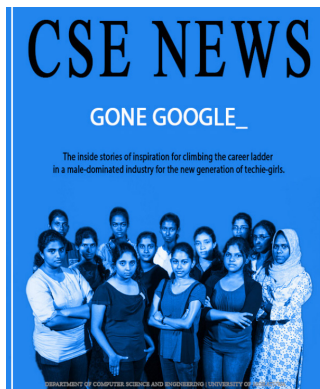


CSE NEWS

GONE GOOGLE_

The inside stories of inspiration for climbing the career ladder in a male-dominated industry for the new generation of techie-girls.





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“

Red blood cells are the vertebrate organism's principal means of delivering oxygen to the body hence are responsible for strengthening the human body. One microliter of blood contains 4.7 to 6.1 million (male), 4.2 to 5.4 (female) erythrocytes. Scientifically it explains why men are physically stronger than women. The foresaid fact is known and used widely by people: mostly by men to excel, by putting down women and also by women as an excuse for not excelling. But it is proved that the physical strength has not much of an impact on the success of a person. Rather, the determination, courage, intelligence, knowledge, attitude together with a bit of strength build a successful personal regardless of the gender.

Changing the attitude of the society towards the capabilities of women is not a simple task which can be achieved through a single attempt. It should be done in a timely fashion. This is one of the steps taken towards that by the department of Computer Science and Engineering attempting to build up the perception of the female undergraduates towards the ICT sector and to increase the number of women entrepreneurs / employees in the ICT sector by increasing the willingness to join to the ICT sector. This edition is specially published in parallel with the event "Girls Gone Google" featuring live examples of Sri Lankan women who have pioneered in the field of Information technology along with other achievements made by the department.

”

~ Rashmi Mudugamuwa Arachchi

& Sasikala Kottegoda ~

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SHE . . .

ADA LOVELACE . . . GRACE HOPPER . . . ?

Once the author Diane Mariechild said that “A woman is the full circle. Within her is the power to create, nurture and transform”.

A woman is the one who gives light and life to the world. For a technologically advanced age as today, her immense effort and contribution towards almost any scientific aspect has become a wide concern. It is because nothing is comparative to the success and the achievement she is capable of gaining in terms of her field of expertise.

Today the field of Information Technology in Sri Lanka has been able to receive the wonderful contribution by many women in Science, Engineering, Management and other related fields. However, there are so many talented female souls out there with

so much of energy and potential concealed within themselves, yet to be discovered. Empowering them to follow their dreams, giving them incentives at their strive for the excellence and entitling them to play the vital roles of the industry will moreover solidify the foundation whilst ensuring it as a flourishing industry in the country.

As of the theme of this years’ International Womens’ day; ‘Inspiring change’, it is indeed the right time to bring up the remarkable skills and abilities of each and every female individual whilst bestowing them with the honour and recognition they truly deserve. Entitling them to play vital roles in the field would surely motivate them do their best.

Yes! They are formidable. They have this amazing ability to work on an innovation not just by adding the technical sense but also drive the process to be a seamless flow of work so that the final out

come will be a success. They add creativity and humanity; something which may be forgotten by the others when the sole focus is on the technological aspect. They work hard and give their utmost effort to do the assigned tasks in a well manner. They are proud and firm yet sensible and caring. Their endurance can never be passed through.

Let us listen to four well known female leaders who are among pioneers in the Sri Lankan IT industry. We are fortunate to have invaluable thoughts, ideas and opinions on the focus of Sri Lankan women in computing by such prominent and exemplary figures in the country today.

“

Be unique, Be passionate

”

Mrs. Vishaka Nanayakkara

Deputy Project Director

HETC Project and Senior Lecturer at University of Moratuwa



“I happened to follow a computer course accidentally and then wanted to be a computer scientist. First I did not want to go for engineering since there wasn't a field related to computer science. But then the Vice Chancellor of the University of Moratuwa came to our school and informed us that they are going to start a Computer Science and Engineering course at the faculty” 16 students had been selected for the initial program and she was one of those privileged.

“It was the immense support I got from my family and my husband that made me cling to the field of Information and Technology” According to her, the support is what you need as a woman for

not to quit such a dynamic field. “There are three types of women in the field; unmarried, married and divorced. Of course there's it is distributed in a normal curve. If you are getting a great support from your family and your husband, it's not a big deal. ”.

