

Technology...  
Can You Live  
Without It?

Who Am I?

A DETERMINED MAN TO FIND  
OUT ABOUT HIS FAMILY ORIGINS.



Photo  
Competition



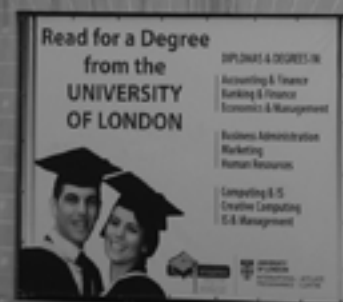
Through the Lens

PHOTOGRAPHING THE DREAM



Game On!

GAMEDEV CHALLENGE : BEHIND THE SCENES

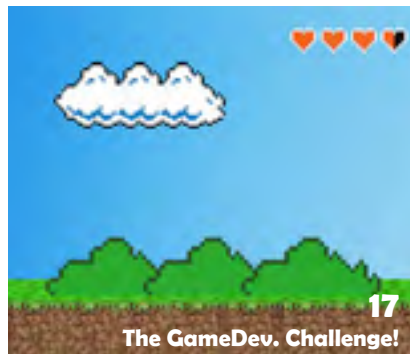




5 The Human Condition



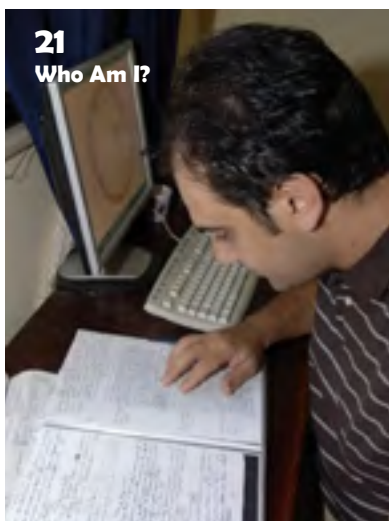
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# From the Editors



When I first decided to take on the task of creating this magazine, I certainly never imagined that it would take this shape and form and become ASPIRE; hopefully an inspiration to many. I had been thinking on simpler terms. It was at a particular staff meeting that my right hand sort of took a life of its own and shot up when Jonathan Barbara asked if anyone was interested in taking on this project.

After battling with several unknowns I was joined by Keith Pace; the man in charge of giving my plans and dreams a life, to be enjoyed by all future readers. If ever there was a definition of teamwork, then Keith and I definitely redefined it.

Today ... that is a couple of months, hours of meetings and hundreds of emails later, I am proud to present the first issue of ASPIRE – An inside look at what makes St. Martin's Institute tick, proving that the people involved in the everyday running of this Institute are real flesh and blood, human beings who would love to share their interests. A large family, made from individuals with a strong common interest – Learning.

Finally, I would like to thank all those who contributed in some way or another in the creation of this e-Magazine. Your contribution, large or small, was very much appreciated and without such contributions this magazine would have never seen the light of day. I know that the next issue will contain many more new and diverse articles ... there is a so much more planned for our faithful readers!

So, till next time and I sincerely hope you enjoy our efforts.

*Joseph C* Joseph Camilleri,  
Editor in Chief

I would like to take this opportunity to wish all our readers a pleasant and prosperous 2012-2013 academic year.

ASPIRE is a new digital publication at St. Martin's Institute of Information Technology (SMIIT). Its main focus is to keep in touch with all our St Martin's students (past and present) and other St Martin's associates. This publication is aimed to inform readers with the opportunities offered at St Martin's, and also any past and future events organised by our institute. Furthermore, we also aim to inspire you through some of the articles that are presented within this publication.



The first issue of the magazine is aimed at presenting work and experiences by various lecturers and students within the SMIIT family. We hope you will find the magazine to your liking, and as educational as it is fun and entertaining. We invite you to read on. Feel free to contact us and give us your comments as to how we can go that extra mile to improve quality for you, our readers.

Keep in mind that all students are welcome to contribute to future issues of the magazine. We hope you can provide us with fresh, interesting and exciting material that may serve as a true inspiration to our fellow readers.

Last but not least, we would appreciate if you could take a minute to fill out the short questionnaire at the end of the magazine to give us insight of your experience in reading this magazine.

*Keith P.* Keith Pace, Co-Editor,  
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# Principal Matters



An educational institution renews itself every year. And similarly St Martin's Institute welcomes its twenty eighth academic year in earnest.

Social networks would have been buzzing throughout the summer months, yet now is the time when colleagues meet up in class. Yet, students would have graduated and now in employment, whilst freshmen students are joining in. Some lecturers moved on, and new lecturers have joined. Yes, undoubtedly the start of a new academic year is a buzz, to say the very least.

In this short introduction it is impossible to cram all the developments that have taken place. But the launching of this magazine is an effort to provide a channel of communication.

I will allow you readers to vouch for the quality and value of this great effort by all concerned. The editorial board will be very keen to receive contributions from all those who have a connection with St Martin's Institute. Feedback will make this publication better, and tailored to your wishes.

Congratulations to all our graduates! Yet again, you have made us all proud.

Charles Theuma  
Principal

# Open Day at St. Martin's Institute

Open Day has been established on St. Martin's Calendar of events for one main reason – that of letting the outside world get to know exactly what happens within the Institute and hear the details from several speakers including the Institute Principal himself, Mr. Charles Theuma.

