

Inventique®

The newsletter of Wessex Round Table of Inventors February 2005

Next WRTI meeting WEDNESDAY 9 FEBRUARY

Guest speaker Peter Van Peborgh will give an illustrated lecture on Executable Modelling in room HC 017, Herbert Collins Building, Southampton Institute, commencing at 6.30pm. This will be followed by a Club Clinic on members' innovative ideas.

Map: <http://www.solent.ac.uk/location.stm>

The wwweb we weave

THE INVENTOR of the World Wide Web, Sir Tim Berners-Lee, is to take up a Chair of Computer Science at the University of Southampton's School of Electronics and Computer Science.

"Staff have worked with Tim on the development of the World Wide Web over many years," said Professor Wendy Hall, head of the school. "We are now closely involved with the evolution of the Semantic Web." The Semantic Web allows data to be shared and re-used across applications, enterprises and community boundaries.

Sir Tim – UK Man of the Year 2004 – is a senior research scientist at MIT's Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory, and director of the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C). He developed the World Wide Web whilst working at CERN, the European Particle Physics Laboratory in Geneva.

● <http://www.ecs.soton.ac.uk/>

In a new development for Open Access in the UK, the university also announced that it is to make all its academic and scientific research freely available.

Virtual engineering

SOUTHAMPTON INSTITUTE'S WRTI AGREEMENT

THE FACULTY of Technology at Southampton

Institute has entered into an agreement with the WRTI to provide support and facilities for would-be inventors, writes Professor Richard Penson.

In addition to housing both the Inventors' Academy and the Technology Research Centre, the Faculty of Technology houses three schools: design & manufacture, computing & digital communication, and maritime & coastal studies.

The Inventors Academy is a 'virtual' engineering course which enables WRTI members to enrol as students of the Institute at a reduced cost and make use of its facilities. Benefits include:

- Access to high-technology engineering facilities
- Access to product design and prototyping facilities
- Access to manufacturing facilities
- Access to the Business School
- Intellectual property advice
- Legal and marketing advice
- Business development and technology advice
- Informal access to Institute staff

Additional benefits include access to the Institute's superb technical library and IT centre, a WRTI club



SOUTHAMPTON
INSTITUTE

room with internet access and a professional presentation room for club meetings.

Inventors should note that Intellectual Property Rights always remain with the originator, and that Institute staff privy to confidential information are required to sign the WRTI non-disclosure agreement.

If Institute staff believe that a particular project may qualify for an award or grant, fees payable by the inventor may be held in abeyance until an award is won. ●

● To arrange an informal discussion about joining the Inventors Academy, contact Professor Richard Penson at Southampton Institute.

Richard.penson@solent.ac.uk
www.inventorsacademy.org.uk
www.solent.ac.uk

STOP PRESS

A new category of 'Corporate Member' has been created by the club. Companies large and small are invited to enjoy the benefits of WRTI membership – including the cross-fertilisation of ideas, improved access to the innovation industry and a higher profile community presence – in return for tangible benefits.

● Contact: membership@wrti.co.uk
www.wrti.org.uk

Wessex Round Table of Inventors meet at 6.30pm on the second Wednesday of each month at Southampton Institute, East Park Terrace SO14 0RP

Palexpo discount offer

INVENTORS AT *Geneva Palexpo 2005* – the 33rd international exhibition of inventions, new techniques and products, to be held on 6-10 April – should realise that their products can only be exhibited at one year's show; this ensures that visitors are guaranteed seeing something new every year, writes *Nicola Field*. There are three obvious reasons why exhibiting might be particularly beneficial to inventors and innovative companies.

● **Market Research.** You will receive valuable feedback about your product while the crowds are coming through, not to mention possible medals: if your product should gain one of these prestigious awards, you will be allowed to attach a medal logo to your sales literature – which does wonders for your kudos.

● **Distribution and Sales.** A huge numbers of distributors visit the show (business cards are a must). Most of our Irish Inventors who attended last year's event 'ready to sell' returned with seven or eight significant contacts, and some with as many as twenty. Again, being awarded a medal will certainly enhance the possibilities.

● **Press & PR.** The Geneva show enjoys massive worldwide press coverage, so all exhibitors should take Press Packs with them. The exhibition press office is in constant use, so it is likely that your information will be used later even if it is not picked up immediately. However, remember that Geneva prefers black-and-white 10x8 product photos (although you can include a disk with the hard copy).

