



SIRC-NF Fellows Newsletter



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Special points of interest:

- Meeting with Mr Sasakawa, President of Nippon Foundation
- The 2nd SIRC-NF Alumni
- 2009 Seafarers International Research Centre (SIRC) Symposium
- Capt Bhattacharya Receives his PhD

Mr Sasakawa Meets SIRC-Nippon Foundation Fellows

Mr Yohei Sasakawa, President of the Nippon Foundation had an audience with the SIRC-NF Fellows on 6 May 2009. The informal meeting held at the Crowne Plaza, London was a chance for the Fellows to meet Mr Sasakawa and show their appreciation for his support to the Fellowship. Each Fellow had an opportunity to introduce his/her research work to Mr Sasakawa. With his congenial and warm attitude, he

made everyone feel comfortable throughout the meeting as they discussed many issues in the global maritime industry, such as piracy and the welfare of seafarers all around the world. Mr Sasakawa was very appreciative of the work of SIRC and the positive impact of the research for the maritime industry. The gathering culminated with the exchange of

gifts and pleasantries and a photo session between Mr Sasakawa and the Fellows.



Mr Sasakawa and NF fellows

The 2nd SIRC-NF Alumni Event, 14-16 July 2009

Picturesque Usk in Monmouthshire played host to the second SIRC-Nippon Foundation Alumni event from 14-16 July 2009. The Alumni event provides an ideal opportunity for the SIRC-NF fellows to come together and share their knowledge, experience and expertise while engaging in academic, personal development, and social, activities away from the bustle of city life.



Fellows at Usk Castle

The event agenda was packed with carefully selected, enriching activities and internationally accredited, meritorious scholars took the time out to come and speak to the SIRC-NF Fellows. Professor Michael Burawoy's sessions on 'Ethnographies of Work' I & II

illuminated some of the processes of undertaking work related ethnography and transported us to a newly post colonial Zambia to appreciate Zambianisation and the 'upward floating colour bar'. Professor Huw Beynon spoke to us about, 'Learning from industrial sociology?', and Professor David Walters conducted an interactive session on 'Writing an Article'.



Prof Burawoy with Fellows

The event also included other interesting activities; including a workshop by Sian Faire on 'Writing a Newsletter' and Dr. Victor Gekara's presentation on 'Union response to the

transnational capital challenge'. Three SIRC-NF fellows from the first cohort, Dr Syamantak Bhattacharya, Dr Victor Gekara and Dr Lijun Tang spoke about their reflections, achievements and aspirations. To wrap up the alumni event, the Fellows presented their plans for forthcoming events.



Prof Walters with Fellows

It is an honour and a privilege to be a part of the SIRC-NF fellowship program which works to bring the best of the industry to the Fellows and to bring out the best in the fellows to serve the industry.

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2009 SIRC Symposium

"I am looking forward to bringing to our company what I learned from listening to our speakers so that we could improve further the condition of seafarers and make the industry more relevant and responsive to the needs of the global economy."

The Seafarers International Research Centre (SIRC), Cardiff University, held its biennial Symposium on July 8-9 where maritime industry stakeholders and university academics were briefed about the completed and on-going research of its academic staff and the SIRC-Nippon Fellows.



Prof Sampson addressing the audience

"The SIRC Symposium is held every two years with the intention of feeding back our findings to those across the sector who may find them of interest, and use, in forming policy, in reaching decisions about strategy, and in considering operational matters," said Prof. Helen Sampson, SIRC director.

Various papers were presented in the two-day symposium.

Professor Michael Bloor spoke on patterns in injury reporting. Dr. Nick Bailey focused on making sense of the differences in perceptions of risk. Capt Mohamed Ghanem highlighted the social construction of marine accident reports. Professor David Walters spoke about integrated supply chains and 'best practice' in the management of health and safety. Mr Neil Ellis' presentation encompassed vessel design and the well being of seafarers. Dr Lijun Tang reported on how training and technology could be potential issues for shipping.

Individual papers were well received and industry stakeholders who attended the symposium were impressed by the quality of research being done in the Centre and the commitment of its staff make in coming up with policy-setting agenda for the maritime industry. "I take pleasure in attending this symposium for its highly helpful and critical insights into the issues affecting the industry. I am looking forward to bringing to our company what I learned from listening to our speakers so that we could improve further the condition of

seafarers and make the industry more relevant and responsive to the needs of the global economy," said one of the conference attendees.



Food for thought?

The symposium was supported by the Lloyd's Register Educational Trust which also supports a research unit at SIRC. SIRC is the only research Centre in the world run by a university and supported by funds coming from external sources which focuses exclusively on research related to the human aspect of the maritime industry. The Centre also runs the SIRC-Nippon Fellowship Program which supports students in their postgraduate studies leading to a PhD in the social sciences at Cardiff University. The next SIRC Symposium will be held in 2011.

Accidents @ Sea: Whose Fault?

There is a chain of unseen causes beyond what is made apparent in accident reports. Investigating bodies (and subsequently their reports) usually do not extend their scrutiny beyond the operational level of the ship.

"Investigating and Reporting Accidents at Sea" argued that the existing accident reports frequently concentrated on factors at the operational level of the ship. Specifically, they focused on the actions and inactions of the ship and its crew.

