

Travel Report form 26th International Conference on Software Engineering (ICSE), 23-28 May 2004, Edinburgh, Scotland

Mikael Åkerholm
Mälardalen Real-Time Research Centre
Department of Computer Science and Engineering, Mälardalen University
mikael.akerholm@mdh.se

Abstract. ICSE is the premiere conference on software engineering; it is intended to be a showcase for the discipline. In addition to the main program, there were 19 workshops, 9 half day tutorials, and 5 co-located events. The main reason for my presence at ICSE was to participate with a paper at the co-located event 7th International Symposium of Component Based Software Engineering (CBSE7). The remaining part of this travel report therefore contain, brief summaries of CBSE7, ICSE, and the city of Edinburgh.

CBSE7

CBSE 1-6 has been organized as ICSE workshops, this year the event was organized as an own detached symposium with own proceedings published by Springer Verlag. CBSE received 82 submissions and accepted 12 as long papers, and 13 as short papers, the submission rate was beyond the expectations of the organising committee. It was a two day symposium (24-25 May), with two invited speakers Oscar Nierstrasz, and Hans Jonkers. The symposium was divided into four paper sessions; unfortunately there were two parallel sessions, so it was only possible to attend to two of the four sessions. However, the focus was on discussions so half the days were dedicated for discussions, and half the days for papers and invited speakers. The most interesting part from my viewpoint was not surprisingly session 3, components for real-time embedded systems, which were the session most close to our research and the session of our paper. I find the work presented by Paolo Gai, A Hierarchical Framework for Component-Based Real-Time Systems, most interesting since it is the first paper from their group about a project that relates to my research. Similar to our work they use larger software components, meaning that a software component can be viewed as an application with several concurrent threads. The long discussions tended to land up in discussions about basic definitions, which is important to agree upon, but at least according to me the paper presentations gave the impression of research from an established field, while the discussions did not belong to such a field. The first days discussions were mostly about component definitions and if connectors should be in or out. During the second day, a reasonable and according to me sound explanation was raised: "The abstraction called component will vary in what is abstracted, what is exposed, depending on desired properties", from a slide summarizing the discussions made by Kurt Wallnau titled "Matser of the Obvious".

ICSE

ICSE received 436 submissions and accepted 58; there were three invited keynote speakers, Richard Stallman, Karl Lieberherr, and Janet Thornton, opening one day each. Richard Stallman, founder of the GNU project, called the father of free software, gave a speech about software patents. Where his standpoint of course was that they should be forbidden, even if conference participants agreed or not, he gave big impressions and people were arguing about the topic for the rest of the conference. The session that placed most impressions on me, was a panel discussion with Dave Bustard, Mike Holcombe, and Ian Sommerville, concerning new

directions in software engineering research in UK. They were talking about the grand challenges of software engineering, the benefits of broadening the focus of software engineering etc. Something that became obvious to me during the discussions was that software has an undeserved bad reputation; the common understanding is that software causes all faults, and software is always late. However, the functionality we build with software is fantastic, all advanced functions we are using is mainly realized with software, e.g., consider all functionality in the latest mobile phone, or car. Try to implement that without software! A considerable reason for software being late were also given, most often the software projects are dealing with completely or partly new applications where some inventions is required. Compare that to more mature engineering disciplines as mechanics or construction, a mechanic engineer estimate the time the project will take based on the last times something similar was built, the first times a bridge was built by a construction engineer it was surely hard to estimate the time it would take and if it would be possible at all. Otherwise the paper sessions held overall good quality, with interesting session topics as testing, software architecture, analysis, and verification.

Edinburgh

The city of Edinburgh is the Capital of Scotland and has 750.000 inhabitants, the second largest in Scotland next to Glasgow. The city centre has a lot of old buildings, and there is a local pub in almost every block. We can recommend visiting a pub on a Saturday afternoon, watching a football game, a festive atmosphere and nice prices for ale. However, talking about food, the pubs seem to be popular among Scottish people, but we recommend one of the common Italian or Indian restaurants. Two things that must be done when in Edinburgh, number one admire the dramatic castle on a rock in the middle of the town, and visiting the royal mile whisky shop!