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## SIGCSE News in Brief

Happy new year! We look forward to a great year of SIGCSE-sponsored conferences and workshops beginning with the SIGCSE Symposium on Feb. 29. The conference co-chairs, Laurie King of the College of the Holy Cross and Dave Musicant of Carleton College, give us a preview of some of the conference highlights. And of course, you don't want to miss the SIGCSE business meeting; our chair Renee McCauley reminds you why!

In this issue we announce several recent SIGCSE awards. SIGCSE board members Dan Joyce of Villanova University and Amber Settle of DePaul report on the winners of the 2012 SIGCSE Lifetime Service and Outstanding Contribution awards. SIGCSE Treasurer Doug Baldwin of SUNY Genesco announces the latest SIGCSE special projects award winner.

We look back at CS Education week with a report from two schools. Chan Jin Chung of Lawrence Technological Institute reports on their Robofest 2012 kick-off. And SIGCSE Board member Tiffany Barnes describes activities at the University of North Carolina, Charlotte.

As usual we give you an update on upcoming SIGCSE conferences. And in SIGCSE by the numbers, Henry Walker, Grinnell College, looks at how we've changed our browser preferences based on SIGCSE conference submissions.

## SIGCSE 2012

by Laurie King and Dave Musicant

The 2012 SIGCSE Technical Symposium will be held February 29 - March 3 at the Raleigh Convention Center in downtown Raleigh, NC. This year's symposium continues our long tradition of bringing together colleagues from around the world to present papers, panels, posters, special sessions, and workshops, and to discuss computer science education in birds-of-a-feather sessions and informal settings at breaks and meals. The SIGCSE Technical Symposium addresses problems common among educators working to develop, implement and/or evaluate computing programs, curricula, and courses. The symposium provides a forum for sharing new ideas for syllabi, laboratories, and other elements of teaching and pedagogy, at all levels of instruction.

Our theme, "Teaching, Learning and Collaborating" is a nod to our



location in North Carolina's renowned *Research Triangle*. Teaching, learning, and collaborating occur inside and outside of the classroom, among students, academics, industry professionals, and others. We are excited that all three sides of this triangle will be reflected in the variety of sessions at the symposium.

We are excited about our keynote speakers. On Thursday, Turing Award winner Fred Brooks will frame teaching as a design task in his keynote titled, *The Teacher's Job is to Design Learning Experiences; not Primarily to Impart Information*. On Friday, the keynote speaker will be Hal Abelson, winner of the 2012 SIGCSE Award for Outstanding Contribution to Computer Science. And on

Saturday, Fernanda Viégas and Martin Wattenberg will talk about how visualizations reach millions of people and play a role in political discussions, citizen activism, religious discussions, game playing, and educational exchanges. We are also looking forward to hearing from Jane Prey, winner of the SIGCSE Award for Lifetime Service, who will say a few words at the First-Timer's Lunch.

In our never-ending quest to keep you connected within this wonderful community, we are introducing QR codes to our name badges. This is a fast and easy way to collect a person's contact information using a smart phone, if you have one. You will simply need to ask fellow participants to hold up their badges so you can scan their QR codes. For those attendees who choose not to participate, there will be stickers available at the registration desk that can be used to cover up QR codes.

SIGCSE 2012 will also see the return of robots through a new venue, "The SIGCSE Playground: Experience It!" Participants can get hands-on experience and expert-guided assistance with easy-to-use robotics platforms for use in all levels of computer science education. Plan to watch the robots perform in the exhibit hall throughout the conference, and at a grand finale.

Raleigh is a great city for our conference. You'll find a wide variety of restaurants within a short walk of the conference center and hotels, as well as attractions in the nearby neighborhoods. Hop on the free downtown bus, the R-Line, for more dining and entertainment options. Please see the our website for more information: <http://www.sigcse.org/sigcse2012>.

We hope to see you in Raleigh!

## Why you should attend the annual SIGCSE Business meeting

by Renee McCauley

SIGCSE conducts an annual meeting of its members, during the SIGCSE symposium, to discuss its activities and plans for the future. Because this meeting is so important, we do not schedule other conference events at the same time.

