Rideshare Anyone?
Velda L. Thomas

"Alternative transportation methods will reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality. We'll all save time and money, reduce stress, be provided with more opportunities to exercise (e.g., walking, biking), and have more free time. Carpools bring people together, and they're good for us!" We've heard it all before but let's hear it again.

Our ISI Librarian, Linda Mizushima, serves as the Institute’s Rideshare Coordinator. She is also our liaison to USC’s Transportation Services Office. On August 27, 1996, Linda coordinated a vanpool meeting at ISI. Tracy McConnell, a representative from Vanpool Services, Inc. (VPSI), a 20-year-old professional vanpool-managing organization and the nation’s leading vanpool provider, came out and explained how their program works. She also brought an 8-passenger luxury van with her. The company offers a variety of vehicles as well as different leasing arrangements. Quite a few ISIers were present and lots of our questions were answered. Since then, there has been a strategy meeting for a van coming from south of ISI. Unfortunately, there weren't enough people present to start a vanpool. Though a minimum of 7 people is considered a vanpool, we're shooting for 8 to get maximum value out of the van, if we lease it. These vehicles, by the way, which are owned by VPSI, are in no way connected to the USC-owned cardinal and gold vans.

"Close to 50% of ISI staff use alternative transportation, and that’s pretty good, but we still need to try to make it better. The highest concentration of people come from the following areas: USC, Santa Monica, Culver City, Venice, Marina del Rey, Playa del Rey, El Segundo, Manhattan Beach, Hermosa Beach and Redondo Beach. USC and the area surrounding ISI are the highest," says Linda. While the average ISler travels a distance of 8.58 miles one way, USC's average main campus commuter and our counterparts at UCLA travel almost twice that distance, coming from cities all over Los Angeles County and beyond.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>USC/ISI</th>
<th>USC’s Main Campus</th>
<th>UCLA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drive Alone</td>
<td>50.26%</td>
<td>53.00%</td>
<td>61.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpool</td>
<td>32.12%</td>
<td>18.00%</td>
<td>14.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanpool</td>
<td>0.52%</td>
<td>3.00%</td>
<td>5.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Trans.</td>
<td>5.70%</td>
<td>4.00%</td>
<td>8.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bike</td>
<td>9.33%</td>
<td>7.00%</td>
<td>2.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walk</td>
<td>2.07%</td>
<td>12.00%</td>
<td>7.00%</td>
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<tr>
<td>No. Surveyed</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>7,500</td>
<td>1,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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If It’s Convenient, They Will Come.

It's been my finding that folks are willing to participate in things that are convenient. Otherwise, the effort just isn't worth the investment of our time. Carpools and vanpools can really be a challenge to get started. There must be good planning, which includes everything from coordinating work schedules and agreeing upon a decent radio station, to selecting reasonable pick-up and drop-off points. My current contribution to the cause of alternative transportation includes carpooling with my mom once a week and maintaining a 4-day work schedule. My hope, however, is that I can become involved with a vanpool in the not-too-distant future.

Here are a few tips from Riderlink, a transportation options information resource, to help you enjoy a smooth commute via carpool or vanpool:

- Decide who will drive when. Give everyone a list with each pooler's phone number.
- Choose a convenient meeting place. Either pick up each pooler at home, or meet in a central location like a Park and Ride lot.
- Set up a schedule — and stick to it. Make sure everyone knows the schedule and is notified of changes. Decide how long you will wait for tardy riders.
- Establish a fare. If you share the driving equally, you don’t need to exchange money. If one person drives, you can simply agree on a mutually acceptable fare, or you can calculate what to charge riders by dividing the round trip mileage times cost per mile by the number of riders.
- Establish guidelines on smoking, eating, drinking, playing the radio or tape deck, and seating arrangements.
- Make sure your vehicle is in good repair and has enough gas.
- Check your insurance coverage. Some policies offer rate reductions for ridesharing.
- Ask about preferential parking.

