

UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

School of Computer Science Family

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THE EPS COMMUNITY



Winter 2014

Greetings,

As you will see from this newsletter, our academics have been busy, with much of their work reported in the media, from Boris the robot's potential to load a dishwasher to Professor Russell Beale challenging a family to live without technology. As a School we were also prominent at a very successful British Science Festival, hosted at the University.

This semester has so far seen us celebrate the inaugural lectures of Professor Andrew Howes and Professor Russell Beale with Professor Jeremy Wyatt set to wow us with live robot demonstrations at his lecture later this month.

Our students have also had a busy few months, hosing the 'Brumhack' 24-hour computer challenge in the School and developing plans to launch their own liquid fuelled rocket into space with students from across the College of Engineering and Physical Sciences.

As the end of the first semester in the 2014-15 academic year approaches, I would like to wish you all a pleasant and restful Christmas and I look forward to updating you with the latest news from the School and our students in the Spring Term.

With best wishes,

Professor Jon Rowe
Head of School
Computer Science

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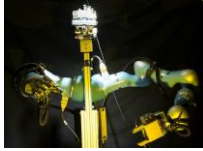
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News from the School of Computer Science

'Boris' the robot can load up dishwasher



Boris, one of the first robots in the world that can dexterously grasp unfamiliar objects, was recently unveiled at the British Science Festival and Professor Jeremy Wyatt and colleagues in the PacMan project want him loading your dishwasher by next April. [Read more.](#)

Food for thought: scientists use social media to expose global eating habits



People in the UK eat their main meal at dinner time, Brazilians eat theirs at lunchtime, and the population of the US tends to eat more throughout the day, according to research by computer scientists at the University of Birmingham in the first study of its kind into eating and drinking habits using social media data. [Read more.](#)

'Brumhack': 24-hour computer challenge



Almost 50 students convened at the University of Birmingham's School of Computer Science on 25-26 October for 24 hours of programming in a brand new competition supported by industry sponsors. [Read more.](#)

Rocketry Society update



The University of Birmingham Rocketry Society (UBRS) is the newest group within the College of Engineering and Physical Sciences. This year, the group are embarking on the significant challenge of launching their own liquid fuelled rocket into the upper atmosphere in a challenge known as Project Chamberlain. Terry Moorton, President of UBRS and Director of Project Chamberlain, [tells us more.](#)

College of Engineering and Physical Sciences at the British Science Festival 2014: Highlights



The College shone at the British Science Festival this year with over 30 contributions to the Festival's main scientific events and workshops and the Young People's Programme. From new robot technology to HS2 and the big bang, our scientists and engineers addressed the big debates and offered interactive activity to engage young people in STEM futures. [See more.](#)

Computer Science as the keystone to a multidisciplinary approach to understanding human behaviour



Professor Andrew Howes delivered his inaugural lecture on 25 September on 'Computational Rationality: Linking Mechanism and Behavior Through Bounded Utility Maximization'. An audio recording of Prof. Howes' lecture is available [here](#) and you can read an interview with him [here](#).

Could you survive a technology and gadget detox?



Professor Russell Beale recently challenged a family from Coventry to spend four days without technology for the BBC's Inside Out programme. [See more.](#)

Giving back



Did you know that College of Engineering and Physical Sciences graduates make up approximately 22% of the University's alumni population and are among the most generous donors to the Circles of Influence campaign? [Read more.](#)

New staff in 2014

There have been a number of appointments in the School this term. [Read a summary of our new staff online here.](#)

Your School needs you...

Would you be able to share some of your time, expertise or connections to help our students to succeed?

We're currently looking for help and support from alumni with the following:

- Work experience placements are invaluable for our students, allowing them to learn about the world of work first-hand and apply their knowledge in a real-life setting. If you work in industry and think you could offer a work experience placement to our undergraduate or postgraduate students, please [email us](#)

There are many ways in which you can give a little back, from providing a career profile, to mentoring a student. Please [email us](#) if you would like to get involved and we'll be happy to talk to you.

