

# Launch of women@CL: celebrating and promoting women in IT research

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Sisters are doing IT for themselves

New support group to promote women in academic and industrial IT research

8th December 2004, London - A new mentoring and support group launches this week, aiming to shatter the 'frosted glass ceiling' that prevents many women in IT research from rising to the top of their profession. The women@CL project aims to redress an imbalance that sees more women in IT research aspiring to leadership positions than men – by 33% to 22% - yet contributing only 1 in 20 computing professors, 1 in 8 computing researchers and 1 in 4 PhD students.

Professor Ursula Martin, of Queen Mary University of London and also director of women@CL, said: "There are various initiatives to encourage more women to study IT at school and at university, but these initiatives don't extend beyond undergraduate education or into industry. The aim of our group is at least partially to fill that void: by celebrating, informing and supporting women in the UK who are, or plan to be, engaged in computing research or academic leadership.

"Computing research is an exciting, important and social activity, and research transforms the world we live in. It's about creating the technology we use every day, like search engines or mobile phones, or working with other scientists to figure out the answers to big questions such as how to get computers to recognise emotions, or what is going on in the human genome. The business case for having diverse teams to tackle these challenges is clear: diverse teams make better progress.

"But the opportunities for effective, diverse teams decrease when there are too few women in leadership positions. We call it the frosted glass ceiling because it's not that it's unbreakable, it's just that we have, historically, had difficulty in seeing through it," added Professor Martin.

Chris Bishop, assistant director, Microsoft Research Cambridge commented: "Microsoft Research Cambridge recognises the skills that women continue to bring to all aspects of computing research particularly those where interdisciplinary skills are prevalent. We're pleased to see this launch and are proud sponsors of the women@CL project."

women@CL will support women in computing research with a focus on interdisciplinary research, leadership and enterprise, through a programme of career development activities which will include regional and national workshops, mentoring and networking. The first event is at Queen Mary University of London, on December 20th.

For more information on women@CL activities or to join the mailing list, visit [www.cl.cam.ac.uk/women](http://www.cl.cam.ac.uk/women) or contact Fiona Billingsley, the women@CL administrator [fiona.billingsley@cl.cam.ac.uk](mailto:fiona.billingsley@cl.cam.ac.uk) / 01223 763505.

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## Press contacts

Hannah Knowles / Rose Ross

+44 (0)208 255 5225

[hannah@omarketing.co.uk](mailto:hannah@omarketing.co.uk)/[rose@omarketing.co.uk](mailto:rose@omarketing.co.uk)

## Notes to editors

### About women@CL

women@CL – women in the computer laboratory - has been made possible by support from the Engineering and Physical Science Research Council (EPSRC) through a Network Grant, the British Computer Society (BCS), Microsoft Research, Intel Cambridge Research, Queen Mary University of London, and the University of Cambridge.

It has its logistical base at the computer laboratory at the University of Cambridge and will mark its formal launch at the BCS Roger Needham Lecture, being held on December 8th at the Royal Society.

The first women@CL event is at Queen Mary University of London on 20th December 2004, speakers to include Professor Donia Scott and Dr Mounia Lalmas. More information at:  
<http://www.dcs.qmul.ac.uk/women/LondonHopper.html>

### A few more women@CL:

- Dr Lourdes Agapito of Queen Mary University of London holds a prestigious EPSRC early career award and works on 3-D face recognition
- Professor Muffy Calder is head of the Department of Computer Science at the University of Glasgow, and works on computer modelling of networks – from phone exchanges to biochemical pathways
- Dr Jane Hillston, of the University of Edinburgh, is winner of the 2004 BCS Roger Needham award for her revolutionary new software modelling language that predicts performance-related problems at software design stage
- Rana El-Kaliouby is finishing a PhD at the University of Cambridge and works on how computers can recognise emotions
- Dr Dina Papagiannaki of Intel Research Cambridge won the 2003 BCS Distinguished Dissertation award for her PhD work on improving traffic flow in massive computer networks
- Karen Petrie is finishing a PhD at the University of Huddersfield, and won the 2004 Young IT Practitioner of the Year award. She works on how the principles of symmetry, which are so important in physics and maths, can be applied to solve search problems in massive datasets.

### About the BCS

As the industry body for IT professionals, and a Chartered Engineering Institution for Information Technology (IT), the BCS exists to provide service and support to the IT community, including IT practitioners and employers of IT practitioners.

The Society also acts to generate public awareness and appreciation of the concomitant social and economic benefits IT.

The BCS was formed to establish and maintain appropriate standards of education and experience for persons engaged in the profession or practice of IT and Computing or those entering upon courses of study in Computing and allied subjects.

#### About the Roger Needham Award

The Roger Needham Award, sponsored by Microsoft Research Cambridge and established in memory of the late Professor Roger Needham, is for a distinguished research contribution in computer science by a UK-based researcher within 10 years of their PhD. It offers a £5000 prize together with the opportunity to give a public lecture on their work at the Royal Society.

The 2004 winner is Dr Jane Hillston, of the University of Edinburgh, creator of a revolutionary new software modelling language that predicts performance-related problems at software design stage.