If you’re interested in finding out about all of your commuter options, this week is California Rideshare Week (October 7-11). This will be a great opportunity to gather information. Also, another strategy meeting is planned for people coming to ISI from the north east direction, which includes USC, Pasadena, etc. The meeting will be in the 11th floor small conference room, from 2:00 - 2:30 P.M., Wednesday, October 9, 1996.

Special thanks to: Linda Mizushima, USC / ISI Librarian and Rideshare Coordinator, for providing all of the USC / ISI data; Pat Williams from USC’s Transportation Services Office, who gave me the 1996 South Coast Air Quality Management District calculations for the University Park Campus; and Gordon Anderson, Compliance Coordinator at UCLA, for supplying the statistics for UCLA.

New Faces in ISD

We are pleased to announce ISD’s new arrivals:

- **Lars Asker** is a visitor from JPL, working with Steve Minton on the Grammar Induction project.
- **Magdelena Romera** is a visiting Graduate Student. She’s currently working with Ed Hovy and the Machine Translation Group.
- **Paco Saiz** is a Post Doc from Spain. He will be working with Pedro Szekely on the MASTERMIND project.
- **Bonnie Glover Stalls** is an Arabic expert, working with Ed Hovy and the Machine Translation Group.
- **Xuejun (Daniel) Wang** a PhD student from Beijing, China. He’s working on the DataCrystal project with Wei-Min Shen.
- **Leo Wanner** is visiting from Germany, working with Ed Hovy and the Machine Translation Group.

Welcome one and all!

*We look forward to hearing from each of them more personally in the next issue.*

Getting to Know ISD

The **IMS Project**

In an effort to get to know each other better we will be highlighting members of the ISD staff in each newsletter. This month we are highlighting the members of the SIMS Project.

The problem SIMS (Single Interface to Multiple Sources) addresses is that locating, retrieving and combining information from distributed sources is difficult. Even if one knows where all information that may be relevant to one’s task is stored —
and that is not always the case — different information sources organize their data differently, require different access and query languages, and use different formats for what is stored in them. Recent government initiatives in information infrastructure and digital libraries promise to make even greater amounts of information available over electronic networks. The problem of providing access to heterogeneous, distributed information sources must be solved to take advantage of the NII — or even just to make full use of the numerous databases that already exist within even moderately large organizations. Today, people build specialized applications to handle their specific tasks because general tools for integrating and processing information do not exist.

SIMS attempts to solve this problem in its most general form. SIMS is an information mediator that provides an interface between human users or application programs and the information sources to which they need access, automatically locating and integrating information from distributed, heterogeneous sources. SIMS accepts queries in a uniform language (Loom), independent of the distribution of information over sources, of the various query languages, the location of information sources, etc. SIMS determines which data sources to use, how to obtain the desired information, how and where to temporarily store and manipulate data, and how to maintain an acceptable level of efficiency in performing its task.

The SIMS project has existed at ISI since 1987(!) under several guises. It was originally conceived of as a user interface project, later became some sort of software engineering project, and only in 1989/90 took on the flavor it has today. In 1989 only Yigal, Chee and (briefly) Yan Tian — for those who know her — were working on SIMS. Today we have a considerably larger group. Bios of all current project members appear in this issue.

Together with its expansion in size, the SIMS project has expanded in the number of relevant research issues it has pursued and in the areas to which prototypes have been applied. We currently conduct research on the basic planning and search required to construct query plans, on optimization of plans, suitable representation and query languages, automating the modeling of information sources, representing Web pages as information sources, and more. The application areas we are working in or have worked in the past include transportation planning, medical trauma care, genetics counseling, military logistics and electronic commerce. Further information about SIMS, including copies of all our recent publications, can be obtained by consulting the project homepage http://www.isi.edu/sims, and (naturally) by talking to project members.

Yigal Arens

Looking over the biographies that people have submitted to the InSiDer in past issues, it appears that this opportunity is supposed to be used to provide ISDers with the kind of information about one that would not be found in a professional resume.

A full description of my non-professional life would take up way too much space, naturally, and would mostly be boring. So I've decided to do the following. I'll list a few things about myself. Anyone who finds in the list something that DOES look interesting is welcome to drop by and ask to hear the full story behind it.