We really hope that you will attend this meeting! We need your input. We want you to be more involved with the running of the organization. This meeting provides an opportunity for you to learn how the organization currently works, which is a first-step in becoming more involved. It also offers you a chance to offer suggestions for how the organization might work in the future.

At this meeting you will learn about the state of the organization in terms of its:

- Activities – What current computing education initiatives are we involved in? How can you get involved in these activities?
- Membership benefits – What are the current benefits? What new benefits are members interested in?
- Finances – Where do your SIGCSE dues go? What are our income sources?
- Do our conferences make money? Are our conference registration rates reasonable? How do we fund membership benefits (including *ACM Inroads* and more)?
- Conferences – Where are our upcoming SIGCSE, ITiCSE and ICER conferences being held and who is organizing them? How can you become involved?



Renee McCauley, SIGCSE Chair:  
"Come to the SIGCSE business meeting."

- New topics of interest to members – Open floor for members to express comments, concerns and ask questions.

As the meeting is *only* 45 minutes long and no other conference events will be scheduled at the same time, we hope that you will find it convenient to attend. We promise that the meeting will be well organized, it will start and end on time, and the agenda will be covered efficiently, leaving time for your questions and comments.

As an incentive to your attendance, at the end of the meeting we'll draw from the list of meeting attendees the name of one person who will receive complimentary registration to the 2013 SIGCSE symposium.

Please join us.

**When and where:** Friday, March 2, 2012, 5:10-5:55pm, Room 302A, Raleigh Convention Center, SIGCSE symposium

## 2012 SIGCSE Awards

by Dan Joyce and Amber Settle



The 2012 SIGCSE Award for Lifetime Service to the Computer Science Education Community has been awarded to Jane Prey. This award will be presented at the 43<sup>rd</sup> SIGCSE Technical Symposium being held in Raleigh, NC, USA,

February 29 – March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2012. Dr. Prey will address the First Timers' Luncheon at the Symposium.

Dr. Prey's contributions to computing education span a 30+ year career that includes stints working in academia, industry, and government. Throughout her career she has exhibited an unparalleled and relentless drive to increase the visibility and profile of computer science to encourage more students, especially women, to pursue education and careers in computing. Jane is often deeply involved at major gender and diversity conferences as an organizer, speaker, panelist, and/or paper presenter.

Some of Jane's service activities include memberships on the ACM Education Board, the Computer Research Association Board, and the IEEE CS Educational Activities Board. She has served as chair of the Frontiers in Education Steering Committee as well as chair for our SIGCSE Symposium. She has also managed the programs to showcase NSF DUE funded projects at SIGCSE, served as a Program Director for Computer Science at the NSF, and led Microsoft Research's Gender Pipeline Strategy Program.

The SIGCSE Award for Outstanding Contribution to Computer Science Education has been awarded to Harold (Hal) Abelson, Professor of Electrical Engineering and Computer



Science at MIT. This award will be presented at the 43<sup>rd</sup> SIGCSE Technical Symposium being held in Raleigh, NC, USA, February 29 – March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2012. Dr. Abelson will give a plenary address to the attendees on Friday.

For 35 years Dr. Abelson has been transforming the way students, and everyone else, think about computing. In the early 1980s he played a major role in the "Logo Revolution." Not only was he a key member of the original Logo team, he also wrote a number of successful books (including the well known *Turtle Geometry* with diSessa) that teach the powerful ideas of Logo through the use of compelling examples and exercises.

Beyond Logo, Hal's contributions range from the ground breaking book *Structure and Interpretation of Computer Programs* (with Sussman), through his leadership and work with the free-software and open-education movements and his founding efforts with the Creative Commons Initiative, up to his current lead role in the development of App Inventor. His work represents an enormously important and lasting revolution, not only in the way we teach computer science, but in the way we view knowledge in the broader society.

## Special Projects Grant Awarded

by Doug Baldwin

SIGCSE is delighted to announce that professor Michael Jipping of Hope College has received a Special Projects grant for a project entitled "Learning about Network Security Threats in a Safe, Easy Sandbox." The project will develop demonstrations and experiments addressing common network security issues. The demonstrations will run on virtual machines for safety; distributing preconfigured virtual machines and set-up scripts will make the demonstrations easy for instructors to use. Look for a complete report on this work at a SIGCSE conference or publication in the next year or so.

