

The INSTITUTION of ANALYSTS & PROGRAMMERS

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INSTITUTION NEWSLETTER

March 1991

Spring has arrived particularly quickly this year. Only yesterday it seems we were packing diaries and I was busy drafting my Christmas message. Now the daffodils are out and here I am again, bent over my keyboard in an effort to concentrate all the activities of the past three months onto two sheets of A4.

Many members will have noticed that the Institution has recently stepped up its advertising in the specialised press. The aims are to increase the membership and to raise the public profile of the Institution. This has brought in a large number of enquiries from potential members, and many questions regarding the Institution's entrance requirements, particularly those concerning educational qualifications.

This Institution is seeking to recruit the most talented and experienced analysts and programmers in the computer industry. While we try to encourage younger people, and in fact all those regardless of age who aspire to enter the profession, the Institution's corporate grades are reserved for those who are already established near the top of the professional tree.

In order to reach this point one needs a good basic education, a knowledge of mathematics and an understanding of the theories behind computing. But above all one needs the ability to actually do the job that can only be gained from hands-on experience at the keyboard.

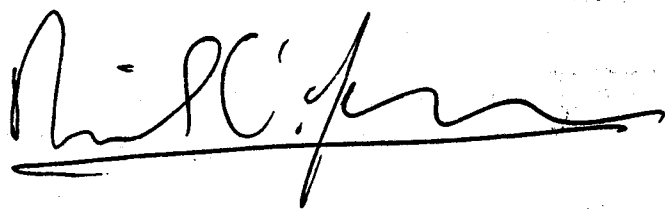
I am often asked if a Graduateship in the Institution is equivalent to a degree or HNC, and whether it is recognised by other professional bodies or the educational establishment. The answer is that though a lot of people in the computing world do recognise the value of the Graduateship, it is not the same thing as a more generalised educational qualification. The Institution is not primarily in the education business - we are in the analysis and programming business. We want to make sure that those who reach Graduate status have learned enough of the theory to take proper advantage of the period of practical training that must follow. This is a rather specialised aim, and does not bear direct comparison with the examinations set by other bodies with different aims in mind.

Because the Institution is still relatively small and our members are spread all over the world, it is not practical for us to set our own examinations. We have to rely on courses and examinations run by the established educational bodies. Our problem has been that there is a wide variation in the content and quality of these courses and examinations, and we have had no systematic way of determining whether or not they are adequate to meet the Institution's very special requirements.

We have therefore decided that instead of trying to approve specific courses, training colleges and examinations on an individual basis as in the past, we will develop a core curriculum, indicating what the Institution believes students will need to learn if they are to reach Graduate standard. Colleges which offer courses covering the core curriculum, and ensure that students are properly taught and examined, will be able to apply for accreditation by the Institution.

I do not anticipate that any of the larger and more established training organisations in the UK will have much difficulty in meeting these requirements. Where I think they will be of most value is overseas. In many parts of the world, particularly those which are undergoing rapid development, good quality training is hard to come by, but students are keen and there is a desperate need for good analysts and good computer programmers. In these places I believe the Institution should give a lead, encouraging both students and colleges to aspire to high standards, while accepting that there are sometimes practical difficulties to be overcome.

In the coming months I intend to consult with our many friends in universities, technical colleges and private training organisations, in order to obtain a consensus view on what our students need to know, and what it is practical to teach. I am also most anxious to obtain the views of members established in the profession on what it is really important to know and what, perhaps, can be safely forgotten. The whole purpose of the Institution is to promote excellence in the computing profession and to thereby raise its status and the status of our members in the eyes of the public. Our approach to educational matters must support this aim.



MICHAEL C. RYAN Director General

NEW DIRECTORY OF MEMBERS

You will be pleased to hear that work is under way on the new Directory of Members. We are in discussions with the printers, and it is intended that the Directory will be mailed to you in July.

The format will be broadly similar to the 1989 edition. There will be a main listing of the total membership alphabetically and in grades. This will be followed by a second geographical listing. The main change proposed is to greatly enlarge and improve the "Consultants" section by allowing more space for each consultant to describe the services he has to offer.

Details of all paid up members of the Institution will be printed in the Directory. Your name and address will appear the same as on the envelopes we send you. If this is not right or you have some alternative instructions, please make sure you put them on the pink Questionnaire form and return it to us. We will not have time to go back through each individual member's file searching for instructions that may have been given in the past; in any case we need up to date instructions if we are to ensure that the new Directory is really current.

The Questionnaire is in two parts. The first page is intended to provide or check the information we will be printing in the Directory itself. Thus this form should be completed and returned to the Institution offices not later than 15th May, 1991, in order that we have time to recheck the material before it has to go to the printers.

