

Fortran Specialist Group Chair's Report 2020/21

Despite the availability of vaccines, Covid-19 is still a major health concern and it continues to influence all areas of human activity including the ability of scientists and engineers to travel and physically meet at talks, training courses and conferences as they once did. While the pandemic is subsiding, it has changed expectations and now the hybrid meeting model is much in demand and it seems here to stay. This is a positive development which enables greater inclusivity for those who cannot travel for reasons as diverse as costs, childcare or availability of time.

Last year's AGM and presentations were conducted virtually, although we struggled with the latter as it was using a BCS-supplied platform that was entirely unfamiliar to any of us. Apologies to those who expected higher levels of proficiency particularly from me! The BCS has since embraced other presentation platforms and is in the process of deploying a new discussion/collaboration platform in addition to the changes it made to the mailing list system last year. Let's hope that any teething problems and transition issues can be minimized.

During the year, I was invited to represent Fortran in a discussion of "Coding Cultures" as part of the UCL Festival of Code. This was a rather unique event, put together by anthropologist Gui Heurich, which sought to examine the cultures that existed around different programming languages. We explored this both in terms of application development but also the evolution of the languages themselves. I thought it useful to contrast between open-source languages and open-standard languages and how the respective communities engaged with language development or might be frustrated by it. The emergence of a group of enthusiasts running <https://fortran-lang.org> and associated development/discourse activities is a welcome attempt to get open-source levels of engagement injected into Fortran, although the perception that Fortran language development hasn't always been open isn't quite correct as much of this group's activities have demonstrated over its 50 years.

Speaking of which, this year saw the second successful FortranCon. Unfortunately, due to work commitments I couldn't attend but I would like to thank the organizers (Tiziano Müller & Alfio Lazzaro) as well as many of my fellow Fortran SG committee members who comprised most of the scientific committee. I know how much effort it takes to run these events and this is to be commended.

The more observant of you will be wondering what has happened to the rebranding exercise, namely the transition to the **Scientific & Engineering Computing SG**. While I did suggest this would be a slow and gradual process, it wasn't expected to be this slow! Unfortunately, we have concerns about the fate of our existing Fortran website and some further discussions will be necessary about how the transition will be managed from a technical perspective. Nonetheless, we will respond to both aliases and cater for the wider audience.

As always, I would like to thank the IOP Computational Physics Group for their ongoing financial support of joint events and also express gratitude to the FSG committee for putting up with me as chair!

John Pelan – London, 30th September 2021