SIGCSE received 12 Special Projects grant proposals for the November 2011 funding cycle. The Special Projects Committee is delighted to see the continuing high level of interest in the program, and looks forward to future proposals. The next round of reviews begins May 15, 2012. If you have a proposal idea, you can find submission instructions at

<http://www.sigcse.org/programs/special/apply/>

Email questions to [apply@sigcse.org](mailto:apply@sigcse.org). Even before a proposal comes in, the Special Projects Committee is happy to discuss project ideas with authors or answer questions, and we welcome contact from you at any time.

Congratulations once again to Professor Jipping. Let's all get more computing education projects ready for May!

## Conference Update



The 43<sup>rd</sup> ACM Technical Symposium on Computer Science Education will be held February 29 - March 3, 2012 in Raleigh, NC, USA. Registration is now open. For more information see the conference web site: [sigcse.org/sigcse2012/](http://sigcse.org/sigcse2012/)



The 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference on Innovation and Technology (ITiCSE) will be held in Haifa, Israel July 3-5, 2012. The deadline for tips, techniques and courseware as well as posters is March 13, 2012. See the web site for more details:

<http://www.iticse12.org.il/htmls/home.aspx>

The 2012 International Computing Education Research (ICER) conference will be held this summer in New Zealand. The ICER web site will provide details as they become available:

<http://wp.acm.org/icer-conference/>

## Robofest kick-off for CSED Week at Lawrence Tech

by Chan Jin Chung

Robofest 2012 kick-off informational meeting was held during the CS Ed week on Dec 5, 2011, at Lawrence Technological University in Southfield, Michigan. The meeting was also joined by several people across the nation via Webinar.

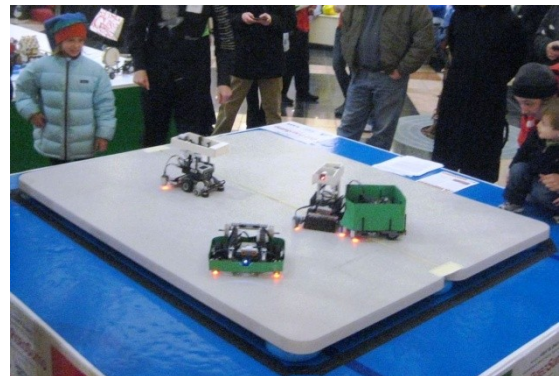
Launched in 2000 at Lawrence Tech, Robofest ([www.robofest.net](http://www.robofest.net)) is an annual autonomous robotics competition designed to promote and support Computer Science and STEM (Science, Engineering, Technology and Math) for pre-college as well as college students.

Robofest is a festival of technologies that offers the following challenging and fun competition categories to inspire and attract students into computing careers. Robots can be programmed by using any programming language.

- Game Competition - Students undertake annual robotic missions.
- Exhibition - Each team has complete freedom to show off any creative intelligent robotics project.
- RoboFashion & Dance – A team of two or more robots shows off their costumes and choreography while interacting with each other as well as team members.
- Vision Centric Robot Challenge – develop a vision centric laptop robot to maneuver through an obstacle course. (See image on right.)
- nVn RoboSumo – World's first **team** robot sumo competition. A robot team loses a game if its robot is pushed off the table another robot. (See image on right.)



Robo-fest obstacle course, photo by CJ Chung



nVn RoboSumo, photo by CJ Chung

- Hexapod RoboSumo – World's first robot sumo on legs! The objective is to climb up into the octagon ring and to be the surviving 6 legged robot.
- Bottle RoboSumo - Be the first robot to push a 2 liter bottle off the table or be the last robot remaining on the table.
- RoboParade –Robotic floats are detecting other robots in front, stopping and re-starting along the parade route.

Robofest has multiple venues in the US and several other countries. Over 1,500 students participated in Robofest 2010-2011 season.

## CS Ed Week Showcase at UNC Charlotte by Tiffany Barnes

UNC Charlotte celebrated CS Ed Week this year with a showcase to over 100 computing students and teachers from three local high schools. The program started with a panel on what it's like to be a Computer Science college student. Next, high schoolers toured our labs and got excited about our head-mounted virtual reality displays, student-created games, and visualizations. During lunch we played Snag'em and Table Tilt, two games we built to promote social networking and team building.