This year on the 14th of July 2012, Principal Charles Theuma started his welcome speech to all prospective students. Mr. Theuma said it was his pleasure to welcome all University of London Directors attending St Martin's Open Day. Mr. Theuma made a brief introduction of St Martin's and its relationship with the University of London to all prospective students, also introducing a list of programmes which are being offered at the school and emphasized the reasons why one should choose to study at St Martin's.

Following Mr. Theuma's speech, Mr. John Ferra and Dr. Jan Stockdale introduced LSE programs, Dr. Maggie Cooper introduced Gold Smiths' programmes and Dr. Semeer Hosany introduced the Royal Holloway's programme to students and they all commented that they were very positively surprised and could hardly believe that the best performance worldwide of the University of London External Programme came from such a small institution! They all spoke of their pride in St Martin's achievement – the youngest affiliate institution of the University of London.

Mrs. Pavla Borg, BSc Economics & Management graduate and Mr. Clive Bonavia, BSc Computing Information Systems graduate and St Martin's current student Mr. Jonathan Grumley all shared their studies experience at St Martin's and how the University of London degree helped them in their job prospects.

St. Martin's staff was available to discuss all Diploma and Degree courses with prospective students to ensure correct personal and individual choices that would not prove erroneous in the future.

*The Editor*



Visit of inauguration of St. Martin's Institute of I.T.  
by the Prime Minister Dr. Lawrence Gonzi



# The Human Condition.

by Luke Aguis



*“Just like that, I have captured an unguarded moment”*

I've been interested in photography for just a couple of years now and at first, just like any other photography enthusiast, I started photographing anything from small details such as textures to landscapes. In photography after a short while everyone (those who delve further into the hobby) tends to shift towards a particular subject of interest. My shift happened at a very particular moment on a much unexpected day.

It was May and the exam season was upon us and to calm down my nerves just before an exam, I woke up early, headed over to Valletta with notes of course (for last minute revision ;)), camera in hand and an open eye for anything interesting to shoot. As I was walking past the new parliament building, I snapped a photo of an elderly couple just as a test shot to make sure everything was ok with the camera and lens. There is nothing extremely technical about the photo apart from maybe the bokeh, but as soon as I reviewed what I had just photographed on the LCD, I was struck by how much of a story the photo was giving out. Just like that, I have captured an unguarded moment, a gesture that tells a story, something which anyone can relate to. After some research on line regarding this type of shooting, I have found that it is called street photography, and I never looked back after that. After a while I started to collect the best ones out from the lot into a set called **“The human condition”**.



As for the technical details, during those photos I was using a Canon 550d which is an entry level dSLR, with a 55-250mm EF-S f/4-5.6 attached to it. The lens was a new addition at the time so I took it out for a spin. I was shooting mainly in Av mode during this shoot to keep things fluid and in movement. I chose this mode over Manual, because people tend to move a lot. You do not have a lot of time to fidget with settings so I kept Av on in order to capture that particular posture in their movement.



little more blurry due to the enlargement, thus creating the illusion of a better bokeh and therefore separating the subject even more from the background, making your subject pop out even more.

So in closing this little article, I would like to leave you all with a few words a very famous photographer, Steve Mc Curry published in one of his books -



*“Look for the unguarded moment, the essential soul peeking out, the experience etched on a person's face or gesture.”*

One might ask how come such a bokeh was achieved with such a slow Apertures. The blurred background is not the result of a very fast aperture; say an f1.4 or an f2, but rather the result of an effect very common in telephoto lenses called Perspective Compression or flattening. In simpler terms this means foreshortening the view, making distant objects appear to be right next to close objects. Therefore when you have a blurred background like the reading man in one of the following photos, the blurriness gets a



# imagination<sup>3</sup> PHOTO COMPETITION

Click Here To  
Submit Your  
Pictures

## Calling all aspiring photographers...

### Who can enter?

1. Current University of London International Programme students
2. University of London International Programmes alumni: Students who graduated through the University of London International Programmes (formerly the External System), and are now active members of the Alumni Association.

# Il-ħajja ta' student Għawdxi f'Malta.

by Charlene Debattista

Il-ħajja minnha nnifisha mhux faċli aktar u aktar għal dawk in-nies li huma m'caħhda mill-opportunitajiet f'pajjiżhom – opportunitajiet ta' xogħol u studju. Din hija r-realtà tal-magħġor parti tal-Għawdxi li m'għandhomx għażla oħra ħlief li jirrikorru lejn Malta f'dak li għandu x'jaqsam ma' tahrig u xogħol.

Skont studju li sar din is-sena jidher li 89% tal-Għawdxi li jistudjaw Malta, ġewwa l-Università ta' Malta, l-MCAST fost skejjel oħra, joqogħdu Malta matul il-ġimgħa filwaqt li jaqsmu lura lejn Għawdex fi tmiemha. Din ir-realtà tidher eċitanti meta thares lejha mingħajr ma tqis il-konsegwenzi u r-responsabilitajiet li esperjenza ta' dan it-tip għib magħha. Bla dubju ta' xejn hija esperjenza li twassal għal sfidi godda f'dak li għandu x'jaqsam mal-iżvilupp personali taż-żgħażaġh. Żgħażaġh Għawdxi, minn età bikrija ta' 18-il sena (bejn wiehed u iehor), jgħaddu minn fażi ta' żvilupp fejn jinqatgħu kompletament minn mal-familjari tagħhom u mill-ambjent li dejjem għexu u trabbew fih filwaqt li jibdew jistabilixxu l-ħajja u l-identità tagħhom 'il bogħod mid-dar. Din l-avventura jibdewha f'appartament flimkien ma' oħrajn u għaldaqstant barra li jridu jaddattaw għall-istil differenti ta' ħajja jridu jittgħallmu jaddattaw jgħixu mat-tajjeb u l-ħażin ta' haddiehor ukoll. Ta' min insemmi wkoll li dawn iż-żgħażaġh jibdlu l-irwol tagħhom għal wiehed aktar responsabbli fejn ilkoll jridu jahsbu għall-bżonnijiet bażiċi ta' kuljum bħalma huwa t-tisjir, xiri u tindif. Dawn ir-responsabilitajiet huma ta' piż għal dawn l-istudenti li barra l-ħajja impenjativa tal-iskola, minħabba x-xogħol kollu li għib magħha, jkollhom ilaħħqu wkoll ma' bżonnijiet oħra.

