CSI Communications

President's Message

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From : president@csi-india.org
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Dear Members

CSI was founded in 1965, when computing technologies were confined to a few research institutions, universities, and government departments. In particular, there was no IT Industry that is so prominent today, and computing was fragmented between different hardware manufacturers, who also made the software for the computers that they manufactured. The computing domain at that time was driven by a few stalwarts, many of whom CSI has had the good fortune to associate with.

Given that CSI was the only organization who was associated with the growth of the computing domain in India - later to develop into the IT Industry - during its early days, it is only natural that CSI has a special affinity towards this period. It is important to remember that the founding fathers of CSI were themselves the pioneers of computing in India.

History of IT in India

This issue of CSI Communications has the theme of “History of IT in India”. We look at some of the early initiatives in computing in the country in this issue for the benefit of the newer generations of IT professionals. Of course, IT and Communications are interleaved so much today that one cannot exist without the other. Together with computing, the Internet has also been a major driving force behind the popularization and democratization of what has come to be known as Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) in the last two decades.

At a personal level, this has also provided me an occasion to reflect on my own early days in programming - which started as a hobby in college in the early 80s, later becoming a passionate avocation. After encountering the Internet for the first time in 1993 at a UK University, its immense possibilities were immediately clear to me, and prompted me, in 1994, to become a part of the United Nations Volunteer (UNV) program named “IndiaLink”, connecting a few NGOs around the country using ERNET as backbone. My experiences are provided in a brief article, “FishNet: An Early Experiment with Email”, in this issue (page 18).

Given CSI’s preeminent position in the history of computing in India, we have plans to strengthen the CSI History Initiative, which has been initiated a few months back, so that we have a chronicle of the efforts of the early pioneers of computing in India.

Smart Computing

As I write this piece, there are news of crippling power breakdowns across much of the country, affecting a reported 600 million people. Although it is the first time in a decade that a disruption of this magnitude is being reported, in terms of the numbers of people impacted, the tripping of the three grids is a major catastrophe.

As technologists, it is perhaps time that our talk about smart computing, manifesting itself as initiatives such as smart homes, smart vehicles, and smart grids, became a reality. As we know, a smart grid is an electricity grid that uses IT to gather and process information”... in an automated fashion to improve the efficiency, reliability, economics, and sustainability of the production and distribution of electricity”. Of course, we are still at the preliminary stage of transitioning into smart grids, but events of this kind shows the vulnerability of technologies that are in everyday use, and the increased responsibility that engineers and technologists have in ensuring the quality of life of people.

ACC 2012

An important event held last month was ACC 2012, the International Conference on Advances in Cloud Computing held at Bangalore. This event showcased the technological developments in one of the most talked-about technologies in the recent past, Cloud Computing. The event attracted significant participation. Congratulations are due to Dr. Anirban Basu and the other team members of CSI Bangalore Chapter who were able to successfully organize this Conference.

Student Chapter Handbook

I am happy to report that, in order to provide the student branches with a comprehensive framework to enable the formation, operationalization, mission delivery and reporting, CSI Education Directorate and the National Student Coordinator have prepared a brief presentation and handbook, which can be accessed at http://www.csi-india.org/web/csi/1330

With best wishes,

Satish Babu
President