were most impressed with the quality of the work.

NCSS is a very intense program of lectures, lab work and other activities. It relies on the large number of NCSS and School of IT alumni who contribute their time and expertise to tutor the students, help raise sponsorship, and run the program. We would like to thank everyone for their enormous contribution in 2009 -- especially John Judge, Stuart Cumming and the rest of the NICITA and ESA volunteers who created the fantastic new Embedded Systems project for the returning students.

We look forward to working with even more alumni for NCSS 2010.

See www.ncss.edu.au for more details.

James Curran
NCSS alumni volunteers
James Curran, BSc Adv (Hons) 1999; Tàra Murphy, BSc Adv (Hons) 1999; Michael Cahill, BSc (Hons) 1997; Laura Ingram, BCST (Hons) 2007, NCSS student 2003 and 2004; Nick Cooper, BCST (Hons) 2007, Katie Bell, BIT (Hons) 2009, Susan Howlet, BLitBdStud (Hons) 2009 and Steven Sommer; Joel Nothman, BSc (Adv) /BA (Hons) 2009; Nicky Ringland, BA 2008, GDC 2009; Sam Thorogood, BCST (Hons) 2009 and Greg Darke, BIT (Hons) 2009.

NCSS student volunteers
Sam Tardif (NCSS student 2004 and 2005); Glen Pink; Will Cannings (NCSS student 2003 and 2004); James Constable (NCSS student 2005 and 2006); Tim Dawborn (NCSS student 2005 and 2006); Anna Dominiqe; Ben Taylor (NCSS student 2006 and 2007); Dominick Ng; Laura McKemmish; John Jiang; Georgena Wilcox; Dominik Balasurjaya; Stephen Bian; Sophie Liang; Stephen Merity (NCSS student 2006 and 2007); Cat Stewart (NCSS student 2006 and 2007); Bin Zhou.

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The University of Sydney Alumni
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The Australian internet content filtering scheme

The Australian internet content filtering scheme has recently been a hotly debated topic after an alleged top-secret blacklist of the Australian Communications and Media Authority’s banned websites was leaked onto the world wide web. SIT’s Associate Professor Bjorn Landfeldt worked on a feasibility study commissioned by Howard government investigating internet filtering at the ISP level. Professor Landfeldt has concerns about the government’s response to the report and what mandatory internet content filtering will mean to Australians.

“There are a number of issues with blanket content filtering that we should be worried about, freedom of speech and blocking of legitimate content are just two” says Professor Landfeldt. The report, prepared by the Australian Internet Industry Association (AIIA), was handed to the Communications Minister, Stephen Conroy early last year, and highlighted, “that one report is not enough to determine if ISP content filtering is a good thing. This issue is so complex, you need to do a decent job investigating how this will fundamentally affect society before allowing laws to be passed. A small group of people gathering information over a few months is simply not enough. ”

Mandatory internet content filtering would set Australia aside from all other democratic nations in the world. The initial purpose of this scheme was to protect Australian children from accessing unsuitable material such as child pornography. “There is widespread consensus in society that such material is undesirable and potentially harmful. But making internet service providers responsible for the actions of users...
will effectively result in spying on the general public. They would have to look at all the traffic of all the users - checking all activities on the net, and they would have to keep records of it. There are serious risks involved in imposing that on society.

The report included eighteen pages of unresolved issues, which the government has responded to by running live trials. Professor Landfeldt is skeptical that the trials will provide any new information. “One of the issues that the live trials will address is how ISP filters will affect internet speeds. But we already have evidence that if an investment is made, buying the right hardware and equipment, that internet speeds will not be affected.” Professor Landfeldt says that British Telecom have voluntarily implemented an in-house developed filter called ‘clean feed’ for their customers, using their own list of banned sites, with little effect on the quality of service; “If it works there, it can work anywhere. But I don’t think internet speed is a really big issue. The big issues are what does it mean to put this filtering in place and how are we going to protect ourselves as a society against bad use of this system in the future. The general public should be much more concerned with getting transparency in this process.”

Currently, the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) has a mandate to include any content that deems inappropriate for children, including material that is broadcast on national TV; “The process of adding information to the unwanted category is completely opaque, as opposed to traditional media censorship where it is known which content is blocked. In addition, the technical evaluation of ISP level filtering in the report revealed that any such filters are either very easy to circumvent or inherently inaccurate. The question to ask is: ‘is the limited protection and benefit from such a scheme worth the risks and negative side effects?’” Professor Landfeldt argues that the issue needs to be addressed properly before more societal resources are siphoned that way.

So, how should Australia progress? Professor Landfeldt believes that voluntary filtering is the way forward; “The internet is a reflection of society, and unfortunately there are some facets of society that are not very nice. If you want the government to protect yourself and your children from all the nasty stuff on the internet you should have that option. But you also should be free to access information without being forced to conform to a mystery bureaucrat’s morality.” Since the government’s current rhetoric is to make the Internet child friendly, that can ultimately lead to blocking of information children should not get access to but which is vital to informed and open public debate, such as recounts and evidence from the holocaust, and even news feeds. Professor Landfeldt says “I don’t want my daughters to get access to much information, but I don’t let my children loose on town and expect the Government to protect them, I take that responsibility.”

A video of Professor Landfeldt’s public lecture “Do we simply accept the Australian Internet filtering scheme or do we need to ask hard questions?” is available at: www.it.usyd.edu.au/videos.