Min-naħa l-oħra, il-11% tal-bqija tal-istudenti huma dawk li jivjaġġaw ta' kuljum minn gżira għall-oħra minħabba raġunijiet varji. Raġuni komuni hija li hafna żgħażaġh ma jirnexxillhomx jgħixu 'l bogħod mill-familjari tagħhom u għaldaqstant ma jkunux jistgħu jaddattaw għall-istil ta' ħajja li tirrekjedi aktar responsabilità u indipendenza. Raġuni oħra hija li wħud ma jkunux jistgħu jlaħħqu mal-ispejjeż finanzjarji. Preżentament il-gvern joffri 400 ewro kull tliet xhur lil kull student Għawdxi bil-għan li jnaqqas il-piż finanzjarju li jhabbtu wiċċhom magħhom iż-żgħażaġh Għawdxi. Minkejja li inizjattiva ta' dan it-tip hija bil-wisq apprezzata sfortunatament ma tkoprix l-ispejjeż kollha. Tajjeb wiehed iżomm f'moħħu li barra l-ispiza tal-kera, li bejn wiehed u iehor tammonta għal 100 ewro kull xahar, hemm spejjeż oħra – il-kontijiet tad-dawl u l-ilma, kont tat-televiżjoni, kont tal-internet, ix-xiri ta' ikel, fost spejjeż oħra minimi li dejjem ikomplu jżidu mal-ispiza. Għaldaqstant huwa impossibbli li żgħażaġh Għawdxi jirnexxillhom ikopru l-ispejjeż finanzjarji tagħhom jekk ma jkollhomx is-sapport

finanzjarju tal-familja wkoll. Dawn ma jhabbtux wiċċhom mal-istess diffikultajiet bħal dawk id-89% però jhabbtu wiċċhom ma' oħrajn. Biżżejjed wiehed iqis li wiehed ikollu jgħid minn kmieni filgħodu sabiex jgħaddi l-ewwel ftit sigħat tal-ġurnata jivjaġġa qabel ma jasal fil-post mixtieq sabiex imbagħad jibda l-ġurnata ta' hidma tiegħu u jerga' jesperjenza l-istess vjaġġ lura sabiex imur id-dar. Barra l-hela ta' hin biex wiehed jasal fil-post mixtieq, hemm l-aspett ta' għejja iżda xorta waħda dawn l-istudenti jkollhom jibdew ix-xogħol u l-istudju tal-iskola fi għieda kontinwa mal-hin u magħhom infushom.

Huwa minnu li l-ħajja f'Għawdex hija waħda trankwilla però meta tqis li wiehed għandu jgħaddi minn dan kollu t-trankwilita ftit li xejn tiġi esperjenzata. Għaldaqstant, hija holma ta' hafna mill-Għawdxi li jkollhom il-possibbiltà li jistudjaw u jaħdmu Għawdex, li jgħammru ġewwa Għawdex u fuq kollox li jkabbru l-familja tagħhom fih – holma li preżentament diffiċli ssir realtà.

# Through the Lens

by Keith Pace

I have always admired good photography from a very early age. Images like the “Afghan Girl (1984)”, “Tiananmen Square Stand-off (1989)” and “Reichstag Flag (1945)”; just to name a few; have rooted the dream to own a camera and be able to capture exceptional moments. Yet, at that moment in time I was too young to be trusted with a camera; let alone own one.

The eye for detail and the passion for photography subsisted, even though I had to set my dream aside for a while. At the age of 18 I eagerly bought my first compact digital camera and avidly shot various pictures and ventured into different styles of photography.

Along the years I nurtured a real passion for photography, and taught myself the art of photo-editing. Meanwhile, I managed to purchase a number of digital cameras to better suit my aspirations. Albeit that a compact digital camera has its limitations, it served its purpose and enabled me to experiment and continue nurturing my hobby.



Needless to say, when it comes to range and the ability to capture moments in split seconds, one just has to bring out the big guns. In 2009, I decided to invest all the more in my hobby, so while I was in Singapore, I bought a Sony DSLR-A550 camera with an 18-250mm lens.

I always try to capture each and every interesting scene or moments that I might experience during my free time. Through photography and editing I strive

to express my creativity, and try to shed some light on anything that tends to get unnoticed. As my portfolio grew, I felt the urge to share my best works with other fellow photographers. I subscribed to Flickr and 500px, both of which are an online photography community. I soon found out that 500px gave me the chance of sharing my work without having any previous exposure or a large fan base, since it is aimed at aspiring photographers (like me) and professional photographers. Unlike Flickr, it gives everyone the opportunity to share their works; meaning that a novice photographer can obtain the same exposure as any professional photographer. Through this online photography community, my inspirations grew and as a result I felt confident to submit my works for a photography competition.