The exhibition centre, sited at the airport, is easy to visit. If a stand is booked through me there is a 10% discount for all members of inventors' clubs; 5% for non-members: no discounts apply when stands are booked direct with Geneva. If advice regarding stand equipment, accommodation, transport etc is required, I'd be happy to help.

● *Nicola Field is President of the Inventors Association of Ireland, has been the Irish delegate to Geneva Palexpo for five years and is the UK delegate to this year's exhibition.*

nichyfield@eircom.net

www.inventnetireland.com

www.inventions-geneva.ch

INVENTORATOR Mark Sheahan

Beware The Tin Man

SHOWING PEOPLE YOUR IDEAS CAN SOMETIMES BE EXTREMELY DETRIMENTAL TO YOUR WEALTH...

AFTER WINNING *Invention of the Year 2002* and *Innovator of the Year 2003* in the UK for my Squeezeopen™ device (an easy-open plastic container), I decided to promote my product abroad. There was nothing to lose – or so I thought – so in April 2003 I took a stand at the 31st International Exhibition of Inventions in Geneva.

(I then tried to get some form of DTI support. Surely, they'd want to help an innovative British business, wouldn't they? Well no, apparently not. The Geneva show, you see – the biggest of its kind in the world – is not on their support list...)

Although the show appeared only half full and the other delegates rather distant – coinciding with the Iraq war couldn't have helped – my Squeezeopen™ invention won a gold medal and special accreditation from the international jury.

Follow the yellow brick road...

During the exhibition, a man stepped onto my stand and asked whether my plastic Squeezeopen™ containers could be made in tin? I explained that yes, they could – but tin would not be as good as plastic because it doesn't have the 'material memory' (among other reasons). When I asked for his business card, he simply turned and walked away.

I didn't realise it at the time, but I had just been mugged by The Tin Man – although not the one from *The Wizard of Oz*...

One month later I also exhibited at America's largest trade show, *INPEX 2003* in Pittsburgh. It was a big financial risk (needless to say, this show was not on the DTI's support list either), but the contrast with Geneva was amazing – I couldn't keep Americans off my stand. Squeezeopen™ won two gold medals and picked up the Grand

Prix Award as overall winner.

Meanwhile, I'd licensed a UK company to sell Squeezeopen™ as a personalised desktop marketing aid. This strategy both made a profit and gave it the profile to penetrate mainstream markets. An ugly, dangerous-looking tin container was its only real competition – until recently. Have you guessed what's coming? Yup: someone began selling tin devices constructed on the same principle as my Squeezeopen™.

This tin product hit the markets some six months after the shows – and garnered major awards for supposedly original work. And who accepted those awards? Why, The Tin Man from Geneva, of course.

I gave the manufacturers of the device the opportunity to buy a licence from me, but they just denied all knowledge of Squeezeopen™ and quoted patent and design registrations that had absolutely no relevance – so I am now in a market where my main competitor is using the technology I invented against me, and I can do nothing about it.

It is said that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. Strangely, I don't feel flattered at all. Developing my Squeezeopen™ device has taken years of hard work and sacrifice (not to mention a small fortune), yet my only recourse is to move on and aggressively win market share with a superior product.

I wonder what Dorothy would think about The Tin Man now? ●

© Mark Sheahan 2005

● *Mark Sheahan is a director of the Institute of Patentees & Inventors and vice-chairman of Croydon Round Table of Inventors.*

mark@squeezeopen.com

Tel/fax: 44 (0) 20 8692 8455

www.squeezeopen.com

www.croydonrti.com

UK RESEARCH BOOST

GROWTH IN R&D MASKS UNDERLYING WEAKNESS

THE NUMBER OF British companies whose sales exceed £25m and are devoting more than 4% of turnover to their research budgets rose from 65 in 1999 to 108 last year, according to the R&D Score-board compiled by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI). This innovation effort is dominated by IT, biotech and pharmaceutical companies.

Fully one-third of the companies listed are in the software business – a sector where the UK has long

trailed its rivals – with R&D spending growing to 6.8% of sales. The software industry also features prominently among 200 small companies investing heavily in R&D.

However, the DTI study also shows that Britain still has a way to go in raising its R&D effort if it is to compete with international rivals: on average, only 2.3% of sales in the UK are assigned to research budgets, against 4.9% in the USA.

