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Barnaby Jeans IT Pro Advisor
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Dr. A. Joseph Turner: Top Software Issues and Resources; Future Trends; Globalization--one size doesn't fit all; Shortage of IT skills - Input from Business to Academia; Globalization--Harmonization of Credentials.

This is the next interview in the [continuing series](#) of Computing Canada's (CC) [Blogged Down](#) (BD) which is featured here "first" in the Canadian IT Managers (CIM) forum.



In this blog series, we continue our talk with Dr. A. Joseph Turner: internationally regarded computer science authority and educator; Professor Emeritus, Clemson. The blog series started on Friday November 3rd with Dr. Turner's profile.

Stephen: What are the top technology issues presently facing businesses and how do you propose they can be solved?

Joe: I can't speak for businesses, but surely one of the top issues has been the same for more than 20 years: the production of reliable software. The solution to this problem has to be shared by business as well as by academic programs. In the academic programs, we need to do a better job of teaching methods for developing reliable software as well as an understanding of its importance. Business shares part of the blame for the problem by using developers who are not well qualified, by encouraging procedures that emphasize fast production at the expense of quality, and by releasing software that has not been adequately validated.

Another top issue is related to software quality: security of computing and communication systems and networks. Again, the solution lies in improving academic programs to better prepare graduates to produce reliable systems, and in better implementation practices by businesses to emphasize security and reliability rather than expeditious production.

Stephen: What should businesses know about future trends? What are the implications and business opportunities? Why should businesses care?

Joe: I learned long ago that I am not very good at predicting the future. I would have agreed with Ken Olson when he said "There is no reason anyone would want a computer in their home". But obviously businesses need to keep up with trends even if future trends are not predictable. One thing that is clear is that advances in miniaturization, nanotechnology, and the capabilities of computing and communication technologies will continue to occur, and that this will provide numerous new business opportunities to address the changes in business processes and in people's lives because of the advances in technology.

Stephen: Which are your top recommended resources and why?

Joe: It depends on what the resource is to be used for. In general, the publications of societies such as ACM and IEEE-CS and the search capabilities of their digital libraries provide broad coverage. Most of these publications are oriented toward researchers, but some are for practitioners as well. The conferences of these organizations and others provide perhaps the best way to keep up with current problems and future trends. There is still no good substitute for one-on-one discussions with colleagues who are working on similar issues, and networking at conferences provides many opportunities for such discussions.

Stephen: Provide commentary on topics of your choosing.

Joe: Topic 1: Globalization (1)

Governments should take a cue from business that flexibility and adaptation are essential in dealing with other governments. One size does not fit all, and one country's highly successful structures and procedures are often not workable in other contexts.

Topic 2: Shortage of IT skills.

I made some comments on this in answer to an earlier question, but in addition to what I said there, it is important to continue to work to improve the dialog between businesses and academia. Things are much better in this regard now than they were during the first 20 years or so of computing programs, but we can do better. Business participation in the accreditation process, whether by direct participation as volunteers or in an advisory role, also is an important part of this dialog. People from business often say that they do not feel competent to design curricula, but their important contributions are on the specification side, describing the needed outcomes from a program and leaving the implementation to the academicians. Academicians complain that the expectations from



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business for graduates of baccalaureate computing programs are unrealistic and often short-sighted, focusing on current technologies, but I have found that working together can produce realistic expectations that are achievable. It is important that there be dialog, not just input from business to academia.

Topic 3: Globalization (2)

Much work remains to be done to harmonize credentials for graduates from different countries. As graduates become increasingly mobile and companies have work done in various countries, this becomes increasingly important. It would help to have a framework or methodology for comparing various curricula, and some work has begun on this. Developing international standards for capabilities/credentials also should be useful, but this is difficult. Differing educational standards and evaluation rubrics across the world make effective harmonization difficult.

Stephen: Joe, we will continue to follow your work in so many arenas. We thank you for sharing your time, wisdom, and accumulated deep insights with us.

Joe: I don't think that I have provided anything very deep, but I am pleased to share some thoughts with you and honored to have been asked to participate.

I also encourage you to share your thoughts here on these interviews or send me an e-mail at sibarak@ccips.ca.

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Thank you,
Stephen Ibaraki, [FCIPS](#), I.S.P.

Posted: Friday, November 10, 2006 4:34 PM by [ednitmar](#)
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