She thinks that it is only up to 20% or even less women have contributed to the industry so far. To see a difference in this trend by increasing that percentage, we need to educate people. “Most of the girls are told to be doctors when they are young. In the secondary school level, they should be made aware of this”.

The key factor that she considers as to her success is her confidence. “I never wanted to be treated as a second class person just because I am a woman” She says.

It is true that there are only a few on the top among the women who are in the field. Ms. Nanayakkara states that it is the support from the other women, Human Resources and the people engaged in planning which lacks. That support should be assertive.

*Computer
science is no
more about
computers
than
astronomy
is about
telescopes.*

Edsger Dijkstra

“ Females are smarter and stronger than men ”

Ms. Upamalika Ratnayake
CIO, Ceylinco Insurance Plc.



She was one lucky individual to get selected as a trainee programmer at the inception phase of the Peoples Bank IT department. It was her, who had ranked the top from the test. Courage, determination and her worklife balancing capability are the key factors that made her to be strong in the field of information technology. Believing in herself while having a passion for whatever she does and a proper balance between work and personal life is the key factor to her success. According to her, it is a true fact that only a few percentage from the overall female community in the country have being a part of the industry so far, but each

and every one of them has given so much of contribution. We should always make them aware that they are stronger and smarter than men. Women keep on underestimating themselves will only make them to be behind the scene most of the time.

The question of whether computers can think is like the question of whether submarines can swim.

Edsger Dijkstra

“

IT is not only limited to software coding. IT has a total lifecycle.

”

Ms. Lakmini Wijesundera

Director & CEO, IronOne Technologies

“In my childhood I had the habit of breaking apart most household equipment to gain better understanding of how they worked. This was one of the reasons to study Electronics and Computer Engineering since the computer and its capabilities intrigued me and raised my curiosity. Once I understood the fundamentals, my interest moved to IT, as it is the industry that enables us to use computers and their capabilities along with my passion to improve how we do things. I enjoyed solving such challenges and therefore made me continuously strive to achieve tougher challenges.

Starting up my company gave me freedom to innovate without boundaries. I also have the freedom to assist many young people who embark on their careers in the IT field to gain confidence and innovate while they enjoy what they do. IT industry provided me with this satisfaction therefore I have stuck to it throughout my career.

My role has however changed over time from a hands on IT person to a more strategic level role which is responsible for a cross sectional set of activities including market strategy. My strong fundamental background in IT, has equipped me with

a deep knowledge to handle any type of challenge that comes my way”

Ms. Wijesundera says that the client facing and business analysis areas of such a wide field have a large number of women engaged at work whilst core engineering has lesser percentages of them.

“More awareness for women regarding the different types of roles available in IT is important. IT is not only limited to software coding. IT has a total lifecycle from the production aspects which include code development all the way to UIX design, business analysis, marketing, strategy, sales, client servicing etc. and all these are roles which will appreciate persons who have IT fundamentals. I have observed that the percentage of Computer engineering and IT graduates who are ladies has increased to 20-30% or even higher levels currently. This itself shows that the awareness is increasing. Challenges in staying on in IT are related to balancing family commitments etc. Such challenges can be somewhat resolved by company policies and flexi rules and facilities”

Her enjoyment towards what she

does is the reason for her success. “That makes the difference. Everything else is based on that fundamental”

Her thoughts on having only a small number of women at top positions in the industry explains more on the issue. “My thoughts are that the lack of numbers is not reflective of the actual situation. Even if it’s a fewer number, those who are at the top are outstanding examples. There are many ladies who opt not to move to the top slot due to family commitments. This is a reality, and they are content with such decisions in most cases as it is a career choice whether to move to the top slot which demands a lot of time commitment for work while not taking the top slot helps to keep the work life family balance which has been important specially for ladies. Therefore those who selected the top to have worked out their commitments and the ability to share such with other family members in order to balance the family commitments. This is only my personal observation”



“IT is a sector that has growth potential in globally. Career opportunities and growth of the industry is strong. It’s a knowledge industry which encourages people to continue to learn and grow. It’s an attractive industry to people who enjoy challenges and problem solving .For ladies it’s a suitable career since it has a high chance of being a office located job and not a manual labor intensive job”

Moreover with her invaluable advice, “You should select your passion. If you follow in that path you will not fail. You will enjoy even the hardest challenges and hardest days since what you do has a deeper meaning and a feeling of satisfaction for you. Find a workplace that will help you to achieve this, and in IT there are many work places which provide such flexibility to achieve your dream” says Ms. Wijesundera.