Staff news
Welcome
The School is pleased to welcome new academic research staff Luiz Pizzato, William Niu, Rainer Wasinger, Tomasz Reg, James Haggserry and sessional lecturer Larry Libman. We also welcome Evelyn Rieglar who will be working with the admin team.

2009 AUC Scholarships
School of IT Honours student Christina Yum has been awarded an Apple University Consortium (AUC) Honours Scholarship. The scholarships, for honours students working on research projects that in some way depends on or uses uniquely Apple technologies, are awarded based on academic merit as well as the student’s interest and passion for the research area.

Christina is working with Professor Judy Kay in the Computer Human Adapted Interaction Research Group (CHAI) on a project based around a user study of task management. Christina explains; “My honours project will give a holistic view of personal task management, understanding how individuals and teams manage what they need to do, and understanding how software tools can aid this process.” Christina will be conducting a field trial where people make use of a set of tools for planning their tasks over multiple machines and using an iPhone.

Honours students Tim Davborn and Sam Tarfd and PhD student James Bunton also won scholarships from AUC to attend the Apple Worldwide Developers Conference in San Francisco in June. The conference showcases the latest innovations and developments from Apple, and attendance is a great opportunity for students programming and developing applications on the Macintosh platform.

Postgraduate prizes and scholarships
To encourage academic excellence, each semester the School of IT recognises the highest achieving student in each postgraduate coursework unit of study. The School congratulates the following students for their hard work in Semester 2, 2008:

- Information Visualisation - Joel Northinghun
- Object-Oriented Analysis and Design - Xiaochen Huang
- Digital Media Fundamentals - Jakub Krajcovic
- Internet Protocols - Jakub Krajcovic
- Relational Database Management Systems - Phillip Gerlach and Pilsari Rukkulchon
- Introduction to Information Systems - Phillip Gerlach
- Algoirthms - Minhs Doa
- Software Construction - David Goswell
- Computer and Network Organisation - Yang Zhang and Rao Shang
- Software Development in Java - Karen Clark
- Knowledge Discovery and Data Mining - Genliang Guan and Keith Tung
- Advanced Data Models - Paul Prekop
- Multimedia Authoring and Production - Genliang Guan and Keith Tung
- Advanced Network Technologies - Nima Auhuman
- IT Research Methods - Florin Pavel
- Professional Practice in IT - Phillip Gerlach
- IT Professional Services - Georges Klopotowski
- Understanding IT Innovations - Zhamsk Dehghani
- Project management in IT - Phillip Gerlach
- Pervasive Computing - Sam Thorogood
- 12cp Project - Rita Khawand
- Project: Knowledge-based Relationships in the Service Sector
- 18cp Research Path - Florin Pavel
- Project: Reliable object recognition using SIFT
- The School also awards two half-fee scholarships to students commencing their final semester of full-time study: one each in the Master of IT and the Master of IT Management courses. The scholarships are awarded on the basis of academic merit, and were presented to Phillip Gerlach (MIT) and Pilsari Rukkulchon (MITM).

From the President cont from page 1
We have several events scheduled over the remainder of the year. Indeed, coming up in July is our Annual General Meeting, which will be followed by a talk on information surveillance management systems by Head of School Sanjay Chawla. We’ll advertise events as they come closer. We’re building up quite a large following through our LinkedIn group and Facebook site. Connecting to us online is an excellent way to make sure you always keep up with the latest news and events from the School and if you haven’t already I encourage you to join up. I look forward to meeting many of you through the year.

Mark Webb, President, University of Sydney IT Alumni Association (USITAA)

Mr Mark Webb, President of The University of Sydney IT Alumni Association invites you to attend a USITAA IT Seminar on Thursday 16 July 2009

Information Surveillance Management Systems: Architecture and Implementation

Speaker: Associate Professor Sanjay Chawla

The event will be preceded by the University of Sydney IT Alumni Association Annual General Meeting.

All alumni are welcome to attend and volunteer for the Executive Committee of USITAA.

For more information or to register and/or nominate please visit:

www.it.usyd.edu.au/alumni/agm

Science meets Parliament
“Science meets Parliament” (Smp) brings together scientists from all over the country for face-to-face meetings and forums with Parliamentarians in Canberra. For an entire day, Federal Parliamentarians get a glimpse into science in a series of meetings and events which also allow the scientists unparalleled opportunities to witness national decision making at first hand, and to inform this process on important scientific issues.

Dr. James Curran from the School of Information Technologies was one of two representatives of the Computer Research and Education (CORE) group, the association of university departments of computer science in Australia and New Zealand. James had the chance to discuss computer science education and education/research more generally with Ms. Julie Owens (Labour Member for Parramatta) and the Hon. Eric Abetz (Liberal Senator for Tasmania and Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate).

The aims of Smp are: to stimulate and inform Parliament’s discussion of scientific issues that underpin the economic, social and environmental well-being of the nation, and enhance the understanding of science through the wider community; to establish linkages between scientists, politicians and policy makers; to provide scientists with a broad outlook for opportunities that may require the input of scientific knowledge into policy making. James’ main points of discussion related to reforming the computer science curriculum in schools and getting school students engaged with computer science and science more generally:

1) Develop and resource a national curriculum in science and computing;
2) Get students engaged with scientists at national facilities;
3) Support gifted and talented programs and activities run by volunteers. Fund-raising for these kinds of programs is time consuming. Federal support would expand them beyond the limited time made available by volunteers.