Before I start, I should mention just a few "professional" facts concerning my association with ISI that some may not be aware of. To wit:

I occasionally consulted for natural language projects at ISI between 1984 and 1987.

• I came to work at ISI full time on a user interface project (Integrated Interfaces) in 1987.

• I took over the SIMS project in 1989.

Anyway, here's the list, in no particular order

I have been threatened by an agent of a secret service.

• My wife is a poet.

• I have spent some time in jail, on two occasions.

I have a daughter, who is older than you'd think.

• Someone later imprisoned for 17 years decided not to recruit me to his cause because he thought I "wasn't serious enough."

• I am described, at some length, in two books.

• I was once shot at (this is stretching it a bit, because those shooting didn't know it was me, but still).

• I once crammed for a psychiatric exam, and failed (or passed, depending on how you look at it).

• I have been decorated for fighting in a war that I had absolutely nothing to do with.
I once received an academic degree by mistake.
During my reluctant military service I was twice promoted in rank without being told.
I have acted parts in a human and (separately) puppet theater.
My family tree is full of people who married their cousins.

(All facts mentioned above are true. Any similarity in style to another bio in this issue is purely coincidental...)

Craig Knoblock
I first became interested in the topic of Artificial Intelligence when I took a course from Alan Robinson (the inventor of resolution theorem proving) in the early 1980s as an undergrad at Syracuse University. That interest spurred me on to graduate school at CMU where I spent another seven years pondering the problems of automatic planning and machine learning. After graduate school I came to ISI and for the last five years I have been working on the problem of building intelligent information mediators. While we have certainly been successful in building information mediators, one cannot help but wonder whether our systems are truly intelligent.

Fearing that my research trajectory might not lead to actually building an intelligent system in my lifetime, a few years ago I began working on another project that took a completely different approach. I did this work in my spare time -- nights, weekends, etc. Initially, the project started out small, but has grown to fill all of my waking hours. His name is Alex. Naturally, my wife, Claire, also deserves some credit for the success of this project.

It seems to me that there is a great deal we can learn about building intelligent systems from watching one in the making. For one thing, why do we spend so much time worrying about matching human intelligence? Alex went through a stage where he thought he was a dog. He would crawl around the house after our dog, Cory, saying "bow wow wow." He would lay on his back and kick his legs in the air imitating the dog. Occasionally he would even bite the dog. I knew that he had completely mastered dog intelligence when one day he leaned up against the back fence and barked at the neighbor's dog. Fortunately, that was just a stage.

Another area where there is a great deal we can learn is in natural language processing. First, why do we spend so much effort on language generation when toddlers can get by with a single word, "No?" For emphasis, "No, no!" is very effective. It also turns out that if you say it with a rising intonation, it is too cute to contradict. Another thing is that the use of grammar appears to be an unnecessary extravagance. If you need something, then repeating the same word over and over, louder and louder, while the other parties in the room frantically try to interpret your needs is highly effective as a means of communication. The same things goes for these unnecessarily long words. For example, "avocado" is much more succinctly stated as "ca." And while the word "car" might also map to the same abbreviation, one can usually figure it out based on context. After all, how often do you use the word car and avocado in the same sentence?

It turns out that general-purpose vision in AI systems may not be as important as special-purpose recognizers. For example, Alex has developed a finely tuned hose recognition system. As a result of this, I discovered that there are a lot more hoses in the world than I ever imagined. Not only can he find a hose at just about every house we pass, but each one needs to be carefully examined (although I'm not sure yet what we are checking them for).

More recently we have come to suspect that Alex may not actually be from this planet. It is not unusual for Alex to run around the house shouting out the name of his home planet, "Bu," while trying to locate it in the sky. Actually, it turns out that "Bu" is not a planet, but the moon. On one recent occasion Alex was standing at the kitchen window in the middle of the day frantically yelling "Bu" over and over. We finally realized he had made contact. Sure enough, he had found the moon in broad daylight. Claire thinks he might be using some kind of homing beacon. I think that when we can use SIMS to locate hoses on the moon we can then say we have an intelligent information mediator.