Last year, I had the opportunity to present my works for the Sony World Photography Awards 2012 - Open Competition. I submitted an image which I shot during a family Christmas vacation in Lake Bleed, Slovenia. After some months I was informed that my work had been shortlisted in the top 10 images in the Travel Category. Undoubtedly, this was an incredible achievement. I reaped great personal satisfaction, in that it was my first submission in a competition and considering that my single image had been selected from 52,323 images submitted by competitors from 171 countries.



This year I am determined to dedicate more time for my hobby. Hopefully, I might capture more intriguing images to add to my current portfolio.

I also hope that my photographic works will inspire the younger generation to take up photography as a hobby, just like I was inspired by more experienced photographers.



# On Both Sides Of The Fence

A story of how a student became a lecturer.

It has been quite evident to me that the course of my life was determined by cards dealt to me. As a young boy I was unfortunate enough to have lost my little sister due to a tragic traffic accident. This, coupled with the birth of my younger brother soon after, who suffers with Down syndrome, had practically forced me to become the “responsible” sibling.

To be fair, this story is not all about unfavourable circumstances. At the age of seven something happened that was to change my life forever. My parents had bought the first family computer. It was a Macintosh 1c2 and it was on this machine that I had my first computer game experience. It was from then onwards that I had decided that wanted to become a game developer and thus the pursuit for computer related knowledge started. Attending St Michael’s school, in Ħal Qormi, I took the topic of computer science very seriously.

Up to this point in life I was both quiet and shy, not really

lecturer material one might say. Thanks to an invitation from a friend of mine, this was all about to change. The invitation was to start attending the Youth centre in ĦAttard... aptly named the Attard Youth Centre or A.Y.C. for short. The constant interaction with youths of my own age opened my mind in ways I have never thought possible and it had cured me of my chronic shy-

and hosting meetings has become the norm.

After attending Junior College and obtaining my matriculation certificate without any major hiccup, it was time to move onto university. At the time, there wasn't any course that really captured my imagination such that it would direct-



ness. As teachers who taught me after this point, can testify I was never quiet again. I liked this youth centre so much that, 12 years on, I am still an active member to this day, where organising events

ly lead me into the realm of game development. I therefore took an option which, in my eyes, was second best. I am not saying that taking a course in BSc. Computer Science and AI with Physics is a bad course; it was just that it

didn't sit at a 100% with me. As time dragged on it was becoming increasingly clear that my course selection was a mistake. The fact that a long term relationship had ended badly was the straw that broke the camel's back. The ever increasing anxiety that was hovering over me with respect to education, forced my resignation from the University of Malta.

A brief exploration into the world of work was interrupted by an advertisement in a local newspaper. A degree was being offered by St. Martin's Institute of I.T. in Creative Computing. At first glance, this course seemed to tick all the boxes for the requirements I wanted in an undergraduate level. On closer inspection this was confirmed as the course that I had always craved. Thus began my

life as a St. Martin's student. The differences between what I was used to at university became very quickly apparent. Small classes, individual attention from lecturers, small campus, manageable number of students ... all polar opposites from what I had experienced at the University of Malta.

I can honestly say that, looking back, my 3 years as a St. Martins student were quite pleasant. I have made numerous friends along the way and there were many experiences

that my lecturers, as well as my fellow colleagues, exposed me to. I am not trying to say that those 3 years as a student didn't have their own difficulties, but I think it was easier for me to deal with due to the friendly atmosphere of my surroundings. As with every course there were some topics which of course were a lot more difficult to grasp than others but on the

them up to the last possible “safe” moment, but having said that my lecturers at the time did warn me of such an eventuality, so I might have not heeded my own warning!

One thing that always remains dear to my heart when looking back at my life as a student were the extracurricular activities which St. Martin's provided. Most notably the student placement program



whole my dream kept me going, trying to achieve and test concepts that I have learnt outside the class room setting. This constant idea of testing myself and seeing where my limits were, helped me in obtaining relatively high standards, thus making the whole experience of studying less of an ordeal and more of a challenge or game. On the other hand, if I had to go back in time and face my past self, I would have hinted that starting early on assignments would have been better than leaving

scheme, where I was asked to build upon an idea my friends and I had come up with in the creative week (a week in which delegates from Goldsmiths had asked us to come up with an idea for an artefact which would improve our surroundings), as well as the Game Dev Challenges (where teams of students were pitted against each other to come up with functioning and original game titles). The fact that such activities were not an essential requirement for the completion of the course, had given me a greater insight into how



one can work in teams to come up with something creative, thus implementing most of the techniques learned in class. Even though some of the said projects were more successful than others, I remain proud of what my various team members and I had accomplished and treasure the invaluable lessons learned. August 2011 was particularly hard for me. It was the summer just after the completion of the final year exams and the curiosity of how

Martin's as an assistant lecturer, helping students, just as I was not so long ago, with any difficulties that they might have had, especially with regards to programming. Having had such a pleasant experience at St. Martin's had a big say in the level of curiosity I had in such a proposition, and after a meeting with Mr. Barbara and Mr. Charles Theuma (Principal & Founder of St. Martin's), I had gladly accepted taking up the position.

to Java). The prospect of being thrown into the deep end without any formal training in lecturing was, I'll have to admit, a bit of a frightening prospect for me, but I had accepted the role especially after being encouraged by both Mr. Theuma as well as Mr. Barbara that I had the necessary skill set in order to take up such a challenge. And then, as they say, the rest is history. Subsequent to my introduction to the St. Martin's staff room, I can

well I had done (or not) was eating away at me. The results were in. I had passed with a first class honours! The joy and relief felt was palpable, as now I knew that all my hard work had paid off. Thus a renewed confidence in my own abilities had spurred me on to move on with the next



honestly say that I felt as though I had done the right choice, the staff were both friendly and willing to help me out in any query I had, and the atmosphere that was so familiar to me as a student came rushing back now that I was on the other side of the fence as a lecturer. Needless to say, I felt right back at home and

phase in my life, seeking employment in my chosen profession. After some months searching for job opportunities, I remember receiving an email from an ex-lecturer of mine, Mr. Jonathan Barbara (at that time a Head of Department at St. Martin's), asking me how things were going. After some back and forth emailing, I was asked if I would be interested in taking up a position at St.