R&D spending in the UK is led by GlaxoSmithKline with £2.8bn, AstraZeneca (£1.9bn), BAE Systems (1.1bn), Unilever (0.8bn) and BT (£0.3bn). But these figures are far less impressive when placed alongside the top international R&D spenders: Ford (£4.2bn), Pfizer (£4.0bn), DaimlerChrysler (3.9bn), Siemens (3.9bn) and Toyota Motors (£3.5bn). ●

Source: The Times/Business, 25 Oct'04
www.innovation.gov.uk

THE GEORGIA INSTITUTE of Technology claims that a tiny generator they have produced will power future laptops and mobile phones. The micro-engine high-speed generator is expected to measure 3mm across; its prototype is powered by compressed air, can already produce over a Watt of electricity (enough to power a mobile phone) and promises to last 10 times longer than current batteries. The generator comprises a magnet spinning at 100,000rpm over coils created on a silicone chip.

● <http://masl.to/?R28D317E9>

Winchester's art, science and music festival 2005

AN EMPHASIS ON integrating performance with discussion and demonstration informs Winchester's *Religion, Art and the Brain* festival next month, which brings together an eclectic mix of Tashi Lhunpo Tibetan Monks, Sufi ritual dancers, scientists, artists and academics to explore the evolution, experience and expression of the religious impulse – what triggers the brain to produce it, how does it do it, and why?

The festival opens on 10th March with a world premiere concert by international composer John Tavener in Winchester Cathedral. Other highlights include baroque dancers and a performance of Bach's *Chaconne* by Paul Robertson (ex-lead violinist of the Medici String Quartet). Paul Bahn unpicks the

archeological record in ice age art, Paul Robertson researches Bach's spiritual world through his music's hidden mathematical codes, behavioural neuroscientist Todd Murphy explores the roots of the religious impulse, and educationalist Guy Claxton outlines the nature of the egoless state.

Psychologist Richard Gregory explains the process of perception in the human mind, while festival director Garry Kennard explores the relationship between architecture and the self.

In *Transcendence and Ecstasy*, neuroscientist (and Zen Bhuddist) Susan Blackmore investigates the evolutionary base for the transmission of ideas, while pharmacologist Ciaran Regan explains the power of drugs to alter the mind, and Bishop Richard Harries explores the iconography of the Passion in art. ●

Religion, Art and the Brain: Exploring the religious experience through art & science
10-13 March 2005 at the Theatre Royal, Winchester and Winchester Cathedral
Tickets: £8-£10 per session, £30 per day Theatre Royal Box Office Tel: 01962 840440
www.artandmind.org

WRTI UPDATE

FROM HUMBLE BEGINNINGS, membership of Wessex Round Table of Inventors is growing steadily and currently stands at around 60 active participants (not including those who have left to form clubs or companies elsewhere), writes WRTI Webmaster Mike Overy. A number of service providers have joined our club under its Associate Member category.

The WRTI meets on the second Wednesday of each month at the Southampton Institute, where several members have already made use of the extensive engineering facilities to prototype and develop inventions into fully-fledged innovative products for the marketplace (a number of exciting new devices are currently progressing at the Institute).

In addition to inviting guest speakers to present illustrated lectures about innovative products and processes to members, the club also organises group visits to companies and sites, and initiates inventors' clinics and workshops at its monthly meetings – all of which provide excellent networking opportunities for those wishing to meet like-minded individuals.

THE WRTI WEBSITE

www.wrti.org.uk now comprises one of the most comprehensive sources of web-based information for inventors. It receives over 1,000 page-views per month, with the Home, Inventors' Links, Inventors' Clubs and Newsletter pages being the most frequently visited. The constantly-updated *Inventors' Links* page is one of the most extensive of its type and contains over 200 linked sites, all carefully checked for relevance and usefulness: a visit is highly recommended. (Another successful forum for inventors is the USA-based www.inventored.org. It would clearly be beneficial if something similar could be created for the UK.)

The free club newsletter has now passed its 50th edition (the last 20 of which have been in its e-mailed *Inventique* format). Circulation has grown to around 2,000 inventors and clubs, SMEs, R&D centres, universities, government departments and innovation agencies, with a significant international readership. *Inventique* also now enjoys an automated web-based subscription and distribution process, kindly created for WRTI by Baylis Brands (www.baylisbrands.com).