Wei-Min Shen
I was born in JinHua (near ShanHai), China, on December 25, some years ago. As a child, I did not know what Christmas was (who cares about those foreigners anyway, they are all Paper Ti-
Andrew Philpot

Intro: Hello, my name is Andrew Philpot. I have been at ISI about a year. I was hired last year about this time onto the SIMS project. But my real purpose here at ISI is to create confusion and dread among ISD staff by having a similar appearance and adjacent office to Jeff Rickel.

ISI: I work on the SIMS project, mainly on applying SIMS in several logistics domains. I've also worked on installing and maintaining Oracle databases, adding new modules to the SIMS system, and porting SIMS to the PC.

History: I was born in Columbus, Ohio but quickly acted to connect the situation, as my family moved to west-central North Carolina during my late toddlerhood. By at least one definition, I'm on the cusp between the baby boom generation and the generation Xers. I think this entitles me to be greedy and ambitious while feeling aimless and angst-ridden about the whole thing. Due to a stroke of (mis)fortune, I did not attend kindergarten, instead taking a one-year sabbatical between nursery school and "the real thing." I grew up in a rural area (not "small town"; rural means dirt roads, 1+ hour school bus rides, 1/4 inch thick phone books -- small towns have named streets and even running water so I am told). I escaped the stultifying remoteness and pastoral ennui of country life (well, perhaps not quite that bad but I loved inventing that characterization) for the last two years of high school at a state-funded public science and mathematics academy in Durham, NC. I later attended Duke University in the same town and graduated in 1986, having completed coursework in mechanical engineering and computer science with a few AI courses. There's a somewhat well-known and often cited university commencement address given by Ted Koppel at Duke where he talks about the biblical Ten Commandments not being the "Ten Suggestions." Alas, that wasn't my year -- I was part of the previous class -- we received Lee Iacocca's vision instead, no doubt prompting the next years' search committee to try to find higher moral ground... After graduation I took a position with Texas Instruments in Dallas, Texas, where I worked on the Pilot's Associate and related projects. After two years, I left TI and entered the MS-AI program at Stanford University. At Stanford I worked with Marty Tenenbaum and Rao Kambhampati on applying planning with reuse to a mechanical engineering design for manu-

Steve Minton

Since the InSiDer recently published most of my life story, I decided to come up with an update containing something new and interesting in my life. Unfortunately, however, after taking a careful accounting of my situation, I realized that there is nothing new and interesting to report. Except maybe I moved to El Segundo. Well, actually, that's not too interesting. We do have an avocado tree in our backyard, though. Stay tuned for further exciting news!
facturability system. When I graduated from Stanford, I joined the first in a series of fungible contractor companies working at NASA Ames Research Center in Mountain View, Calif. At Ames, I worked on various planning and software engineering projects with Amy Lansky, Steve Minton, and Michael Lowry in the AI Research branch.

Hobbies and misc. random facts about me: I like to (downhill) ski and play volleyball. I do both poorly, but with enthusiasm. I have brewed my own beer before, am a "beer snob," and once was comped a beer at a micropub by ostentatiously appearing to be reviewing the establishment. I’ve sung in a barbershop quartet, worked one summer in a zoo in France, and never been to Disneyland. My grandmother lived to the age of 107, so I’ve got that going for me. I think “LA Story” is more viciously funny every time I see it. I am single, a Presbyterian, a Star Trek watcher, and (evidently) one of the few people in ISD not living in El Segundo or PV. My (old) car’s own home page was once featured on the "Useless WWW pages" compilation. While at Ames, I led a revolt against one contractor company's 401(k) retirement plan, forcing the company to reject the plan and the broker which sold it to them. I had plenty of hesitation about moving to LA, but now I like it well enough that all the rest of my family has visited me recently in order I guess to be sure that I hadn't become some kind of showbiz groupie, sun worshiper, LA Law type uberv yuppie, surfer dude (negative on all counts).