Following a couple of weeks of my new role at St. Martin's, I was approached to see if I was at all interesting in taking up a more permanent role as a fully fledged lecturer by taking a class or two from MCAST (in Fundamentals of Programming) under my guidance whilst still keeping my role as an assistant lecturer in CC112 (Creative Computing 1st years) and CIS109 (Introduction

my new colleagues and we fast became friends.

Even though my career is still in its infancy, it is clear to me that the role of a teacher, a mentor, is important to students and I can already see the twinkle in some of my students' eyes, that of eager minds that want to learn. I wonder if I had that same look when I was in their shoes. On

the flip side, I can also see the difficulties that some students might have in this learning environment. Although I am the first to admit that I still have a lot to learn myself in order to become an effective role model, just as my lecturers were with me, I also know that my students are teaching me how to fulfil that responsibility as much, if not more, than I am teaching them their course subject material.

Looking back, it seems as though, life contains everything from happiness to despair, misfortune to dumb luck and tragedy to success, and it is apparent to me that most people pass to similar phases within their lives. I guess that the only thing different between one person and the next is their experiences but more importantly how one deals with said experiences and feelings in order to learn and become a better person because of it. If I have any advice that I might offer you it is not to give up on your dreams. Pursue them with all your might and don't let detours scare you. Take them as a challenge, for what is life but a journey and why not enjoy it? As a 26 year old man, all this and more has already happened to me and who knows what the future holds. All I can say about it is this; I can't wait.

*by Jeremy Grech*



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# Game On!

by Neville Attard

Technical Game Designer at TRC  
& Game Dev Challenge  
coordinator



GameDev Challenge, started from an idea to give students hands-on practice on game development and create a game from scratch. Computer Games is what brought me into computer studies. Breathing life into otherwise inanimate objects is what pushed me into knowing more on how games work under the hood. I realised that I could pass on this passion by letting students team up and discover the interesting challenges whilst developing a game. This involves coming up with a fun game idea, concepting it, prototyping it and bring it to fruition. This is no easy feat. I consider game development to be one of the most challenging types of development. But the rewards are great - when you see other people playing your game and see their smiles, grins and excitement on their face and inviting their friends to try it out is very rewarding.

At St. Martin's Institute of IT we are running the GameDev Challenge for the third time this year. My role as coordinator of the GameDev Challenge is to remind the teams of the upcoming milestones, make sure they are focused on their game idea by prototyping and iterating to find the fun in the game as early as they can. Students tend to think big and want to create the next Assassin's Creed, or World of Warcraft, in just a couple of months. We constantly remind them of the short time they have available and also lack of resources (such as experienced 3D artists). When they have technical problems, we simply tell them where they need to look at. With their newly found passion, they always find the solutions to their own problems. It's always exciting seeing their progress when we meet informally on a bi-weekly basis.

Besides myself pushing the students, we got industry veterans like Gareth Lewis (Ex-Lion Head studio production manager) and Nick Porsche (Producer and Creative Game Director for Battlestar Galactica Online) that give invaluable feedback when the teams give presentations at various milestones. This year I also got my right hand Anthony Demanuele (Lead of Barbaganni Studios coming out from GameDev Challenge itself) helping with pushing the students in the right direction.

We think that the GameDev Challenge will be giving our students a great experience and realise that teamwork is extremely important to succeed. We also believe that taking part and creating a game will give them an edge when they will be being interviewed by game development companies who are setting up shop in Malta, both current and future ones.

The winners of GameDev Challenge 3 will be announced at the end of November.

For these last couple of years several lecturers have been roped in to give the teams from St. Martin's participating in the Games Developments Competition a cutting edge.

Joe Camilleri and Keith Pace together with Jeremy Grech have received additional related training, the former two over 2 years and the latter more recently to prepare them better for tackling any issues and challenges that the students participating in the competition might face in their run for victory.

These courses with trainers like Jonathan Gerada and Gareth Lewis, both prominent members of local and foreign Gaming Companies, have helped to develop the awareness and sharpen artistic and coding instincts in the lecturers that have become involved in the betterment of

the teams from one year to another to ensure the improvement of standards.

Both Keith and Joe have brought along their artistic skills and acumen with Photoshop and actual 2D art respectively to aid the artists in the teams, while Jeremy has been recruited more recently to help out with coding in game, together with Neville; the main brain and energy behind GDC.

The main aim of GDC over all these years was to give students the opportunity to practice what was being taught to them in class and in this St. Martin's has definitely managed as a team growing in size and knowledge, aimed towards the holistic improvement of

their students, in this particular case mainly those reading for a Degree in Creative Computing.

This Competition opens for all students of St. Martin's Institute every year. Planning starts during the Summer while the final game product is judged and the winner declared by November of the same year. Anyone with an insight into coding or art in gaming and interested in joining this competition should keep their eyes open for later issues of this magazine to ensure timely enrolment.