“

Never give up your dreams.
Always try to turn your obstacles
into opportunities

”

Ms. Umashanthi Pavalanathan

Graduate Research Assistant, Georgia Institute of Technology



“I got passionate about computing and the IT profession during my school days. I was inspired by some IT professionals and how they apply analytic skills to produce creative software solutions. This made me to prepare myself towards a career in computing.

I am pursuing higher studies and I do not have much experience working in the industry yet. But the reason for my continued interest in this field is the innovations that we can do to solve real world problems and help humankind in numerous ways”

Her thoughts on bringing the women engineers and scientists to the front row were so much powerful.

“We should target at the school level to increase the awareness among girls about the opportunities in IT and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) fields in order to increase the number of females entering the IT industry. At the same time women leaders in the industry should encourage other females to take up the leadership roles” .

Guidance and mentoring she receive from the others in the field, especially from the senior women have been a vital factor to her success. And according to her “A career in IT requires continuous learning and the ability to quickly acquire new skills. If you are ready for this challenge, then it is the right career for you”.

Whilst all those inspiring words add so much colour to their noble characters, it is much noteworthy to see how they all agree to the fact that the Sri Lankan IT industry is indeed up to the prevalent global standards. Ms Nanayakkara states that sometimes it is even above. One of the software companies that are being the key contributors

towards this kind of a success is WSO2; a leading open source middleware development software company in the country.

Ms. Wijesundera emphasized that her company operates in global markets where they encounter IT professionals and organizations in varied regions, giving an instance of how us , Sri Lankans make the global approach of interacting with different international bodies. Sri Lanka stands strong amongst them. “Our strengths are mainly in the workforce having deep analytical abilities as well as our willingness to learn and service customers” says Ms. Lakmini Wijesundera. Due to the internet penetration and telecom advancement in our country in comparison to regional countries, her company has a great advantage to access information available globally on internet and keep up with industry global standards as well.

Ms. Umashanthi agrees upon the fact with one significant idea. To the most extent, it is true that our industry performs up to the global standards. However, according to her there is some difference. “One

difference I saw in countries like US is that most companies have flexible working environment allowing employees to telecommute which is very convenient for women who need to look after their families. There are companies in Sri Lanka with this kind of flexibility, but not many in numbers as far as I know”

With such a globally reputed industrial coverage, you would never know what marvellous innovations will be coming to life with a sparked interest in a young girl’s mind towards the beauty of the science in computing. It is each and everyone’s responsibility to give them the needed support, inspiration, honour and blessings for them to climb the ladder of success and astonish the entire world with their excellence.

We can only see a short distance ahead, but we can see plenty there that needs to be done.

Alan Turing

MOFA

AWARDS



Humanity's love affair with the silver screen is a well documented phenomenon. In fact, it wouldn't be much of a stretch to say that moving images are the artistic canvas of the 21st century. MOra Film Awards was conceptualized with the idea of promoting documentary film production among engineering undergraduates. MOFA 2013, the inaugural

documentary premiere redcarpet event, was held on the 7th of December at the Civil Auditorium at University of Moratuwa. In attendance was visionary film director Asoka Handagama as the chief guest and acclaimed actress Pooja Umashankar as the guest of honour. The head of the Computer Science and Engineering Department, Lt. Col. Dr. Chandana Gamage and Video Production Lecturer Architect Raveen Gunaratne also graced the event as special guests.

Four Documentaries were premiered at this event, each the product of a full semester module followed by the students of the Department of Computer Science and Engineering, Faculty of Engineering. The module was taught by Architect Raveen Gunaratne, who is himself a documentary producer. Celebrated documentarians Anoma Rajakaruna, film director Boodee Keerthisena, artist Tilak Samarawickrema were involved in the critiquing process and provided much needed insights into many thematic aspects, while Sanjaya Sooriyarachchi equipped the students with much needed technical expertise with Asitha Nanayakkara and Ruwan Gunarathna providing additional support.

The featured documentaries were:

- **Engineering Gastronomy:** An exploratory journey into the food habits of undergraduates
- **Tears of Blood:** A revelation of the hardships faced by the differently abled in the wartorn North
- **Floating Fortress:** Presenting the 8th wonder of the world, Sigiriya, from a wholly new perspective
- **Perfect World:** An adventure into the mind of a gamer, a foray into the abyss of addiction

The documentaries were showcased to the appreciative applause of a fullhouse of documentary fans and arcticritics alike. The overall best production award was claimed by the documentary "Tears of Blood" for the heartwarming screen footage as well as the contemporary social message it carried.