José-Luis Ambite-Molina

I was born in Madrid, Spain, a fact over which I had no control but turned out pretty well given the alternatives I've experienced ever since. Fundamentally, I like to learn. This has had strange effects on my life, mainly, lots of travel, finding out what doesn't interest me, and, hopefully, getting closer to the Truth.

As a consequence of the axiom above, by the end of 1990, I had become Ingeniero de Telecomunicación by the Escuela Técnica Superior de Ingeniería de Telecomunicación of the Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, or more briefly, a "Teleco". That's a six-year-long degree roughly equivalent to a Masters in Electrical Engineering. Thus, I learned my share of Maxwell through tubes and air; doping and holes; Fourier, Laplace and Z transforms; and many other things I rarely use nowadays, but I still somehow respect (as opposed to things I have used since then but I didn't respect). After taking many, many courses, I finally specialized in computer networks and control systems. Nevertheless, by the last year, I decided to try something new, so my Master's thesis was in Distributed AI.

Before and during my "Teleco" years I traveled as much as I could. Through two Inter-rails and several car trips, I covered most of Western, Central, and Southern Europe. The cities where I had most fun: Budapest and Istanbul. Unfortunately, Ephesus remains the deepest I have gotten into Asia. Most remarkable trip: summer of 1989 (actually winter) in South Africa.

After I graduated, AI still seemed fun, so I started working at the Instituto de Ingeniería del Conocimiento at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid. But, oops!, all that paperwork and interviews during the (brief) free time while writing my Master's thesis gave some results, I was awarded a Fulbright/Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia (Long Live MEC!) scholarship. Hence, without much thought, I crossed the Atlantic.

Due to either the stochastic nature of the Universe, Fate, or the little thought I referred to, I arrived at USC in September 1991 with the original purpose of getting a Master's in Computer Science (with an AI emphasis) and knowing this part of the world. The first objective was quickly achieved, but mostly prevented the second. That in addition to getting tempted by research led me to the PhD program in September 1992, with the intention of applying DAI ideas to Soar agents. That translated into investigating how an agent can acquire and use models of others in a cognitively plausible way.

Since I arrived in L.A. I have had a few moments of enlightenment. I'll list them chronologically. The very first was to keep eating big lunches and light dinners (it's probably easier to change religions than eating habits!). The second was to come to ISI. The third was to move to the beach (Long Live Hermosa!). The fourth was to realize that Cognitive Science was not my call (unfortunately, that took longer than necessary). The fifth was to join the SIMS project (Long Live SIMS and Its Successors!). The sixth was to get married to Maria Luisa. Now, amidst my seventh enlightenment, I am building a fast query processor for systems that integrate multiple, heterogeneous information sources (e.g., SIMS), along with a theory for efficient planning.
My research interests are primarily in Planning and Knowledge Representation (yes, KR subsumes traditional databases), and, in principle, anything with the word Logic in it. Other interests, time (rarely) permitting, are hiking (climbed Mt Whitney in a day), windsurfing (shame!, haven't used my board yet! nor my surfboard!, ummmmm!), martial arts (currently on leave), and, of course, more traveling.

Chinnan Hsu
It's been close to 1/2 a score and many moons ago that I ventured forth from Austin, Texas to the Lalaland, ensconced in this SIMSulated reality. I love the mountains that ring this smogopolis and confine the byproducts of modern technology within their stony walls. Hiking up those mountains offers an unvarnished view of the splendiferous smogsets that obliterates the ugliness of the lower terrestrial layer with a vengeance to the shining sea. I've also been fortunate to savor the delights of the extra-angeles locales, chiefly the deserts and the Sierra. A small library of compact printed cellulose and discs keeps me company in the solace of my apt.

Chin Chee

⇒ My research interests are primarily in Planning and Knowledge Representation (yes, KR subsumes traditional databases), and, in principle, anything with the word Logic in it. Other interests, time (rarely) permitting, are hiking (climbed Mt Whitney in a day), windsurfing (shame!, haven't used my board yet! nor my surfboard!, ummmmm!), martial arts (currently on leave), and, of course, more traveling.

