Introduction

Welcome to the YoungOR 17 conference organised biennially by The OR Society.

This year it is the University of Nottingham that brings together conference delegates representing the ‘younger generation’ of operational researchers. As usual, the conference boasts a good mix of practitioners and academics with up to ten years’ experience in O.R. and provides an excellent forum to share and update knowledge of the field. The conference committee hopes that you enjoy the occasion and make the best of the networking and learning opportunities available.

As usual, the conference has received a number of interesting keynote papers that illustrate the diversity of O.R. practice and academic research. The keynotes are not necessarily given by a ‘young’ operational researcher and provide an excellent opportunity for learning from some of the best and brightest in the field. The committee hopes that you enjoy them!

In the Simulation stream, Stewart Robinson provides a fascinating look at conceptual modelling that was undertaken in an applied simulation project. The advice given on ‘how to build simulations that are better than the rest’ is particularly important in this instance due to the speed at which the model was developed and used.

Martin Kunc presents a look at innovation through the lens of System Dynamics modelling. Through example models, Martin illustrates the complex nature of innovation and how it can be considered at four levels of analysis: industry, product, organisation and processes.

In the Health stream, Christos Vasilakis provides an overview of the role O.R. can play in the organisation and planning of health care delivery. Christos’ keynote examines parallels of O.R. to improvement science – a newly developed science used to develop knowledge for improving health services – and how each discipline may inform one another.

If you are a regular reader of the OR Society’s Inside O.R. magazine you will be familiar with the Analytics debate and that several UK Universities with strong O.R. groups have launched courses targeting this market. The UK is not alone in this debate and Russell Hodge presents the results of a recent study that Capgemini conducted for the US Institute of Operations Research and Management Sciences (INFORMS) as a joint keynote for the Consultancy and Analytics streams.

The Consultancy stream was extremely popular this year and we are pleased to welcome not one, but two keynote speakers. In our second keynote talk, David Buxton asks ‘why have we never seen an O.R. professional on The Apprentice?’ This question should provide some lively debate amongst delegates; especially as the answer may centre on how can we change the perception of what O.R. can contribute
to management decision making. David offers some advise based on his extensive experience in the application of O.R.

For those people who are not familiar with Soft Methods, Terry Seagriff and Stephanie Lord provide an overview of the aim of soft O.R. and the many techniques falling under that umbrella. For instance, they detail one of the best known techniques: soft systems methodology.

In the Optimisation stream, Iskander Aliev presents an overview of some of his recent work on the application of lattices to discrete optimisation problems. In particular, the presentation covers the main advantages and disadvantages of the Lovász lattice bias reduction algorithm and discusses existing and potential application to discrete optimisation problems.

In the Revenue Management and Forecasting stream, Grace Sterling and David Wooff present their models and case details from a study to forecast out-of-hours workloads of General Practitioners in the North East of England. Particularly interesting is the author’s note that the forecasting methods were simple, but worked extremely well in practice and were well received by their clients.

The committee would like to thank all of our keynote speakers this year for helping make the conference a great success.

Thomas Monks
Keynote Editor
YoungOR 17, University of Nottingham
April 2011