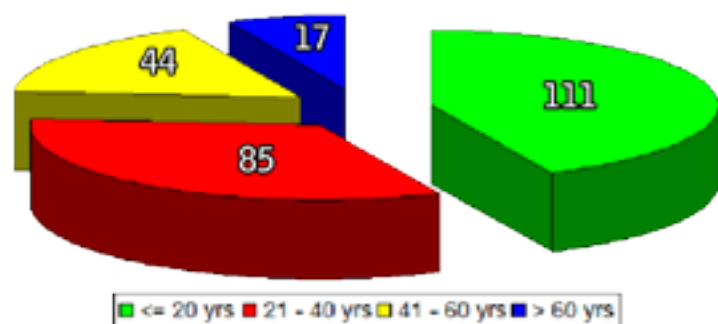
# How Dependent Are You On Technology?

by Dunstan Briffa



Technology has evolved over the centuries and aims at easiness of life and providing us with desirable comfort such that it has become very much an integral part of our daily lives. Technology has diffused well throughout the many corners of our lives .... phones, emails, wireless networking, social networks, online shopping, entertainment and so on. Although it is assumed that technology will lead to prosperity and development of societies, there is an increasing concern that is impacting negatively our family and social lives. First year CIS/CC Diploma students completed an exercise throughout the past academic year to study how much technology is integrated in our lives and to see the public's opinion on the effects of technology. This article gives a brief overview of this study.

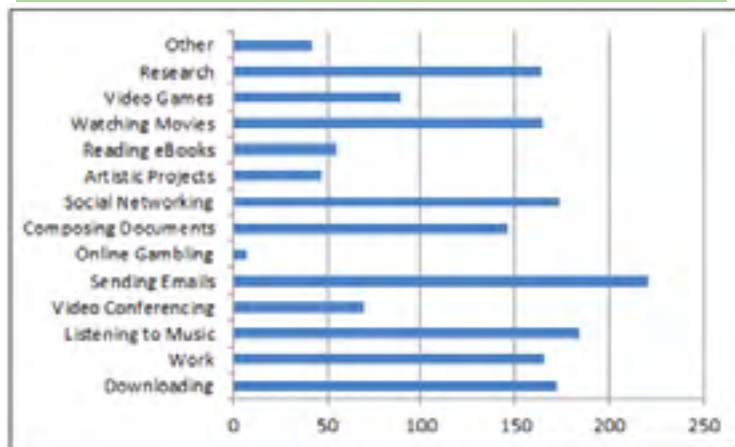
Out of the questionnaires distributed 257 surveys were collected with 56% of the respondents being male and 44% female.



Age group distribution of respondents

Technology is no longer limited to the workplace or the home only but is essential in many corners of our lives. 72% of respondents made use of technology at their work place and 95% believed that technology is essential in our daily lives. In particular, the advances of the Internet enabled

many of such features we use today. 93% of respondents have access to the Internet (at work or at home) and the following graph depicts how the respondents stratified this use.



Classification of Internet use amongst the respondents

But how are we being affected by all this technology? 89% of the participants feel that technology is affecting our social life in one way or another. Typically, the positive aspects mentioned in the surveys include improvements to work, communication, research and business opportunities. It has also made socialising easier to attain and brought the world closer together. However, it is these same social networks that are a major concern between the respondents claiming that such networks have eliminated or greatly reduced the personal contact. In particular, this is a growing concern for parents. 69 of the respondents have children and amongst their main worries are the facts that the various technologies (in particular the Internet) are distracting their children from their studies and that a substantial number of children prefer to stay indoors chatting online rather than going out and play.

Social networks are much to blame for this as they have become one of the main applications

for the Internet with 79% of the respondents claiming to use such networks ... a figure which is set to continue increasing as the popularity of the likes of Facebook, Twitter, Google+, etc keeps on growing. Moreover, the advancement of mobile technology has enabled such features to be available to us continuously and one no longer has to sit down by a computer to check his email, chat and so on.

When asked the pivotal question "Could you survive a week without using your mobiles phone or the internet?" 57% of respondents answered NO while the remaining 43% think they can manage it! Two particular respondents stated that although they would probably manage such a feat they will be quite irritated at the end of the exercise! Two other respondents mentioned that they would probably manage a week without the Internet but not without their mobile. How about you? How would you fair?!

Overall, 65% of the respondents stated up front that they are dependent on technology, but are the others truly indifferent to the availability of our technology? It is really when you lose something that you can appreciate fully its impact on your life. For each individual to fully be aware of his/her dependence on technology simply imagine a power cut! Even more so, imagine a

power cut which is nation wide such as the one that we had some time ago. How did you feel? No computer, no television, no reception on the mobile phones ...

Technology in itself is neutral ... it is how you use it which determines whether it is bad or good! In order for us to reap the benefits and positive effects of technology, what it comes down to is moderation and balance. As long as

## COULD YOU SURVIVE A WEEK WITHOUT YOUR MOBILE PHONE OR THE INTERNET?

technology isn't used as a constant replacement for problem solving, it enhances and encourages thinking. As long as technology isn't used as a babysitter or overused, kids can enjoy the best of both worlds. Parents should allow their children to maximise and absorb the benefits of technology while effectively minimising exposure to the drawbacks, so as to teach their kids the salient values which can be derived from technology.

NB. A full paper on the analysis of this exercise will be available shortly.

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# Who Am I?

## PART 1

### Personal Information

#### Who am I?

34year old graduate in B.Sc (Hons.) Computer Science working as a Lecturer with St Martin's Institute of IT for the CIS and Creative Computing degrees of the University of London. Married for nine years and have two kids.