One thing I would personally like to see established within the club is a scheme where individual inventors have a 'mentor' or 'buddy' to talk to in person (or by telephone or e-mail): a mechanism to 'match' people with overlapping knowledge and skills in this way would be highly desirable.

If you have suggestions on ways to improve the club, newsletter or website, or want someone to bounce your ideas off, please get in touch.

● webmaster@wrti.co.uk Tel: 01420 562378

"When you make the commitment, everything changes..." – David Nicholas

www.wrti.org.uk

THE INVENTORS WEBSITE

CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE Eureka magazine

The truth is out there...

UNIVERSAL VOICE FOR A GALAXY OF DESIGNERS

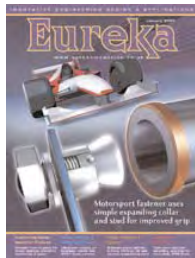
WRITTEN AND read by design engineers, Eureka is the leading mechanical engineering design magazine in the UK, presenting informed, objective reports on

product innovation and including original technical illustrations.

With the stated aim of discovering and disseminating new ideas and technologies for engineers to use in current and future designs, Eureka's website and magazine specialise in identifying innovations which could potentially be transferred across sectors (including military developments benefiting the commercial sector) and explain why they make a difference.

Eureka also aims to be the first to identify and analyse design breakthroughs in the UK industry.

Engineering designers play a decisive role in specifying materials



and component suppliers to be used in OEM manufacturing, often a year or more before production orders are placed – the point being that if you are not on the design specification or

preferred supplier list, you will probably not be in the product when it is launched.

Achieving lift-off

The Census of UK Engineering Design undertaken by Findlay (publishers of Eureka) covers 33,462 individually-researched UK manufacturing and related sites: 13,637 of these include engineering design activity, spread across 16,432 design departments employing 106,353 designers.

And only Eureka magazine knows where they all are...

editorial@eurekamagazine.co.uk
www.eureka.findlay.co.uk

THE OXFORD UNIVERSITY BUSINESS PLAN COMPETITION 2005 was launched at the Saïd Business School on 25 January. The competition is the largest of its kind in the UK and invites entries from entrepreneurs with ideas for new ventures based on science, technology and design. Judges award the £20,000 Apax Prize to the most fundable plan.

● Contact: jasmin.levy@sbs.ox.ac.uk Tel: 01865 288845

www.science-enterprise.ox.ac.uk

WEBSITE OF THE MONTH

www.patents4innovation.org

If you are involved in any software-related innovations or have an interest in the debate on software and patenting in Europe, this site is both illuminating and useful.

Website supplied by Tim Frain.

MEMBER SERVICES

Entries in this column are free to WRTI Members, who should mail their details to the Editor (see panel at foot of page).

CHARTERED MARKETER and electrical engineer will sell for you for a mix of low-cost retainer and results achieved. CV and references available.

Contact: Alan Finn, 01420 80642

alan.finn@btconnect.com

CONCEPT TO MANUFACTURE.

Help with presentation, prototyping, technical & manufacturing issues.

Contact: Alastair Swanwick,

Innovate Product Design, 01722 410 295

alastair@innovate-design.co.uk

ELECTRONICS CONSULTANT with 30 years experience, specialising in wireless and positioning technologies.

Contact: Mike Overy, 01420 562378

mike.overy@zen.co.uk

ELECTRONICS ENGINEER Concept to proof of principle. Ex-scientific civil servant. Own laboratory.

Contact: Mike Wright, 01428 722833

mike@fwright21.freeserve.co.uk

FREELANCE EDITOR/DESIGNER

Over 30 years book, magazine and partwork experience. Contact: Frank Landamore, 01273 475 184

franklandamore@hotmail.com

WRTI ACTING CHAIRMAN Richard Little chairman@wrti.co.uk

ACTING DEPUTY CHAIRMAN Professor Richard Penson deputychairman@wrti.co.uk SECRETARY David Milward secretary@wrti.co.uk

TREASURER Mike Overy treasurer@wrti.co.uk MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY Peter Van Peborgh membership@wrti.co.uk

INVENTIQUE EDITOR Frank Landamore editor@wrti.co.uk

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Edited, designed and produced by Frank Landamore, 42 South Way, Lewes BN7 1LY on behalf of WRTI.