Mr Asoka Handagama, in his address to the audience, mentioned how it was passion and artistic vision that made for truly captivating movies, rather than formal instruction in the art of filmmaking. He also went on to point out how art and science complimented each other and how instruction in a field such as mathematics might provide epiphanic insights into making a truly remarkable piece of art.

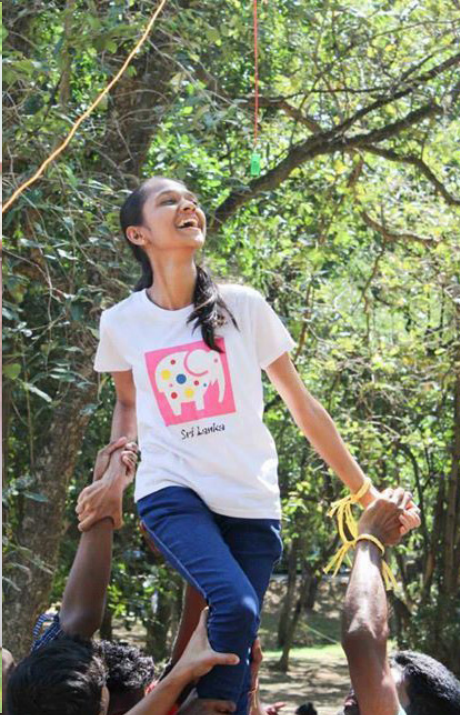
Ms Pooja Umashankar talked mostly about the importance of youth in the film industry. She stressed the importance of having fresh blood in the industry and noted that most of the successful films she'd worked on personally, had had a lot of young and relatively inexperienced crew members, and how that had, in most cases, worked out to bring about a synergistic and overall beneficial effect on the production environment.

There is something about this particular artform that captures the soul. Is it the raw realism and clarity that pervades across the senses? Perhaps it is the underlying universality of the portrayed scene: the bleeding heart, the weeping widow, the smoking gun? Documentary movie making is a relatively new invention that is taking the world by storm. Combining compelling narrative with gripping footage to deliver

unto society the hidden beauty, the vitriolic conspiracies and the lies we hide behind; you would be sorely mistaken to compare them to your runofthemill infomercial.

At its core, a documentary is a device with which the director hopes to enforce some sort of change in the world. The trick to a good documentary is in warranting that this message does not get distorted, while ensuring that it is entertaining enough to captivate the audience and leave them asking for more.





EXUBERANZ

OUT BOUND



Keeping up with the tradition of introducing new dimensions to the students' university life, the Department of Computer Science and Engineering of University of Moratuwa has organized her annual outboundz event, 'Exuberanz'. The event took place on the 25th of January, from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. at the University Premises with the attendance of nearly 400 undergraduates from all 4 levels of CSE as well as the staff members, alumni and industry representatives.

To give a picture about the event's nature, these programs are organized in accordance with a theme, usually historical. So far, the themes have involved the heroic adventures of a "Medieval European Village" in Outboundz (2008), an epic struggle of good versus evil including camps of "Ancient Greece" and "Ancient Egypt", in Indifferenz (2009), the thrilling global conflicts of "East versus West" in Beyond the Wavez (2010), the much adored fantasy of "The Robin Hood Universe" in VibeZ (2011) and the quest of the fellowship of the trilogy "Lord of the Rings" in Resurgenz (2012). The participants, not only bear witness to the fabulous details of these environments, but also submerge themselves in the games and activities that test them both physically, and mentally. They will help improve one's physical skills, as well as intellectual swiftness under-pressure situations.

This year, in the 2013 outboundz event, the Greek gods have descended from Olympus! They have demanded a day filled with adventure and exuberant fun for the whole CSE family. Mythology, mystique and mystery will all come together on this fun-filled day which will feature contests of wits, speed and bravery.

NEW PRESIDENT FOR SRI LANKA CHAPTER OF INTERNET SOCIETY

ELECTION



Prof Gihan Dias of the Department of Computer Science & Engineering has been elected as the President of the Internet Society, Sri Lanka Chapter for the year 2014 at the AGM held on 30th Dec 2013.

The Internet Society's mission is to promote the open development, evolution, and use of the Internet for the benefit of a people throughout the world".

