technology and information

Information technology is an integral part of any modern business yet there is a surprising lack of information about how new technologies actually help those businesses prosper. The assumption that the implementation of a new IT system results in an increase in productivity can rarely be tested accurately. It’s a field of research in its infancy and RMIT is at the forefront through the leadership of Professor Brian Corbitt, Dean, Research & Innovation and Head of School, Business Information Technology within the College of Business. Professor Corbitt last year established the Business Services Science research group, which examines the efficacy of an industry that is no longer simply supplying hardware but providing a broad range of information technology services. “What doesn’t exist are ways of measuring how effective these services are,” Professor Corbitt explains. The team of eight researchers is working on algorithms and systems in areas ranging from decision analysis to health informatics and financial modelling. “We’re developing real mathematical modelling that can be broadly applied to measure the actual improvements that result from information technology changes. Building these metrics will help provide the evidence base so badly needed in the industry.”

Measuring the impact of IT

- Information technology in health
- IT and the management of risk

Researchers at the school are also examining ways of measuring and managing risk in hospitals—both clinical and financial—using information technology systems.

Where are the jobs of the future?

New Master of Business Services Sciences (MBSS) Commencing 2009

Where are the jobs of the future? According to a growing number of universities, corporations and government agencies, the jobs of the future will be in “services science”, Business Information Technology academic, Dr Hossein Zadeh agrees.

In 2009 a new Masters in Business Services Science will be launched by the School of Business Information Technology at RMIT. This program has been developed in consultation with major industry players (such as IBM and many other ICT service providers), and will focus on the skills set needed for the analysis, planning and implementation of services delivery through ICT to all industry sectors. Head of School of Business Information Technology, and Dean of Research and Innovation RMIT University, Professor Brian Corbitt said “underpinning any new program or academic endeavour is a vital connection to the real world, dealing with real world problems - a partnering with industry”.

“Services Science applies scientific, management, and engineering disciplines to tasks that one organisation beneficiially performs for, and with another (i.e. services)”, said Dr Zadeh. Dr Zadeh quotes research that says services are already the hub of many modern economies. It is estimated that more than 80% of the US economy and 56% of that of Australia is based on services. The USA Bureau of Labor statistics predicts that between 2006 and 2015 all of the growing sectors of employment will be service related. Since the world’s major economies are so closely aligned, it is expected that other modern economies will have similar trends.

“One of the problems in any business is the alignment of objectives with performance,” Professor Corbitt explains. “We’re working on a measurement instrument to determine the degree of alignment of risks in the hospital context.” The research, which involves a collaboration with global management consulting and technology services giant Accenture,
PhD Knowledge Production
$215,000 ARC Grant

Nations depend on their research capacity and knowledge-production for their social, cultural and economic well-being, and doctoral programs are the principal means of training new researchers to undertake future knowledge-production. Therefore it is important to ask what are PhD students doing after they graduate? Are they productive? Are they publishing? How are they graduate? Are they productive? What are PhD students doing after graduation? The findings and community outcomes up to ten years from graduation. The project investigates the relationship between PhD graduates’ thesis products (especially publications) and their professional and community outcomes up to ten years from graduation. The findings will inform policy in relation to the implementation of the Rudd government’s new Excellence in Research for Australia initiative. The investigators will report their findings and recommendations to the Research Excellence Branch of the Australian Research Council later this year.

Included:
• Demonstrating the latest in supply chain theory and practice.
• Showing supply chain integration and collaboration and how to achieve them; and
• Showing the physical and logical supply chain as separate entities and how they interact to create efficiency.

Students who enrol in the course Procurement and Supply Chain Technologies (DNTR100) can look forward to the benefits that flow from the School of Business Information Technology’s valued relationship with GS1 Australia,” says MBIT program coordinator and academic Konrad Pesynski.

Singapore Institute of Management RMIT MBIT Brain Workouts

Unlike many programs offered at the Singapore Institute of Management, academics that have been accepting into RMIT’s Master of Business (Information Technology) continue to engage their alumni in professional development activities long after graduation. One of the devices used is a book club that regularly meets to discuss pertinent publications.

Associate Professor Barry McIntyre is the principal organizer. Barry seeks to be an idea virus. “I do it because we need to continue to foster our alumni’s interest in enquiry and evidence-based practice. Moreover, the titles we choose prompt some fun as well as serious thinking. Such work also helps build the RMIT brand.”

