

Editorial Comment: Observations on preparing this issue

Lucas Venter

SAP/Meraka Unit for Technology Development, Pretoria, and University of South Africa

1. PROF DEWALD ROODE

On page 2 of this issue, the reader will find a tribute to Prof Dewald Roode, received from the Department of Informatics at UP.

In the winter of 2009 I received a request to publish a special issue of SACJ as a tribute to Prof Roode, which I immediately accepted. Prof Roode had been associated with this journal for a long time, but due to his illness felt that he should pass his responsibilities on to someone else.

The tribute published on page 2 describes his long career and contribution to the subject field in detail. This issue of SACJ contains one paper that was co-authored by him, as well as at least one more paper that was refereed by him. These papers serve to emphasise his tremendous dedication to advancing his subject field.

2. THE CS AND IS FIELD IN SOUTH AFRICA

In the last two issues of SACJ, we have reported on the passing away of Dewald Roode and Andries van der Walt, two pioneers of Computer Science and Information Systems as academic subjects in this country. Hence, it seems fitting to reflect on the status of these fields, as is being done in this issue. On page 67, an analysis of papers published in SACJ is made by Paula Kotze and Alta van der Merwe. Their conclusions show that research in CS/IS in South Africa, as reflected in journal publications, seems to be growing. Furthermore, they find no particular bias of SACJ to any specific research area.

On the other hand, Stefan Gruner made an analysis of papers presented at SAICSIT. He confesses that his analysis is considerably less thorough. However, he reports a decline in papers of a technical nature presented at SAICSIT, and then makes some recommendations to the committee organising SAICSIT.

These two papers could lead to an interesting discussion on the nature of our subject field.

3. THE FUTURE OF SACJ

The AGM of SAICSIT decided that the next issue of SACJ will be published online as an open-source journal. This will necessarily lead to a wider distribution of SACJ, and will cut down on the cost of producing the journal. This decision will surely be welcomed by all SAICSIT members. At the same time, a complete revamp of the SAICSIT web site was also accepted. This site will contain a link to the online version of SACJ.

However, the journal will still need to be typeset in some standard format. The existing template(s) are not used extensively. Hence, typesetting SACJ has in the past been one of the most time-consuming aspects of producing the journal, and remains so. With electronic publishing come more possibilities, but also greater challenges to produce the journal. A new submission template will be developed and placed on the SAICSIT (and SACJ) web sites before the next issue will be published in July 2010. Suggestions on the format of such a template are welcome.

A tribute to Prof Dewald Roode

Prof Dewald Roode passed away on Sunday 27 September 2009. A tribute will be held on Monday 5 October at 18:00 in the Serengeti Room, Economic and Management Sciences building, Hatfield Campus, University of Pretoria.

Prof Roode was appointed in 1988 to head the new Department of Informatics at the University, while continuing on a part-time basis with consultancy work. Within five years of starting the Department, the Department of Informatics at the University of Pretoria was internationally known, and welcomed a regular stream of international visitors who contributed tremendously to the continued development of the Department.

In 1995 Prof Roode was requested by the University of Pretoria management to accept, in conjunction with his job as Head of the Department of Informatics, the job as Director of Information Technology (responsible for all computer and network services to the entire university). He handled these two positions concurrently until 1998, when a new academic dispensation was established with the creation of the School of Information Technology, incorporating the three academic departments of Computer Science, Informatics and Information Science. He became its first Director in March 1998.

During his tenure as Director of the School, he was instrumental in the development of two new degree courses – the Bachelor of Information Technology (a four year degree course) and the Masters of Information Technology. A PhD (IT) was also introduced. These courses have been phenomenally successful, and achieved the objective of integrating the activities of the three constituting departments.

At the end of 2001 Dewald Roode decided to continue with his academic work at different universities, and to devote more time to high-level training of individuals in the computer industry who have not had the opportunity to receive formal tertiary education. This decision meant that he had to exercise an early retirement option at the University of Pretoria.

During his retirement, he has been busier than ever. Apart from his continued academic involvement with various universities, he completed a six year term in 2007 as chair of IFIP's Technical Committee 8 on Information Systems, and was a member of the Steering Committee of IFIP's World Information Technology Forum in Lithuania in 2003 and in Botswana in 2005. In 2008, he developed and presented a series of 14 seminars on Research and Innovation Core Skills for the South African Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR). Prof Roode supervised more than 30 doctoral students to completion.

In 2008 Prof Dewald Roode was honoured by the International Federation for Information Processing (IFIP) with the highest accolade for service, the Silver Core. He also received the LEO award from the International Association of Information Systems in December 2008. The purpose of the LEO Award is to recognize truly outstanding individuals in the Information Systems community, both academics and practitioners, who have made exceptional contributions to research in and/or the practice of Information Systems.

Prof Roode was a true scholar who contributed enormously to his discipline. He will be missed by colleagues and friends.