The Sri Lanka Chapter represents the over 500 members of the Internet Society in this country and Prof Dias plans to guide the Chapter through 2014 to realize some of its important mission objectives.

LAUNCH OF MBA-IT RESEARCH COMPENDIUM

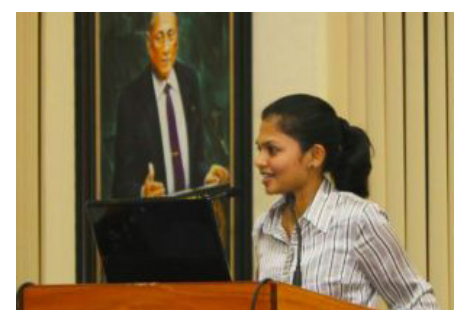
The Department of CSE launched the first edition of the “MBA-IT Research Compendium” that collects together a summary of outstanding research contributions from the MBA in IT program on Tuesday, 17th December 2013 at the Lakshman Kadirgamar Institute in Colombo.

As noted by the Chief Guest at the book launch, Hon Dr Harsha De Silva, MP, this industry focused and practitioner oriented collection of research findings in the domain

of human resource management for the knowledge economy is a must read for policymakers as well as executives. A joint publication of the Department of CSE and the Kent Ridge, a leading HRM Consultancy in Sri Lanka, the compendium was edited by Mr Janaka Kumarasinghe, a past president of the IPM.

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SOFTWARE DEBUGGING AS A SCIENCE

ACM DISTINGUISHED SPEAKER PROGRAM

GUEST LECTURE



Prof. Abhik Roychoudhury, Vice Dean (Graduate Studies) – School of Computing, National University of Singapore conducted a guest lecture on “Software Debugging as a Science” through ACM Distinguished Speaker Program on 21st of February, 2014. The chairperson, Himeshi De Silva and the other officers of the ACM Student Chapter of University of Moratuwa from the Department of Computer Science and Engineering organized this prestigious event under the guidance of Head of the Department and the Chapter Faculty Sponsor, Dr. Chandana Gamage with the media sponsorship from Digit.

The event was organized through the ACM distinguished Speaker Program, which enables



chapters to request top technology leaders and innovators from nearly every sector of the computing industry to deliver technical talks on interesting, timely and valuable topics related to computing and information technology to an audience.

The civil auditorium was packed with a large audience including undergraduates of University of Moratuwa, lecturers and people from the IT industry on the event day to listen the talk “Software Debugging as a Science”. Prof. Abhik Roychoudhury drew the attention of the whole audience by bringing out the findings during his researches related to different techniques of software debugging. In this talk, he discussed about the recent advances in debugging which makes it systematic scientific activity in its own right. This was

an interactive session where the audience asked questions from the speaker and resolved their doubts. In the meantime the speaker had discussions with the undergraduates who participated in the event, where he introduced and explained new research areas and concepts related to his stream.

At the end of this program, chapter officers for the next year were announced. The new committee consists of Hashini Senarathne (Chair), Suneth Vijaindu (Vice Chair), Chamila Wijayarathna (Treasurer), Supun Nakandala (Membership Chair) and Dr Chandana Gamage (Faculty Sponsor).

The first ever event organized by ACM Student Chapter of University of Moratuwa was a great experience for the whole audience.

FLARES DE FLAIRS

TALENT AND GLAMOUR

It is said that the art is such a beautiful thing which guides one through ecstasy towards wisdom and insight. 22nd of January 2014 was a remarkable day for the CSE family at the University of Moratuwa on when, its children made the amazing attempt named 'Flares de Flairs'; the annual talent show of the department for the year of 2014, in order to prove it by themselves again for the second time.

The students representing every batch in the department including the newly joined children to the family were performing in the presence of Dr. Somarathne Dissanayake; a prominent and an exemplary figure in the modern Sri Lankan film industry as the chief guest and the two special guests; Ms. Dinakshie Priyasad and Ms. Senali Fonseka; talented young souls representing the country's performing youth. The elegantly decorated Civil Auditorium of the university was one big pageantry throughout the entire evening of performances.

After the auspicious moment of lighting the oil lamp by the guests of honor and some significant figures from the department, the head of the department Lt. Col. Dr. Chandana Gamage shared his thoughts while welcoming the gathering to the special occasion.

Then it was the time to experience a uniquely creative blend of dance, music and drama presented by our sisters and brothers. Comperes, Ms. Mihiri Gunatunge and Mr. Tharindu Ranasinghe from batch '10 did their very best to take the audience along this delectable flow of entertainment in a great manner.