Recently, this alumni group met to explore the ramifications of Norman Dodge’s excellent account of developments in Neuroscience, “The brain that changes itself”. At first glance, some might ask what relevance such a title has to business and information systems? Barry, however, soon demonstrated that appreciating the findings of current neuroscience has ramifications for us all. MBIT alumni were introduced to the principles that show how cognitive functioning can be restored and improved. In addition, he showcased some of the best-validated software that can improve speed of cognitive processing and memory as well as driving skills. As Barry notes, “Once you have a better idea of how your brain works and therefore what is needed to acquire skills and to sustain your performance, you are well placed not only to help yourself but others in the various life roles we all perform.”

SBIT academic Paul Mercieca says the dissemination of academic research is one of the key roles of a university environment. Internet based telecommunications infrastructures foster this process by providing researchers with high-speed access to a reader’s desktop. In 1990 Stevan Harman coined the phrase ‘scholarly skywriting’ to refer to the ability that email, and global computing could possibly provide in changing and enhancing the ways scholars, academics and researchers could communicate. Google Scholar provides a global index to scholarly and research content that is published directly onto the internet, including conference papers and some journal content, as well as material that is published commercially by journal publishers. A search of Google Scholar will generally have direct access to content published on the open web, but will not be able to access the content of the commercial journals without subscriptions to the journal or a willingness to pay for individual articles.

Thus a debate has developed as to whether alternative publication models can be developed for scholarship and research content. These models are referred to as open access publishing and include online journals that provide free access to their content and open access repositories, which provide an online archive for content published elsewhere. In the UK, and more recently the US, research funding bodies have established policies that attempt to mandate submission of research articles to these open access publishing channels, so that the research has a wider distribution pattern. The question then is, what is the pattern of publication and distribution of academic content within Australia? Current research, being conducted in the School of Business Information Technology, is exploring whether Australian academics are using these alternative publication patterns as a means to disseminate their research and scholarly content. This analysis can assist in determining the degree to which Australian research output is reported within the public domain. It also assists in exploring the impact that policy has on such publication patterns and will identify potential conflict between policies recognising academic excellence and those supporting research dissemination. This is important as the Rudd Government develops new research recognition processes under the Excellence in Research in Australia (ERA) initiative.

Open Access
Scholarly skywriting and open access publishing

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Google Scholar provides a global index to scholarly and research content that is published directly onto the internet, including conference papers and some journal content, as well as material that is published commercially by journal publishers. A search of Google Scholar will generally have direct access to content published on the open web, but will not be able to access the content of the commercial journals without subscriptions to the journal or a willingness to pay for individual articles.
Top of their class
2008 Prize Giving Ceremony, for the 2007 academic year

The RMIT College of Business Prize Giving Ceremony, held on Wednesday 6 May, 2008 recognised students who have excelled in their programs. Congratulations to our School of Business Information Technology prize winning students who received their awards among friends, family, staff and valued sponsors – our students are at the top of their class.

MB(IT) celebrates 20th Birthday at Singapore Institute of Management

30 August 2008. Associate Professor Barry McIntyre led MB(IT) alumni in celebrating the 20th anniversary of offering the MB(IT) in Singapore. Celebrations were appropriately capped off with a 20-candle birthday cake.

The MB(IT) was RMIT’s first coursework masters to be offered offshore. Apart from graduating many hundreds of students now working in the region, the Singapore-based MB(IT) has continued to enjoy positive assessments from graduating students in the annual Course Experience Questionnaire that is administered to all graduates of Australian Universities.

Associate Professor McIntyre, the only member of the team still working at RMIT that first designed this degree, observed that the original intent of ensuring students understood the need to align IT with business had been realized. He noted that in many respects our MB(IT) was ahead of its time. While the program’s content is continually revised to accommodate contemporary business issues, the original alignment focus remains. As Barry colourfully reminds alumni and current students alike, “Companies want business savvy information systems professionals, not self absorbed technical propelled heads!”

E-Business Diffusion in Australia’s Horticulture Supply Chain

Despite the widely acclaimed potential of e-business to transform business and supply chains, its diffusion in different sectors of an economy greatly vary. The agribusiness industry is one of the early users of electronic trading. Long before the Internet, there were successful electronic trading mechanisms for the exchange of agricultural products such as eggs and cotton. The homogeneity of agricultural products, the volume of fragmentation along the supply chain and the need for efficient transfer of goods accompanying documents for quality assurance, inspection and trading makes Internet based e-business an attractive proposition for most agribusinesses.

