

Minutes of the Open General Meeting of the BCTCS

BCTCS 30, Loughborough University, 10 April 2014

Opening: The meeting opened at 17:13.

Quorum: The meeting was recognised as quorate, there being present the President and Secretary of the BCTCS, the local organisers for BCTCS 30, and at least ten other members of the BCTCS.

Apologies: Apologies for absence were received from Stephan Reiff-Marganiec.

Previous minutes: The [minutes](#) of the Open General Meeting held at BCTCS 29 in Bath were approved.

Matters arising: There were no matters arising. However it was noted that following last year's OGM, a mailing list of theoretical computer scientists based in the UK had been assembled and a new website for BCTCS is under construction. Michele Zito and Ian Pratt-Hartmann were thanked for their efforts in these respects.

President's report: Faron Moller reported that we continue to operate in difficult times with respect to funding. However he thanked the Heilbronn Institute for Mathematical Research for their continued support in funding assisted student places. Faron also noted that we are experiencing challenges with respect to the numbers attending, though he felt that 40 registrations more than justified the existence of the meeting, and that the fact that there were parallel sessions was a healthy sign. Paul Bell and Daniel Reidenbach were thanked for their excellent efforts in organising the meeting. The London Mathematical Society was also thanked for providing support for the Keynote Speaker in Discrete Mathematics.

Treasurer's report: Stephan Reiff-Marganiec's report was tabled in his absence.

The cost for Susanne Albers (last year's LMS-sponsored Keynote Speaker in Discrete Mathematics) was £747.81, against a grant of £1250. The difference (£502.19) has been returned to LMS. Stephan had asked for their permission to use the difference towards studentships / other speakers, but that was declined.

£1263.12 has been paid to Bath (the cost for Susanne Albers plus some contribution towards assisted places for students). This had been invoiced by Bath after agreement that this would balance their books. Final accounts from Bath were received on 7 April.

The closing balance is £14,606.05.

We have again applied and were successful in obtaining a grant for this year's Keynote Speaker in Discrete Mathematics of £1250. This will be claimed after the event.

Election of Secretary: David Manlove was thanked for his contribution over the last three years. Faron Moller nominated him to serve another three-year term. Daniel Reidenbach seconded this. In the absence of any other nominations, David Manlove was duly elected to serve a further three-year term.

Election of Postgraduate Student Representative: Augustine Kwanashie was thanked for his contribution over the last year. He nominated Iain McBride to serve as the next postgraduate student rep, and this was seconded by David Manlove. Michele Zito nominated Pavan Sangha, and this was seconded by Thomas Gorry. In view of the fact that the University of Glasgow had just provided a postgraduate student rep over the last year, Iain McBride withdrew from the election. Pavan Sangha was then elected unopposed as the next postgraduate student rep.

Choice of host for BCTCS 31: BCTCS will be hosted by Middlesex University in 2015. Barny Martin and Raja Nagarajan gave a short presentation to introduce the university and its location, explaining that Hendon Town Hall will be the likely venue. They are hoping to attract participants from London even if they can only attend for one day.

Faron noted that BCTCS had never been located in London before due to accommodation costs. However Barny and Raja are hoping to find low-cost solutions within easy commuting distance of the university for those who require accommodation.

The timing of the event is not finalised at the time of writing. Faron Moller strongly believes in the idea of linking up BCTCS with other events, to try to increase participation. It had been intended that BCTCS would co-locate with the BCS Academy Symposium this year, but the latter event did not occur.

Faron, who is a member of the LMS Computer Science Committee, noted that next year will be the 150th anniversary of the LMS. As part of their celebrations they plan to run a Computer Science day which will focus on algorithms and cryptography. One possibility is to organise BCTCS alongside this, though formally the LMS CS Day will not be attached to BCTCS, and indeed the two events may be located at different venues in London (originally the idea had been to hold the LMS CS Day at Bletchley Park, but they no longer allow conferences to be held there). Rather than BCTCS having an LMS-sponsored Keynote Speaker in Discrete Mathematics, the intention would instead be for BCTCS participants to attend the LMS CS Day as an “excursion”.

The LMS CS Day is likely to have six high-profile speakers and will probably take place in the middle of September. Running BCTCS alongside the LMS CS Day could then mean that BCTCS would depart from its traditional Easter slot. An alternative is for BCTCS to remain at Easter and not be associated with the LMS CS Day, and for the committee to request funds for a single LMS-sponsored speaker as before.

Daniel Reidenbach felt that the timing of BCTCS should be chosen carefully so as not to clash with international conferences taking place in September. However Faron Moller pointed out that the existing timing of BCTCS at Easter could potentially clash with conferences such as the BMC and ETAPS.

The meeting was content to allow Faron Moller to explore potential venues for BCTCS 2016. Markus Pfeiffer (University of St Andrews) expressed an interest in hosting the conference, and noted that other colleagues at St Andrews also supported this. This option will be explored further.

Discussion of the future of BCTCS: Faron Moller emphasised that this year’s meeting had been very successful, and that there was an excellent programme of talks. However low

registration figures were a cause for concern. A discussion took place as to the format of BCTCS.

Students confirmed that they felt that the current format was beneficial to them. Although established researchers have not been coming in large numbers in recent years, the meeting is continuing to satisfy one of its main aims, namely to provide an opportunity for young researchers (particularly PhD students and postdocs) to present their research in a supportive atmosphere, without papers being refereed. This was identified as being the “unique selling point” of BCTCS which sets it apart from formal conferences having published proceedings.

Some suggestions were discussed, including breaking up BCTCS into separate “themed days” (such as the recent Middlesex Algorithms Day), however support was expressed to retain the breadth and coverage of topics across the whole spectrum of theoretical computer science.

Leszek Gašieniec raised the issue of the profile of BCTCS. It was noted that the colloquium had been advertised on international mailing lists and via the new mailing list of UK-based theoretical computer scientists several times. It was also noted that a new website is under development which should provide general TCS-related resources rather than simply being used to promote BCTCS. The option for authors to submit papers appearing at the colloquium to a special issue of a journal had been tried before, but without success.

A greater link-up with the European Association for Theoretical Computer Science (EATCS) was also suggested. It was recognised that we already provide an option for delegates to purchase one-year membership of the EATCS at the time of registration, and that abstracts of papers presented at the colloquium are published in Bulletin of the EATCS.

Michele Zito suggested contacting university Graduate Schools so that BCTCS could be incorporated into the training of research students. However it was felt that it, since BCTCS is applicable to research students in theoretical computer science only, and Graduate Schools will have responsibilities for students studying other areas CS and indeed other subjects entirely, this may not be an efficient way for the message to get through.

Any other business: There was no other business.

Closing: The meeting closed at 17.55.

David Manlove
Secretary, BCTCS