#### What got you into this hobby?

It was the year 2000, during my final year at University, when my mind was pumped up on thesis but I wanted to do everything except my thesis.

My paternal grandfather's death led to an inheritance of 7/11ths of a field, and my dad



explained how this 7/11 came about by drawing a 5 generation long family tree. Then he said "And somewhere here there was a relation with this guy".

That uncertainty caught my attention and suddenly I wanted to know who that guy was and how he was related to the other guy, and who all the other ancestros were.

How did you first go about things? Did you go online and Google a name or did you start by asking family?

This was back in 2000 when Google was not so popular. My father always had an interest in his relatives and their families, and he was the major source of information. He was able not only to go back to great grandparents but also to tell me the names of their children, their wives, and their subsequent children. Other sources of information were my maternal grandmother's sister who had some birth records of their parents and the youngest brother of my great grandpa on my maternal grandfather's side. He

had records going back to 1780 due to some research having been done in relation to some inheritance.

I also obtained a couple of photos from my parents' uncles/aunts.

#### Did you start at the Grandparents and keep expanding? Did you pick a particular relative and expand from him?

Then I started pecking at the Government records via the [www.certifikati.gov.mt](http://www.certifikati.gov.mt) website where you need to give a person's name and surname and approximate date of the record required. The husband's or father's name would be an asset - I tried to expand every branch (working backwards) until I reached the 1860s which are the limits of the govt records.

Then I discovered that my father's mother's father's mother was born in Attard and I looked up her birth record. Having success, I continued looking up that branch, always keeping to the same parish - any ancestors coming

from other cities were noted and left for future tasks. I was lucky to have always had someone from Attard, until the last 3 generations (1580s-1600s) were all from that parish.

#### What keeps you going?

Incomplete tree which has missing information, I want to find that out, it's a challenge, my ongoing Millennium Project :)

#### What piece of information are you currently trying to trace? Why is this hard?

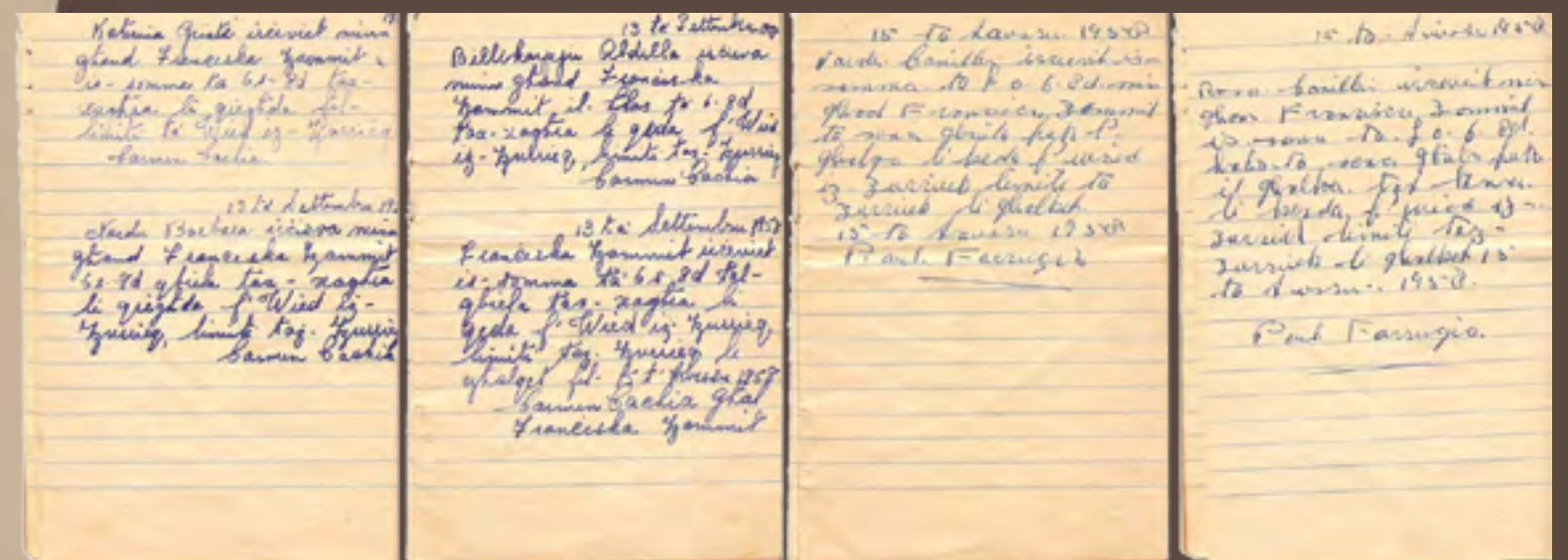
Currently I am tracing my father's ancestors in Zurrieq. The problem is trying to balance between work, family,

One man's travels through history to discover his ancestry.

and the parish office opening hours. On my first attempt I discovered 4 ancestors, and after a Google search I discovered three Canadian brothers who are my 5th cousins who had done their own part of the research for religious purposes (they are Mormons). This gave me some ready-made work but I still go to confirm the records myself - in fact I already have found a couple of "reading" mistakes.

A particular hard part of this trace is trying to find the origins of my 4th ggrandpa along the direct male line (Barbara). He was married here in Malta, emigrated to Algeria and died here. His widow came back to Malta with at least one of their

two sons - who married in Zurrieq. So far I have not found anything about the parents in Zurrieq. If another go at the research leads no result I will have to visit the nearby towns, hoping the parish priests will allow me to research in their records.