Student project demonstrations were the highlight of the day. Ivanna Gutierrez, a first-year student who took our Beauty and Joy of Computing course, showcased her "Horses and Elephants" math soccer game where players solve randomly generated addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division problems to score a goal. Other class projects included an Android phone application for cataloguing music, a Mario-style platform game, and an adventure game highlighting how computing relates to everyday interests. Serious Games students demonstrated BOTS, an online puzzle game like Light Bot that teaches programming, and Greener Challenge, a game where players earn gold by saving energy, and use that gold to build an online virtual garden.

The day closed with a hands-on GameMaker workshop and a short talk on how games can be used for learning and other important purposes.

The teachers raved that their students couldn't believe all they saw and learned. Goal!

### More on the Beauty and Joy of Computing (BJC) course and AP principles

Dr. Tiffany Barnes is collaborating with Dan Garcia and Brian Harvey at UC Berkeley to promote computing in high schools and colleges across the country around Berkeley's Beauty and Joy of



Computing course. BJC is one model of the new Advanced Placement CS Principles course in preparation by the College Board, for introduction in 2015. It is meant to align with college "CS 0" courses for non-CS majors. The existing AP CS A, which aligns with "CS 1" courses, will continue as *AP CS: Programming*.

BJC uses SNAP!, a visual programming language based on Scratch, that allows a technically rigorous course, including recursion and higher order functions, but still attracts and retains non-CS majors, women, and minorities.

Over the next three years, Garcia, Hunt, and Barnes will train 100 high school teachers to teach BJC. These teachers will be supported through the academic year by regional STARS (Students & Technology in Academia, Research & Service) partnerships. For more information on how to get involved, as well as access to all course materials, lecture videos and Moodle lab exercises, visit <http://bjc.berkeley.edu>.

## SIGCSE by the Numbers: JavaScript

by Henry M. Walker

As you may know, SIGCSE 2000 was the first SIGCSE conference that utilized an online system for the submission and reviewing of papers. Naively, for that first conference, I relied upon JavaScript for error checking, so I assumed error checking was not needed at the server --- after all, checking had already been done by the browser, right?

Unfortunately, late in the process, I discovered that many SIGCSE members turned off JavaScript (perhaps for security reasons), and we may have lost as many as 200 of the 2200 reviews submitted for SIGCSE 2000. We also may have lost some paper submissions, but those numbers are a matter of speculation.

With this in mind, the reviewing software was changed to perform error checking both client side (with JavaScript, if enabled) and server side. For the most part, submission of proposals and reviews has gone smoothly since 2001.

But the world of the Web has clearly evolved since 2000/2001. In today's environment, how many reviewers enable JavaScript? To answer this question, the SIGCSE 2011 submission and reviewer scripts were adjusted to record whether a reviewer had JavaScript enabled for each review. (If a reviewer submitted several updates for a review, only the last update was tabulated.)

The following tables shows the results for SIGCSE 2011 submissions and completed reviews.

SIGCSE 2011 Submissions			
Category	Total	JavaScript Disabled	JavaScript Enabled
BoFs	47	0	47
Panels	23	0	23
Papers	290	1	289
Posters	110	0	110
Special Sessions	30	1	29
Workshops	78	0	78
Total	578	2	576

SIGCSE 2011 Completed Reviews			
Category	Total	JavaScript Disabled	JavaScript Enabled
BoFs	115	0	115
Panels	128	0	128
Papers	1898	6	1892
Posters	297	2	295
Special Sessions	167	2	165
Workshops	427	3	424
Total	3032	13	3019

Turning to reviewer statistics, typically, an individual reviewer submits several reviews, and some reviewers submit reviews in several categories. Here are composite statistics for the reviewers.

- Total reviewers completing at least one review: 810
- Reviewers having JavaScript enabled for all their reviews: 805
- Reviewers having JavaScript enabled for no reviews: 4
- Reviewers having JavaScript enabled for some reviews but not for other reviews: 1

In conclusion, most proposers and reviewers today have JavaScript enabled, although a few do not. This suggests a significant evolution since SIGCSE 2000.