⇒ I have stood at ground zero of a nuclear explosion and atop a volcano.
⇒ I lived in Belfast.
⇒ Sometimes, I quote from the Books of Bokonon.
⇒ I plan to get my PhD before 2001.
⇒ Most importantly, on “away missions” I will never wear a red uniform.

Chunnan Hsu
This is Chunnan. I have a tendency that gets me into lots of trouble. I am not able to concentrate on just one thing. I have to make two, or three things to work on, and find myself in big trouble to complete all of them, before I can really concentrate.

I have been a member of the SIMS project for 4 full years, but during these 4 years, I also worked on something else. In 1992-1993, I was working for Dr. Despain on a computer vision project for my RA. But I was interested more in machine learning. So I joined the SIMS project and worked with Craig, and got myself two projects to work at the same time.

I finally became a “full-time” SIMS project member, so I figured that I could get involved in some extra-curricular activities. From 1994-1995, I became one of the leaders of Taiwanese Student Association (TSA) at USC. You might not know that there are three student organizations claiming themselves as the genuine organizations for students from Taiwan at USC. The other two are called “Chinese Culture Club,” (for grads) and “Chinese Student Association.” (for the undergrads). And it turns out the organization for real Chinese students has to be named the “Chinese Students and Scholars Association.” This is all about the political power struggle on three sides: the Chinese authorities in Taiwan and in Beijing, and the Taiwanese people, to which I belong. Both Chinese authorities do not like to see anything officially named “Taiwan” in any international activities. If you watched the Little League Baseball World Series, you might wonder where is the country called “Chinese Taipei” on earth. That’s the name of the team from Taiwan. Though our kids won big by a score of 13-2, they cannot use their real name “Taiwan.” This gives you some idea how miserable we are. Likewise, it is very difficult for the TSA as a small group of students to maintain our indignity. However, I

⇒ I have been a stunt car driver, a smuggler, and a baby-sitter.
⇒ I received my undergraduate degree in foosball.
⇒ I'm still recovering from being thrown by a mechanical bull. (My right arm is sore. I should've learned from my unfortunate and brief attempt at horseback riding).
⇒ Yes, I have kissed the Blarney stone.
⇒ I've flown a plane and tend to write very bad poetry.
⇒ If I had the money I would skydive every weekend.
⇒ I don't have a tattoo yet, but I have had my body pierced.
⇒ In the midst of a spelunking expedition I was nearly abandoned (I was too short to reach the next ledge).
⇒ I survived a CrashWorship concert and participated in several open heart surgeries.
managed to make it become an official member of the International Student Assembly of USC, UN equivalent at the USC campus. I earned a leadership award due to my service in the TSA.

After I retired from the TSA, I started to get involved in a movement to revive my native Taiwanese language. My name should be “Kun-Lam Khou” in my native language rather than “Chunnan,” which is from a Mandarin Chinese translation. A written form of Taiwanese has been used for the Bible since 1800. After the Chinese took over Taiwan from Japan in 1945, they decided to destroy the Taiwanese culture and banned written Taiwanese. They went on to make Mandarin Chinese the only official language and banned the usage of Taiwanese in all public gatherings and schools. The ban was relaxed a little after 1990, but today few young people can even speak it fluently. Early this year, I promised to help in organizing a conference on that movement in Irvine, CA this August, but it turned out I had to complete my experiments, present at AAAI96, and prepare to move to Tempe, all at the same time. I must be very crazy to get myself into this much trouble. Fortunately, none of the projects was screwed up too badly.

I am also interested in using the Internet for social movements. This March, when the Chinese launched a missile test attempting to interfere with Taiwan’s first Presidential election, I contributed the idea to launch a massive web site campaign against them. A friend of mine at Michigan State built an indexing web site to collect all Taiwan supporters’ URL addresses. Chin-Yew, a grad student of Ed’s, helped build another web site for a world-wide candlelight vigil. The campaign was quite successful and was covered by lots of media, including the April 1, 1996 issue of Business Week.