For instance, an investigation report of a collision between a passenger ship and a private launch describes that the private launch impeded the safe passage of the passenger liner in a narrow channel. The report gives a detailed account of the relative actions of the passenger ship and the smaller private launch. It concludes by stating that if the skipper of the launch had altered course to starboard rather than to port, then the accident would not have happened.

Instead of merely focusing on the actions and inactions of the party identified as the cause of the accident, the report could have considered the local regulations relating to the navigational competence of skippers of private boats. Thus, Capt Ghanem, who is currently a SIRC-NF Fellow, argues that had the report's focus been broader than the operational level it might have concluded that the accident may have been the result of a lack of rules and regulation governing the training and licensing of skippers of private boats.

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Capt Ghanem at the Symposium

At the recent SIRC Symposium held on 8-9 July 2009, Capt Mohamed Ghanem's paper

Seafarers' inadequate knowledge of shipboard technologies has recently led to a number of accidents, such as the groundings of the *Pride of Canterbury* and the *CFL Performer*, and the collision between the *Costa Atlantica* and the *Grand Neptune*. To avoid similar accidents, it is pointed out that training on new equipment is essential. In this context, a large project examining seafarers' training on new technology is being undertaken by the Lloyd's Register Educational Trust Research Unit (LRETRU) at SIRC. At the Symposium, Dr. Lijun Tang, a SIRC-NF Fellow now employed at the Centre, reported the preliminary findings of a pilot study and drew out issues to be further investigated in the next stage of the project.

The preliminary findings suggest that the seafarers acquire their skills from three sources: user manuals, experienced peers, and external experts. Learning from

written materials is regarded to be effective when technology is simple. When technology is complex, learning from external experts is seen to be necessary. External experts may be assumed to have advanced technical knowledge and therefore are in a position to help seafarers use equipment to its full potential whilst retaining an awareness of its limitations. However, to convert the knowledge learned from external experts into practical competence, seafarers may still need the help of experienced peers or manuals for the acquisition of practical knowledge, due to lack of equipment standardization.



Dr Tang at the Symposium

To develop competence, seafarers need to be motivated to learn. The findings show that demands on seafarers' own money and time when they are on leave may discourage them from taking formal training courses. By contrast, research on land-based industries suggests that a supportive learning environment can motivate individuals to learn informally from peers. To what extent the onboard environment is supportive, however, has not been studied. In the next stage of the study, the issues of financial and time considerations, and support for informal learning will be further explored. For more information of the study see <http://www.sirc.cf.ac.uk> - >PUBLICATIONS.

Demands on seafarers' own time and money may discourage them from taking formal training courses.



Dr Bhattacharya on the red carpet receiving warm congratulations from the Vice Chancellor at the 2009 graduation ceremony

Capt Bhattacharya Receives His PhD

Dr Syamantak Bhattacharya successfully defended his thesis and received his PhD early this year. His PhD project investigated 'the impact of the ISM Code on the management of occupational health and safety in the maritime industry' by taking a case study approach on board ships and management offices using ethnographic techniques such as interviews and observations. The findings showed that although the organisations studied implemented the Code in theory there were considerable gaps between its intended purpose and what it achieved in practice. It revealed that seafarers' fear of job security and low trust work environment onboard ships were some of the main impeding factors. Further analysis of the findings revealed that various

organisational features, social relations onboard and employment relations at the industry level were the underlying factors which were not conducive to effective implementation of the ISM Code.

As well as being one of the first SIRC-NF Fellows, Dr Bhattacharya is also a very experienced master mariner and ship manager. He was born in Calcutta and sailed at sea for thirteen years with two years as a Captain. Before embarking on his PhD study at SIRC, he worked with Link Marine Pte Ltd, a ship management company in Singapore.



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About the SIRC-Nippon Foundation Fellowship



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The Nippon Foundation

SIRC-NF Fellows are funded by the Nippon Foundation to undertake maritime-related research at the Seafarers International Research Centre (SIRC). The Nippon Foundation is a Japanese non-profit organization that was founded in 1962. Today the Foundation supports various philanthropic activities in areas such as education, and health and social welfare. It has undertaken comprehensive work towards the elimination of leprosy and aims to help the disadvantaged to overcome hunger, poverty and disease. In addition it supports a variety of initiatives relating to maritime issues. This fellowship programme at SIRC commenced in 2004. The objective of the programme is to create an international network of social scientists conducting research on seafarers. In total there are now 22 fellows, and four of them have completed their MPhil/ PhD studies. The current fellows are of 11 different nationalities with diverse backgrounds and research interests. Their expertise and research will help to create better policies and initiatives to tackle the many problems experienced in the shipping industry.



**SIRC-NF
fellows
engaging in
group
discussions
during the
alumni
event**

Feature: where are they now?



Extracurricular activities

This feature provides an update on the SIRC-NF fellows who have completed their fellowship studies successfully, describing where they currently are and what they are doing. So far, four fellows from the first cohort have graduated.



Dr Syamantak Bhattacharya is currently lecturing port policy and management at University of Plymouth, UK



Dr Victor Gekara is a lecturer at Management School, RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia.



Having finished her MPhil study at SIRC, Jessica Benfeld moved back to the USA and is currently pursuing a Juris Doctorate at The University of Michigan Law School, with a focus on international public law.



Dr Lijun Tang is a research associate at the Seafarers International Research Centre. Currently, he is working on the 'Training and Technology' project funded by Lloyd's Register Educational Trust.