A recent study by School of Business Information Technology academics Dr Alemayehu Molla and Dr Konrad Peszynski investigated the implementation of e-business technologies and electronically performed business functions and the drivers, influencing factors and benefits of e-business in the horticulture supply chain. Data were collected through a survey of Australian horticulture growers, service providers and industry associations including: fruit growers, vegetable growers, plant nurseries, the cut flower business, horticultural associations, production and harvesting services, post harvest services, marketing services as well as those involved in the wholesale and retail of produce including export.

What Drives E-Business in Horticulture?

Molla and Peszynski found that the drivers of e-business can be grouped into three broad categories of efficiency (such as the need for more and better information sharing and time saving), legitimacy, (fear of being left behind because of not adopting e-business technologies and positive images associated with e-business adoption), and market forces (pressure from customers and trading partners to adopt e-business technology).

In terms of implemented technologies and e-business functions, Molla and Peszynski say that “the findings reveal that while farm management systems (such as computerized accounting) and mobile technologies are widely diffused, the adoption of e-supply chain technologies is very limited. Existing e-business functions tend to be informational (mostly via Websites) with limited monitoring, tracking, transactional and supply chain collaboration capabilities.”

E-Business Benefits

Most firms have only experienced informational gains. However, those that have developed e-business capabilities have identified improved market access, reduced costs of transaction and coordination, and enhanced transparency and visibility across the horticulture supply chain. The majority of respondents expect the government and horticulture industry associations to provide incentives, set e-business norms and practices and play active roles in promoting e-business. The results have established a benchmark that provides an understanding of developments in e-business in agribusiness and can be used for future positioning and comparisons.

For more information, please contact the authors: Dr Alemayehu Molla – alemayehu.molla@rmit.edu.au Dr Konrad Peszynski – konrad.peszynski@rmit.edu.au The full report findings can be accessed at: http://mams.rmit.edu.au/utfrs5c56bim.pdf
Decision making in a complex world:

Teaching and research in modelling and simulation for decision making at the School of BIT

Computer-based modelling and simulation for decision making

Computer-based modelling and simulation involves studying models of real world systems by numerical evaluation using software designed to imitate the operations or characteristics of the system under study. It is one of the most popular Operations Research (OR) tools because of its ability to deal with complex systems. Thus, it is a key element of Decision Support Systems (DSS) which help managers and policy makers make better strategies and policies when faced with complex unstructured problems.

Research in modelling and simulation

Currently, there is a range of modelling and simulation research projects being undertaken in the School of Business Information Technology led by Dr France Cheong either by research students as part of their PhD projects, or by academic staff in collaboration with international researchers.

PhD projects include: credit scoring using artificial immune systems, modelling student retention in Taiwanese universities, agent-based modelling of the Chinese stock exchange, system dynamics modelling of closed-loop supply chains, and risk management of Vietnamese catfish farming.

Research projects undertaken by staff include: agent-based modelling of childhood poverty in Vietnam for the purpose of understanding causation and consequences and for generating effective policies for reduction of poverty, system dynamics modelling of the Vietnamese catfish and shrimp industries for the purpose of generating effective policies for sustainable production, marine terminal operations modelling and simulation for optimized operations at Australian Amalgamated Terminals, and using evolutionary algorithms, to generate optimized irrigation schedules for the Mauritius Sugar Industry Research Institute.

Teaching modelling and simulation

In the School of Business IT, “we offer a range of courses which provide students with skills in a variety of modelling and simulation techniques. Decision Support Systems (ISYS1018) is a course intended to develop an appreciation of the nature of managerial business decision making as well as a working knowledge of DSS for facilitating the process of semi-structured decision making” says academic Dr France Cheong.

At a glance:

Subjects on offer in business and systems modelling

System Dynamics Modelling (ISYS2397)

is a modelling and simulation course for modelling the dynamics of complex systems, the components of which usually interact strongly with each other by means of feedback loops (also known as circular causality) while Agent Based Modelling (yet to be offered course) is a course that provides skills for modelling a system using a set of individual agents and their interactions. The purpose of building an agent-based model (ABM) is for simulating changes in individual behaviours and determining their effects on the system’s emerging overall behaviour. Both courses focus on business applications of modelling and simulation and the aim is to simulate a range of scenarios in order to develop robust and effective policies and strategies.