Events taking place shortly...

College and School events

EPS Inaugural Lecture Series

Thursday 27 November 2014

[Professor Jeremy Wyatt, Professor of Robotics and Artificial Intelligence, School of Computer Science](#)

Robotics is reaching a tipping point. The intelligence and robustness of robots increased hugely in the past fifteen years. This has allowed them to leave the lab and carefully controlled environments like the factory floor and enter our world. In this public lecture, aimed at the non-specialist, Professor Jeremy Wyatt will explain the achievements of intelligent robotics to date. He will also highlight some of the challenges we must meet to bring robots into our everyday lives. Finally, Professor Wyatt will highlight some of the work carried out at Birmingham over the past decade, particularly breakthroughs in robot planning, robot learning and robot manipulation. The lecture should be accessible to people from age 12 up.

Live robot demonstrations will be included during the evening.

Venue: Leonard Deacon Lecture Theatre, Medical School Building, followed by a drinks reception in the Wolfson Common Room, Edgbaston Campus

For more information on other lectures in the EPS Inaugural Lecture Series please visit

www.birmingham.ac.uk/eps/inaugural

Monday 8 – Wednesday 10 December 2014

[International Conference on High Speed Rail - 8th-10th December 2014](#)

2014 marks the 50th anniversary of the first Shinkansen high speed line in Japan. The University of Birmingham is marking this historic occasion by holding an international conference on High Speed Rail

Venue: Edgbaston Campus

March 2015

[EPS Distinguished Lecture: Prof Dr PE Seeram Ramakrishna](#)

Prof Dr PE Seeram Ramakrishna is the Director of the Center for Nanofibers & Nanotechnology at the National University of Singapore

Venue: EPS College, Edgbaston Campus

Tuesday 9 June 2015

[EPS Societies' Awards Night](#)

Come and celebrate with our student societies as we recognise their fabulous achievements in 2014/15

Venue: The Great Hall, Edgbaston Campus

Saturday 20 June 2015

[EPS Alumni Reunion](#)

As a graduate of one of the nine schools in the College of Engineering & Physical Sciences (EPS), you are invited back to campus for a Summer Reunion to get together with your fellow alumni to celebrate your experiences, accomplishments and friendships at the University of Birmingham

Venue: Edgbaston Campus

University events

25 November – 3 December 2014

[The Edward Cadbury Lectures 2014](#)

The theme for 2014 is 'Is the New Testament Anti-Jewish?' and will consist of a series of lectures given by Professor Amy-Jill Levine, Vanderbilt University USA.

Venue: Edgbaston Campus

Thursday 27 November 2014

[Chaplaincy lecture - A Quaker astronomer reflects on the Universe and us](#)

This year's Chaplaincy Lecture will be given by Dame Jocelyn Bell Burnell, a prominent astrophysicist and Quaker.

Venue: Elgar Concert Hall, Bramall Music Building, Edgbaston Campus

Monday 8 December 2014

[Festive Drinks at the University Carol Service](#)

Organised by the University Chaplaincy and Department of Music, this is a joyful Christmas celebration for alumni, staff, students and families followed by mince pies and mulled wine in the Rotunda at 7.30pm.

Venue: Great Hall, Aston Webb Building, Edgbaston Campus

Thursday 19 February 2015

[Alumni vs Students vs Staff Quiz, 6.30-9.00pm](#)

Put your general knowledge to the test at an informal quiz in Joe's Bar, Guild of Students.

Venue: Joe's Bar, Guild of Students, Edgbaston Campus

Saturday 12 September 2015

[Golden and 50th Anniversary Reunion](#)

Alumni who graduated in 1965 or before are welcome to join for a special reunion lunch

Venue: Edgbaston Campus

Do we have the right details for you?

Please visit your.bham or email alumnioffice@contacts.bham.ac.uk.

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