Names on the Page

XRDS, Networking and You

If you've subscribed to this magazine for a while, you've probably noticed *XRDS* has shifted to highly thematic issues. The reason for this is two-fold: we hope by the time you put down the magazine, you'll be able to 1) speak intelligently about the field and 2) know the movers and shakers.

Although you probably speed through the articles not paying much attention to the authors, they're worth a second look. You'd be surprised how often you bump into these people in airport terminals, conference hotels, or wandering the halls of your university following a guest lecture or faculty summit. If you strike up a conversation by asking, "So, what do you work on?" it can be a real killer and missed opportunity. That's like bumping into Steve Jobs and asking, "So, are you, like, into technology?"

Fumbled Opportunities

I remember stumbling into a dedication event during my second week at Carnegie Mellon University and casually being introduced to a professor (whom I had never heard of) named Randy Pausch. I shook his hand, said hello, and meandered over to the free food, not thinking much of it. Then people started filing out to go to some "last lecture" he was giving. I had some free time and figured I'd tag along with the crowd.

A few minutes later, and whoa.

If you don't yet know the name Randy Pausch or what his Last Lecture was all about, it really is worth an hour of your time. The lecture is very easy to find on YouTube.

This sort of bumping into important people without knowing at the time why they are significant to me and my own work has happened a few too many times for comfort. Another serendipitous encounter happened when I was giving a presentation on tricky progress bar manipulations, only to

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discover the person who wrote the seminal paper on progress bars, Brad Myers, was sitting in the audience.

Another time, in search of some travel advice before departing for Guatemala, I ended up conversing with Luis von Ahn, who hails from the country. Good thing I knew who he was before totally embarrassing myself! I was subsequently able to twist his arm for an interview in this issue; see page 49.

When we brainstorm themes for future issues, we spend a lot of time thinking about not only what topics are interesting, but also who the interesting people are in that field. That's whom we contact first and ultimately end up as the authors of the articles you read in *XRDS*. These are also the people you should contact for research projects, internships, post docs, and so on. We've been very fortunate to have top researchers contribute to every issue. Maintaining a high quality bar of authors—people you would actually want to meet—is one of our primary missions in serving you, our readers.

XRDS is Thinking Green

Speaking of brainstorming themes, we've nailed down the next two issues.

The first is a comprehensive look at where banking, currency, finance, trade, and related items are heading. Money and the exchange of money is one of the oldest technologies we continue to use today—more than 5,000 years old—and practically on a daily basis. Computing technology has already clearly revolutionized how we exchange money, but we're set for another leap forward.

Following that, we're tackling green (environmental) technologies: intelligent power grids, electric vehicles, innovative recycling processes, robotic street cleaners... All these technologies rely on scores of computer scientists to become reality. So although it's a little off the beaten CS track, it's really relevant, and it's a rapidly growing sector (if you're thinking about jobs). It's also a feel-good industry, where you can innovate, improve people's lives, and help mother earth.

If you've got ideas for articles or top-notch contacts you want us to connect with, shoot us an email at xrds@acm.org. This really is your magazine, and we like to follow a *crowd-sourced approach*, which you'll be reading all about in this issue.

Chris Harrison

Chris Harrison, editor-in-chief is a PhD student in the Human-Computer Interaction Institute at Carnegie Mellon University.

He completed his BA and MS in computer science at New York University in 2005. Harrison is a recipient of a Microsoft Research PhD Fellowship. Before coming to CMU, Harrison worked at IBM Research and AT&T Labs. He has since worked at Microsoft Research and Disney Imagineering. Currently, he is investigating how to make small devices “big” through novel sensing technologies and interaction techniques.