ISYS2397 available in Spring School

Business Process Modelling (ISYS2399)

is a course on the design, modelling and simulation of business processes for the purpose of improving them. Business processes are the production lines of the new economy and since they are the sources of value creation they must be properly managed to obtain results.

ISYS2399 available in Semester One

Globalisation in practice

Visiting Professor from Linköping University, Sweden

Recently Associate Professor Stefan Cronholm was the Linköping University visiting professor to our school. While here he was involved in providing PhD candidates with the opportunity to present a "defence" of their PhD research. Associate Professor Cronholm also undertook joint research into some issues with usability guidelines with fellow academic Vince Bruno, resulting in two papers, as well as consulting with other researchers in BIT for possible research links.

Professor Brian Corbitt said that the school valued its global connectedness and relationships with other countries through their universities. This can take many forms, Professor Corbitt said, including staff and student exchanges, study tours, joint research and shared projects, as well as links with industry.

Linköping is one of the major technical universities in Sweden, with a student population of 25,000 and 3,500 employees. In common with RMIT, part of Linköping University’s mission is to promote and facilitate international cooperation with partner universities and prospective partners, “to enhance the quality of both undergraduate and graduate education, as well as to promote an appreciation of other nations and international relations”.

Professional recognition:

SBIT academics honoured as Fellows by the Australian Computer Society

This year the Australian Computer Society has elected a small group of members throughout Australia to the prestigious status of Fellow, recognising their substantial and enduring contributions to the ICT Industry.

Congratulations to Stas Lukaitis for his election to the grade of Fellow of the Australian Computer Society (ACS). He joins academics Brian Corbitt, Elspeth McKay and David Mackay (sessional working with the Work Integrated Learning Team) at this grade. Richard Hogg (sessional working with the Work Integrated Learning Team) is an ACS Honorary Life Member, as well as being honoured with the Centenary of Federation medal.

A leading professional in the field of ICT industry, education and research, in the BIT school, Stas Lukaitis has contributed at a senior level as a lecturer, manager and consultant at RMIT for over 25 years.
Squash Anyone?
Court booking management system – SBIT capstone project

The Business Information Systems Capstone Project is a course in the Bachelor of Business (Business Information Systems) program, which students undertake in their final semester of study. In this course, groups of students are challenged to apply the knowledge and skills they have acquired during their studies in the program to address a real-world business problem. This can be viewed as a final test of readiness before the students graduate and enter the workforce.

Core Systems, a group of 6 students comprising of Stephanie Huynh, Amritpal Singh, Dominik Sowinski, He (Kevin) Jia, Sunay Ruparelia, and Tan Le, was assigned to develop an information system to record and manage court bookings for the Epping Squash and Fitness Centre.

Stephanie Huynh, the project manager, said, “The capstone project was a unique experience that allowed us to apply both the curriculum-based and naturally acquired knowledge and skills from the Business Information Systems course. It also provided the opportunity for further professional development, ensuring that we were all well equipped to enter the industry. It was challenging and fun. The staff involved provided a strong support structure, maximising the benefit we received from the project. Additionally, it gave us the opportunity to showcase RMIT University’s talent and a typical product of the Business Information Systems course.”

The usability analyst of Core Systems, Dominik Sowinski, adds, “It was also a great opportunity for us to put some of our skills to use, break out of our comfort zone, and learn some new skills.”

Looking past university life as a graduate, Tan Le, the programmer of the group, comments, “To me, Capstone is also fantastic in that it gives us the opportunity to start networking and forming groups for future business establishment.”

The students have since graduated from RMIT University and successfully gained employment. When asked if he is putting the knowledge and skills he gained from the Capstone course to good use, Amritpal Singh, the business analyst of the group, emphatically stated, “Of course! You’d be surprised to know how many people at my work place are impressed that I know so much, especially since I’ve just graduated.” He (Kevin) Jia, the database administrator of Core Systems, acknowledged that he had learnt a lot “about providing client services and working as a team.” Tan Le explains that the process of developing the system was most important to him, “To me, what matters the most are the lessons that we, as a team, have learnt along the journey. There have been beautiful moments when our ideas collided and we have learnt to listen and be supportive.”