A modern version of the Sinhala stage drama 'Nari Bana' by the batch '11 was quite of a witty play, amusing and capturing the audiences' unwavering attention. Also the dance presented by a bunch of students from the newly entered batch to a song from a well known Hindi movie, '3 Idiots' was quite mesmerizing. This participation indeed marked the joining of these freshmans as the new CSE family members. The stage drama done by the senior CSE '09 batch was not just simply a comedy play but also a silent discussion about the current political arena. Moreover with other events, there were lots more captivating moments for the audience as each and every one of it was capable of adding some magic to the whole joyous atmosphere within the auditorium itself. Words by the guests who joined this special evening perfectly substantiated that claim while evincing their delight on each and every aspect.

The show ended with a beautiful musical touch made through a composition of some well known songs

of all times by a group of batch '10 students. Closing remarks were done after Mr. Suneth Vijayindu, the batch 10' representative gave the vote of thanks. It can certainly be stated without any doubt that the effort and invaluable commitment made by the batch 10's in organizing this talent show resulted in a successful outcome at the end, while giving an opportunity for the entire CSE family to enjoy a quality family time together.

It was not merely a talent show but indeed a splendid evening which did leave an indelible remark on each and every individual who got to witness the occasion. On that very day, each and every performer proved in excellence that 'a CSE student' from the University of Moratuwa will not just be a highly skilled future engineer but also a true connoisseur and an appreciator of aesthetics.







DECADE OF GSOCC

CELEBRATION

Decade of GSoC, a celebration of the tenth year of the Google Summer of Code was held on the 23rd of January, 2014 at the Civil Auditorium, University of Moratuwa.

The event was organized by the Google Open Source Programs Office in appreciation of the high student participation of Sri Lankan students in GSoC in the past years. Since the inception of GSoC 265 students have been selected for GSoC. Out of these 203 were from the University of Moratuwa, making it the highest number of students from a single university in the world.

The event was graced by Chris DiBona (Director of Social Impact and Open Source - Google,) Mary Radomile (Program Manager – Google Inc), Stephanie Taylor (Program Manager – Google Inc).

Over 320 participants, including past GSoC participants and mentors, open source luminaries, and prospective students, attended the event.

The Chief Guest, Hon. Vice Chancellor Prof Ananda Jayawardena of the University of Moratuwa addressed the gathering, speaking on the impact of open source software for which GSoC has acted as a driving force.

Chris DiBona, described the aims and the early days of the GSoC program. He expressed his excitement at the high participation rate from a small country like Sri Lanka and on ideas to influence the younger generation to start participating in open source development.

Stephanie Taylor and Mary Radomile, spoke on the steps involved in applying to this year's program, the "10 things" GSoC

initiative and described how the program will be enhanced to celebrate a decade of GSoC.

Guest speaker, Dr. Sanjiva Weerawarana of WSO2 spoke to the audience about the history of IT challenges in Sri Lanka and how open source communities have taken on a major role in solving them.

The event concluded with the exchange of gifts, including a plaque presented by Google to the University of Moratuwa celebrating its exceptional participation rates in Google Summer of Code these past nine years. Guests were also treated to modern Raga music, local cultural entertainment, refreshments, and informal panel discussion between guests and students.



TECHEX SOCIETY



With the aim to explore innovative technology beyond traditional boundaries, using Internet, search technologies, mobile technologies, online communities, online gatherings, online collaboration tools; which can improve technical, technological, interpersonal and communication skills of the undergraduates, Google Student Ambassadors Rashmika Nawaratne, Hasini Abeywickrama and Chaamini Mangaleswaran formed the Technology Explorer's Society at University of Moratuwa under the supervision of Lt.Col Dr. Chandana Gamage, Head of Department, Computer Science & Engineering and Mr. Nisansa D. Silva (<http://www.cse.mrt.ac.lk/~nisansadds/>) lecturer in department of Computer Science and engineering. Celebration of Google Summer of Code Decade at University of Moratuwa, Google Map Session of University, GQuiz to improve undergraduate's knowledge in Google Services and Products are few of many milestones achieved in the short span of time from the inception.

Girls Gone Google is another initiative taken by TechEx to empower women in the IT industry by inspiring and encouraging them to take part in various opportunities available in Sri Lanka. A list of well-known women leaders will conduct sessions to motivate the female undergraduates to think out of the box.