(Please check out http://www.taiwanese.com/ and http://www.formosa.com/vigil). BTW, I urged UCS of USC to allow student organizations to have their homepages on USC’s web servers. TSA is the first student organization that has a web page at USC. (Please check out http://www.usc.edu/dept/TSA/)

Now I am still in big trouble working on two things, at least: to teaching for the first time in my life and to writing a thesis, also for the first time in my life. Basically, I think life is too short so that we should work on many things in parallel and fill in all idle time slots. Hopefully, my body, particularly my hands and wrists, will allow me to abuse it like that. My days at ISI were wonderful, I miss all of you.

Naveen Ashish

I was born in Lucknow, a city in the northern part of India, in 1971. However, I have stayed for the major part of my life and did most of my schooling in Calcutta, India. My parents and younger brother, whom I miss a lot, still live there.

I am a proud alumnus of the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Kanpur, where I spent four fun-filled, albeit academically intensive years (1989-1993) obtaining a BTech in Computer Science. There are some nice snaps of the campus accessible from my homepage (http://www-scf.usc.edu/~ashish).

In my final semester at IIT I received a Teaching Assistantship from Arizona State University. I accepted it, as going to grad school seemed more fun than starting working also, I would get to see the Grand Canyon this way! I worked there in the database area, on integrating deductive and object-oriented databases. I changed ships in summer 1995 when I was accepted to the USC PhD program. I was fortunate that Craig Knoblock and Yigal Arens gave me the opportunity of then joining ISI as a member of the SIMS project.

It has been a little over a year at ISI for me now, and I must say I feel extremely privileged to be a part of such a great institute and have the opportunity of working with the people here towards my PhD. I know that ISI is providing me with an environment for doing a PhD that many other graduate schools cannot. As most of you might already know, SIMS is a project in the area of information integration; my specific focus is on problems relating to information integration from structured or semi-structured information sources on the World Wide Web.

My favorite hobby is sleeping! However I do spend my spare time driving around to places of interest, listening to Indian film music, and also experimenting with cooking (the brunt of which is borne by my poor room-mates). I also like to tell people I am a good racquetball player.
Ion Muslea

Since my bio was published in the July/August issue of the InSiDer, I will focus now on my work at ISI. I came to ISI at the end of May, and I was assigned the task of making SIMS a CORBA-compliant application. From our point of view, CORBA-compliancy implies two main aspects. First, we wanted to allow any CORBA-based application to send queries to SIMS. As SIMS agents communicate with each other based on KQML, not CORBA, the simplest solution was to write a CORBA-to-KQML adapter that converts CORBA messages to KQML messages. Except for a few dirty hacks, this part of the project was nice and enjoyable, and our solution seems to be "the best you can get".

Second, we wanted to allow SIMS to access information sources that use CORBA wrappers (initially SIMS could access only KQML-based wrappers). This task was far more difficult, and its solution is far less general than the one that we obtained for the previous task. However, after a lot of work and a bunch of newly discovered incompatibilities between Orbix (our choice of CORBA implementation) and the tools used to develop SIMS (KQML, Allegro, Lucid), we came out with a decent solution for this problem, too.

Now that CORBA-compliancy is history, I am trying to focus on problems related to knowledge representation for multimedia and Web-based information sources. Even if my favorite saying states that "imagination is more important than knowledge" (Albert Einstein), there are times (like now!) when you have to read, to read, and to read again. And this is just what I'm doing!

Takahira Yamaguchi

Since my bio already appeared in "New Faces in ISD" in the last issue of the InSiDer, I will add more information on my work at ISI. I work on rapid development of domain models that play the role of shared domain-specific ontology across heterogeneous information sources. It is very difficult and expensive for human experts to manually construct a domain model from the beginning. In order to reduce the cost of the engineering processes of domain models, I use existing MRD (Machine-Readable Dictionaries), such as WordNet, ROGET, and SENSUS (developed by Kevin Knight), and the EDR Electronic Dictionary (developed in Japan). After matching technical terms from the domain with MRD and trimming the match results, it turns out that some part is reusable without change and other parts are available with small modifications. The modifications can also be assisted using some heuristics. I know that Bill Swartout and Ramesh Patil, et al., already take a similar approach to construct an ontology for military air campaign planning. There are differences in the ways to reuse and modify match results between the two approaches. However, this approach does not pay attention to existing data in source models. Sheila Tejada works on another approach to construct a domain model, using inclusion relationships among data in key fields in source models. If the approaches could be integrated well, it would bring a better computer environment for construction of domain models.