The owner of the Epping Squash and Fitness Centre, Lynne Spark, had the following comments to make about Core Systems and the system they developed. “I was impressed with the program. The students who were involved were excellent, easy to work with, especially as they all initially had a very limited understanding of how a sporting centre operates and their requirements.”

Mr Christopher Cheong, the lecturer supervising the project, had the following to say: “I think Core Systems has done an excellent job. Their teamwork, the End product, and the positive experience of the developing the system is a testament to the hard work and long hours of study each member has personally put in prior to and during this course. They were very open to suggestions, ready to learn and research anything they didn’t know, and saw criticisms as opportunities for further learning and improvement. This was the first time I supervised a Capstone team and they have made it a very positive experience for me. It was an absolute pleasure supervising them.”

Amritpal Singh had the following advice for students currently undertaking the Capstone course, “Don’t restrict yourself based on books and knowledge that you have acquired. Be open to new things and think outside the box. Use your supervisor as your guide and a source of advice rather than your instructor as it’s you who is undertaking the Capstone project.” This is a sentiment that all members of the group agree with. Sunay Ruparelia, advises current students to see the course in a wider perspective, “Picture it as a grand rehearsal before the final showdown.”

The members of Core Systems and their supervisor still meet regularly over dinner and coffee to keep in touch, discuss various issues about the IT industry, and reminisce over the Capstone project.

It is a great example of how university life and group work and working on a real world business problem can bring students together to form life-long networks and learning.

For more information on the Business Information Systems Capstone Project course contact Mr Arthur Adamopoulos at arbhr. adamopoulos@rmit.edu.au. If you would like to play squash at the Epping Squash and Fitness Centre, contact Lynne Spark on 9401 4555 to make a booking!
### Out and about

Information Management academics - from left: John Terrill, Susan Reynolds, Peter Macasuley, Bonnie Jones, Marion Stawom, Huan Vo-Tran, Paul Mentrca, Bernadette Welch

Acting Head of School, Professor Ross Smith - grilling

SBIT Finance & administration team. Back row, from left to right: Barbara Macmull, Patricia Antauer, Administration Manager – Georgia KatounasMiddle row, from left to right: Thao Vuong, Feliana Feliana, Marie St Anne, Zohrei Eilaghi-Hosseini, Wattle Walla Front row, from left to right: Lisa Keay, Finance Manager, Lisa Lahteenmaa and John Pautontza-Pinol

Head of BIT School Brain Corbitt - “Up there for thinking”

Academic Kathy Henschke with SBIT cooperative education students: Vaughn Scott and Jennifer Hizon (Vaughn is currently working at Accenture, and Jennifer at IBM for their cooperative education year) catching up at an Australian Computing Society event

Academic Vince Bruno conducting a "cognitive walkthrough" with Professor Brian Corbitt

Open Day SBIT academics: Maurice Afi-Rayd & Arthur Adamopoulos

SBIT – “Sing, sing, sing …”

### New in print

The Human-Dimensions of Human-Computer Interaction Balancing the HCI Equation Volume 5 The Future of Learning Author: E. McKay


Price: US$125 / €89 / £62

Until recently the term ‘human-computer interaction’ otherwise known as HCI has been captured by the computer scientists and software engineers, focusing on the cleverness of computer machinery, dealing exclusively with calculations and data processing. Dr Elspeth McKay, an internationally recognized expert in taking a new approach to HCI, has been researching the human-dimensions of computing for many years; and authors this essential volume that is set appropriately within a series concerned for the future of learning.

The book fills a gap in the literature that only sparsely covers the vast number of human-dimensions (or social context) of computer usage. The target audience for this book includes IT professionals, postgraduate information systems’ students, corporate trainers, general computer users, educational technology researchers, academics at universities and other types of community-based learning institutions.

The human-dimensions of HCI are but one piece of the complicated computer-usability or techno-puzzle; that involves two distinct and quite separate contexts. One relates to the human-dimension or social context of computing; while the other relates to the machine-side, with people’s perspectives moulded around the performance of the technical computing components. The literature deals more often with the latter.

Because of this duality of people and computer machinery Elspeth’s techno-saga travels through carefully devised chapters. She therefore separates the human-side from the machine-side of the HCI equation, identifying why there is currently an imbalance of sensible solutions for effective HCI.

Academic Dr Elspeth McKay is an active HCI researcher and Senior Lecturer at the RMIT University, School of Business IT, Melbourne - Australia.