The second page seeks information that we can add to our database, enabling us to locate members with particular skills and/or experience. This will provide a new service for members. We receive many calls for assistance from prospective employers, members of the public and even from members of the Institution who have got stuck on a particular problem. Often we know we have the right man buried somewhere in the filing system, but have no way of locating him. Hopefully with the expanded database we will be able to dig him out.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Many members seem unaware that subscriptions were increased in July 1989, the first increase for several years. This has not caused problems for those members who pay by cheque (mainly those overseas) because we always send reminders stating the current rates. But many of those who pay by standing order have not yet brought them up to date.

For a number of reasons it is not my policy to pursue underpayments for the period before I took up my duties with the Institution. But I would appreciate it if members who pay by standing order would now check that their banks have instructions to make future payments at the correct rate. Current subscription rates for those who pay by standing order are:

Companion:	£34.00
Fellow:	£25.00
Member:	£22.50
Licentiate:	£21.00
Graduate:	£19.50
Associate Member:	£17.50

With an eye to the future we are negotiating with the bank about introducing a system of direct debits which will gradually take the place of standing orders. This will be cheaper and more convenient to operate both for the Institution and for individual members. It will allow us to adjust subscriptions annually in line with inflation, and avoid the need for the occasional big increases with all their attendant disruption. More news of this later.

Those of you who pay by cheque might bear in mind that when we receive a payment we do need to know who it is from. We not infrequently receive cheques through the post with no indication as to the sender. Members and their foreign banks have been known to pay money directly into our account. In either case we know someone has paid: the question is who.

TAX RELIEF

Members enquire from time to time as to whether their annual Subscription to the Institution is allowable against UK income tax.

In principle subscriptions to professional associations such as the IAP are allowable against tax, provided the organisation is recognised and appears on an approved list maintained by the Inland Revenue. The Institution first approached the Inland Revenue on this matter in 1986. At the time there was some question as to whether all of the Institution's fringe activities were strictly permissible in a tax-exempt organisation. In other words, tax relief might only be allowable on part of the subscription. In view of the fact that subscriptions were so low, and the most members could hope to save was about £2 per year, my predecessor decided not to pursue the negotiations at that time.

Recently we have made a fresh approach to the Inland Revenue, and I am now hopeful that the Institution will soon be officially recognised so that we can get full tax relief on subscriptions. The activities which worried the Revenue in 1986 are now an insignificant part of the Institution's total activity, and I am hopeful that we will be able to persuade the authorities to ignore them.

SOFTWARE LIBRARY

We are considering the practicality of setting up a software library. This would provide a new service for members of the Institution. From time to time most members create personal software to overcome particular problems they meet in the course of their work. While most of these packages have no serious commercial potential, they might be very useful to other people if only they knew about them.

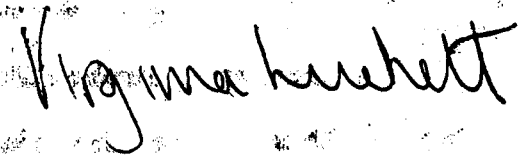
Members would be able to register software with the Institution, and details would be circulated to the membership with the newsletters. Lists of current software (with brief technical descriptions and prices where appropriate) would also be available to members and non-members enquiring at the Institution offices.

The Institution's role would be merely that of an agent, putting buyer and seller in contact with one another. Details are still to be finalised, but it would be useful to know what members think about the value of such a scheme.

CONFERENCE 1992

At Christmas I told you about our ideas for an IAP conference. Some people seemed to miss reading this part of the newsletter, but others responded with enthusiasm. We have had some initial offers to present papers which sound very intriguing. Terence Bates, who advises the Computer Crime Unit of Scotland Yard on computer viruses has offered to share some of his secrets with us. Brian Lehaney is enthusiastic to demonstrate the application of simulation software with case studies; Stephen Jolley is keen to tell us all about the latest developments in CAD. We have also had offers and suggestions from Cdr. John Locke and a number of other members. A lot of people have enquired about the conference and shown an interest in it.

The problem is that we need a lot more firm offers of papers if we are to devise a practical programme. We have to be able to build the presentation around a central theme. The theme has to be one which will attract an audience. From the handful of offers we have received so far no clear theme has emerged, so we need more offers if the scheme is to get off the ground. In the meantime I would like to stress how much we appreciate the interest shown by those members who have written to us with offers and suggestions. Everything is on file and we will be contacting you as soon as we are in a position to move forward with plans for the conference.


VIRGINIA L. LUCKETT

Secretary