



EUGENE GARCIA, ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

Yingyi Bu will study structured data and Bart Knijnenburg will address privacy in their Google Ph.D. fellowships.

GOOGLE

FROM PAGE 1

sonal information, such as hobbies and interests, has become easy. Although someone might be OK with sharing their daily routine on Twitter, they may be uncomfortable with giving out their address to just anyone online.

Knijnenburg will focus on creating a simple, intelligent privacy preference system that could be used for social media and for consumer-related websites.

“Privacy is a decision that we have to make every day,” he said. “But it’s actually quite difficult. It’s something that most (people) don’t want to deal with.”

Websites such as Facebook give users detailed options for privacy preferences, but most people are confused by what the settings really mean or don’t know how to set them, he said. This can lead to people leaving their personal information more public than they realize.

“Human decision making isn’t perfect and that’s definitely the case when it comes to privacy,” he said. “We need to deal with this in a way that we can help people make those important decisions.”

Knijnenburg hopes to create a system that will intelligently select privacy settings based on a user’s sharing habits, similar to the way websites like Netflix recommends movies based on what a member watches. This, he says, will

provide an intuitive experience for those who use social media and consumer-based websites.

A major issue is the privacy paradox, said Knijnenburg.

“Everybody says that they care about privacy, but if you look at their behavior it’s not really true. I should be the one person in the world who knows how to be good about privacy, but I often don’t think much about what I’m posting online.”

The trick is getting users to make conscious decisions about privacy preferences from the very beginning, he said.

STREAMLINING BIG DATA

Ever wonder how Facebook can determine which ads to show when you log in or how marketing departments learn about their most popular demographics? The answer is in data analysis.

Bu’s research will focus on analyzing big data, or data that is too big to analyze through readily available database management or processing tools.

“Companies like Google, Facebook and LinkedIn have huge amounts of data,” he said. “And there is very valuable information hidden inside of that data. Data scientists for those companies are trying to analyze it and break it down into useful information.”

While it is fairly easy for a computer to automatically compile large amounts of data, it can be time-consuming and sometimes difficult to sort through the gathered information. To solve this problem, Bu is working on building a new system to rapidly store,

Donald Bren School of Information and Computer Sciences

- Ranked fourth by PayScale Inc. for salary earnings of graduates in computer science
- Ranked 28th among Best Grad Schools for Computer Science by U.S. News and World Report
- The only information and computer science school of its kind in the UC system
- Has three departments: computer science, informatics and statistics

Source: UC Irvine, PayScale, U.S. News and World Report

manage, index, query and analyze data gathered from the Internet.

Bu hopes to build an efficient computer infrastructure that will make it easier for analysts to break down the data for a company’s interests.

“I want to create something faster and easier,” said Bu. “Users such as data scientists won’t need to write a very complex code to retrieve information about what someone is searching for. They can write a few commands and get what they want.”

A BUDDING REPUTATION

The Google fellowships are just one of many ways UC Irvine’s School of Information and Computer Sciences has edged into the top-tier of schools for the computer sciences, said Stern, the school’s dean.

“This was not at all expected,” he said. “I was ob-

viously hoping at least one would win, but I didn’t expect two. I’m very excited because we believe that we’re one of the top computing programs in the country, and this is a nice reinforcement of that.”

Over the last few years, UC Irvine has become home to research centers like the Intel Science and Technology Center for Social Computing and the California Institute for Telecommunications and Information Technology, making the school a desirable place for computer science students, said Stern.

Last month, PayScale Inc. ranked UC Irvine fourth among computer science schools in the United States based on career earnings of graduates.

UC Irvine beat out schools such as the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Virginia Tech to tie with Stanford University. Schools that ranked higher included UC Berkeley, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo and UC Santa Barbara.

PayScale reported an average starting salary of \$64,200 and an average midcareer salary of \$120,000 for a UC Irvine grad with a bachelor’s degree in computer science.

UC Irvine ranked 28th for Best Grad Schools for Computer Sciences by U.S. News and World Report.

“It’s an exciting time for us,” said Stern. “It’s especially nice to see the company that you keep. The other top universities are the peers that we aspire to be like and compete with.”

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UC IRVINE VOICES

Relating people to their environment

As dean of UC Irvine’s School of Social Ecology, I’m often asked, “What is social ecology?” It’s a fair question because we are a unique feature of University of California, as we were when the school was established more than 40 years ago. A quick, simple definition is that social ecology is the study of the relationship between people and their environment, often the interdependence of people, collectives and institutions. But the school is more than that. Much more. It’s a compelling idea accompanied by a set of research, teaching and service commitments that, when put into practice, leave a unique signature on the university and the many diverse communities we serve.

Our mission is to discover things about our world, engage with our social world to learn and to apply knowledge and transform our world through interdisciplinary research and education. The activities sponsored by the school and sustained by the faculty, students and staff reflect this commitment.

The school has marshaled its interdisciplinary expertise to focus on everything from global environmental degradation to poverty and other forms of inequality, to prison overcrowding and gang violence in California, to healthy child development and the many challenges faced by an aging population, to health risks and community empowerment. These efforts have made the school a national leader in applying basic theory and empirical research to a range of complex societal problems. We examine daily the issues discussed on the local news or world stage.

This short list reveals just some of the interesting work being done by our faculty in our three nationally ranked departments – Criminology, Law and Society; Planning, Policy and Design; and Psychology and Social Behavior. Jodi Quas and Richard Matthew secured a “Visionary Research Grant” from American Psychological Foundation to study the effects of exposure to socio-political and ethnic violence in Sierra Leone on children’s development, especially their capacity to develop care for one another and reduce the risk of recurring violence. Beth Cauffman and Simon Cole filed briefs with the U.S. Supreme Court on the constitutionality of executing youth and on the use of fingerprint evidence in criminal trials, respective-

ly. Susan Turner recently completed evaluation research on the use of GPS for high-risk sex offender parolees in San Diego County. John Hipp, Victoria Basolo and Jae-Hong Kim continue to track and examine the changing demographic, economic and public safety trends in our Metropolitan Futures Initiative, now with a special focus on the potential impacts of Irvine’s Orange County Great Park development. And one of our newest faculty members, health psychologist Sarah Pressman, does work that reveals the health benefits of something as simple as a smile.

At Social Ecology, we live and breathe community engagement. The outcome of our work in published research, expert testimony and community engagement has discernible impact on local, national and international opinion. Perhaps the hallmark of this commitment is our requirement that all undergraduate students complete at least 100 hours serving at one of more than 200 approved community agencies and organizations. This experience extends education beyond the classroom in ways that can result in significant contributions to our community. The community service by bright, energetic, talented young people can be measured in hours (600 students x 100 hours each per year) or through the positive feedback we get from community partners including Think Together, Legal Aid Society of Orange County and Human Options.

Marian Bergeson, former state senator and state secretary of education, said: “Social ecology is working on things that matter.”

Gary Fudge, a member of the Social Ecology Dean’s Leadership Council and sponsor of Fudge Family Scholarships for high-need students, said: “You should be called The School of Interesting Stuff

UCI’s School of Social Ecology with more than 20,000 alumni, left a considerable imprint on the health and well-being of our communities and made good on the promise of a land-grant university. I invite you to visit our website, socialecology.uci.edu, and attend one of our many public events where we share the results of our study of “interesting stuff.”

Valerie Jenness is dean of UC Irvine’s School of Social Ecology.



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