Takahira can be reached at:
Office: School of Information
Shizuoka University
3-5-1 Johoku Hamamatsu 432, Japan
tel: +81-53-475-1473
fax: +81-53-475-4595
email: <yamaguti@cs.inf.shizuoka.ac.jp>

ISD Tidbits

Jon Gratch to Wed
On September 8th I proposed to my girlfriend, Bo Kwon. She said yes. I met Bo last year while I was a regular at a Westwood salsa club. She was the bartender. Currently she is an MBA student at Claremont Graduate School. We plan to be married next spring.

Ali Erdem Passes Ph.D. Oral Exam
Ali Erdem has passed his qualifying exam. Well done, Ali! All of the hard work paid off.

Chin-Yew Lin Becomes a Daddy!
Audrey was born on August 30. She was 7 lbs then and 7 lbs 6 oz now. According to the record of our last visit to the hospital, she is currently 19.2 inches "tall" :-) I and my wife, Jau-Ching, went to the hospital at around 3:00 (8/30) and Audrey was delivered 14 hours later.
She is a healthy baby and has big lungs (She cries very loud :-)). My wife and I are very happy and enjoy being Mom and Dad. Since crying is the only language in which Audrey is fluent, I am conducting a very interesting "natural language" experiment on her. I taped her crying sound and played it back to her. When she started crying, I played the tape. She was obviously listening to her clone and stopped crying. I think this might be a way to help her understand that crying is kind of annoying and is not the only way to solve problems. So please do cry when you really need it. 8-) I don't think I have been successful on this goal. She joined her own clone in a duet the next time I played the tape. 8-)

Farewell...

ISD is losing three familiar faces, Chunnan Hsu, Takahira Yamaguchi, and Masazumi Yoshikawa. We wish them luck in their new endeavors!

Holiday Party Reminder

ISI will have its Holiday Party on Friday, the 13th of December of this year. This is partly dictated by the need to start building out the 8th floor before the year ends.

Cartoonist Needed

You may have noticed that this issue is devoid of a Kevin Knight comic strip. While we could never replace Kevin, we would love to serve as a forum for displaying the talents of any incipient ISD cartoonists. If you're interested in the job, please bring Velda a sample of your artistic talent.

Food Drive Update

The latest edition of "USC and the Community", a resource directory of the University Of Southern California's Community Outreach Programs, was just released. It lists all of the USC civic and community activities and our food drive is mentioned! Also listed, are 265 other programs administered by USC or it's affiliates. Thank you for your continued support.

Upcoming AI Seminars

See our webpage for the most up-to-date schedule: http://www.isi.edu/~gil/isai-seminar.html

Oct 11 Wei-Min Shen, Jafar Adibi, Bonghan Cho, Gal Kaminka, Jihie Kim, Behnam Salemi, and Sheila Tejada, USC/ISI
"YODA: The Young Observant Discovery Agent"

Oct 18 Chunnan Hsu, Arizona State University
"Learning Effective and Robust Knowledge for Semantic Query Optimization"

Oct 24 Carla Brodley, Purdue University (Thu)
"Improving the Quality of Training Data for Inductive Learning" NOTE: This talk will probably take place in the afternoon.

Nov 1 John McCarthy, Stanford University
Title TBA

Nov 8 Bonghan Cho, USC/ISI
"Efficient Production Match and CSP Solving"

Nov 22 Hans Chalupsky, USC/ISI
"STELLA -- Painless Symbolic Processing in C++"

ISD Celebration Planned!

Put on your party hats! The gathering will be on Friday, October 25, 1996 at 12:00 noon. Pizza, salad and drinks will be provided.