# Doing Your Research

## Keep track of your research

With each find resulting in two more people to find, it's very easy to get confused or to lose one's way. Thus keeping a record of your research, where did you search, what did you find, where can you look next, who is who, IS VERY IMPORTANT.

To help you in this, you can make use of a variety of documents. Below is a list of documents freely available from Ancestry.com followed by the URL to get to these documents.

## Ancestral Chart

An ancestor chart (also called a pedigree, or a family tree chart) is used to record information on the ancestors from whom you have descended, and for whom you intend to compile a complete family unit.

## Research Calendar

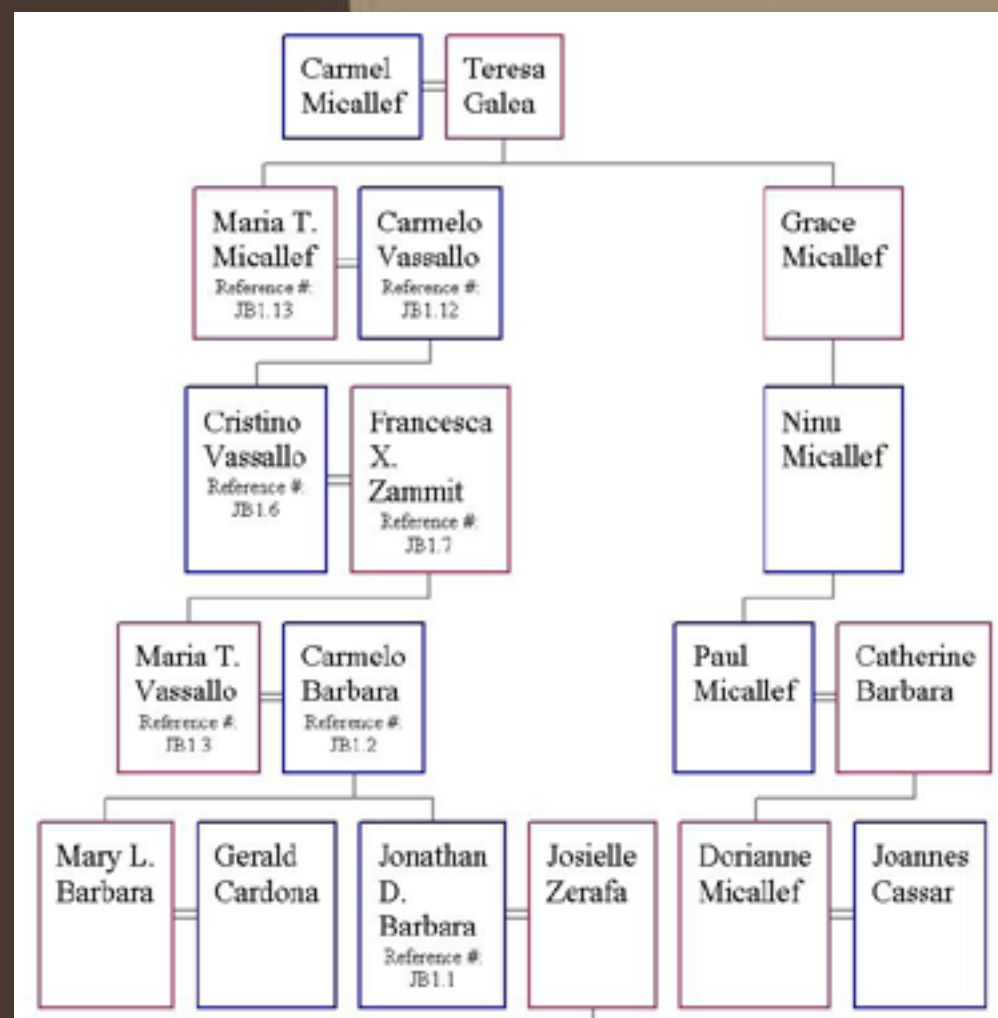
The research calendar gives an account of every record source you have searched and serves as a reminder of what you have already done and where you have found pertinent information.

## Research Extract

Use the research extract sheets to collect information in cases where the source document is not on hand, or cannot be photocopied. The research extract is also useful to summarize documents that may be difficult, or time-consuming to read, such as deeds.

## Family Group Sheet

Use the family group sheets to help compile and correct any data you have located concerning your ancestors and their immediate family, and ultimately to complete and connect the many branches of your family tree.



## Source Summary

It is helpful to be able to refer quickly to information you have found for a particular family and the sources of that information. Keep a separate source summary of information found for each family group.

## Correspondence Record

It is important to keep track of those with whom you have corresponded, the reasons for writing, and whether or not you have already received an answer.

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The photo above depicts a mother (second from left, front) and her 10 children in a photo dated approximately 1908. It is special in that the children at the back were not present for the photo - they were added later. At the time they had already emigrated to the United States of America. The young boy in front is Joe Micallef - father of Eda, who later married Albert Adreveno - also in the USA.

The other girl is Grace Micallef. Her son's son (my mother's second cousin) married my aunt Catherine Barbara, my father's sister. This relationship can be seen in the descendency chart below. Carmelo Barbara and Catherine Barbara are brother and sister.

The girls on the right (the only two girls in the family) remained in Malta. The rightmost is 16 year old Teresa, who 9 years later married Carmelo Vassallo (see below). She is my great grandma - mother of Cristino and his siblings.

*by Jonathan Barbara*

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