

Focus on: IOI-SA's first Associate, Dr. Richard Knight

Dr Richard Knight, senior lecturer in the Botany department, is the first Associate of IOI-Southern Africa.

Background

Richard is originally from Kenya and also grew up in Britain, Sweden and South



Dr. Richard Knight hard at work on his GIS mapping

Africa. By the age of ten years, he knew he wanted to be a zoologist. As a child, his other interests included computers and medicine. At the age of twelve he developed his first computer program, which would determine how many days your birthday was after a leap year.

Professional Career

He matriculated from Milnerton High School in Cape Town. This was followed by a brief period studying medical technology at Red Cross Children's Hospital. Richard however described his then chosen career as boring and decided to fulfil his childhood interest in Zoology. And so, he went on to pursue his initial passion together with Geography at the University of Cape Town in 1977.

His first job was at the Percy Fitzpatrick Institute at UCT where he was in charge of their database. Working there led to his Ph.D. Which

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UPCOMING EVENTS:

- SAMSS : 1-5 July 2002
(www.benefit.org.na/sams/index.html)
- Earth Day Festival: 25 Aug-1 Sept 2002
- PiM 2002: 8-14 Dec 2002
(www.ioi.uwc.ac.za/pim2002/)

Focused on birds and their role in the dispersal of indigenous and introduced plants. From 1988 to 1989 he was a temporary lecturer in the Botany department at UCT, and in 1990 he took up the post as a Zoology lecturer at the University of Transkei where he built a small GIS (Geographical Information System) Unit.

In mid 1998 he joined the Botany staff at the University of the Western Cape. His choice of UWC was strongly swayed by the internet-based systems developed by Prof. Derek Keats and the IOI-SA staff. He viewed it as the perfect environment to further develop his work in the field of GIS.

Current work

Richard teaches Ecology first year, third year Landscape Ecology and People and Community Ecology and the Conservation Biology and Resource Mapping at the Honours level at UWC. He is also teaching Conservation Ecology at the University of Stellenbosch. Currently, he is supervising his first Ph. D. student and a large number of masters' students at UWC, Stellenbosch and Transkei University. His students presented over forty papers at conferences last year.

Apart from his teaching and supervision of postgraduate students, he is involved in many conservation and technology-based projects including the development of the maps within the SACOAST website (<http://sacoast.uwc.ac.za>). He is involved in developing the Biodiversity Network for the City of Cape Town and the conservation of West Coast Renosterveld and to develop the database for the CAPE (Cape Action, People and the Environment) Project.

On the technological side, Richard together with Paramasivam Saravanakumar (former IOI-SA postdoctoral student) has developed several other websites, for example "Planet Botany" (<http://atlas.botany.uwc.ac.za/>) which is a site dealing with landscape ecology, and also "Namaqua" which deals with geohydrology in Namaqualand (<http://atlas.botany.uwc.ac.za/namaqua/>). He is also developing tutoring systems, which include voice recognition and full animation. Richard is involved in two exciting overseas projects. In the first, he is working closely with academics at UCLA on the conservation of the Californian urban landscape and the Santa Monica National Park. The second project is based at the German Aerospace Center and is funded by the German government and soon, Richard will be flying to Germany to present a two-day workshop on remote sensing.

Other Interests

Being unable to say NO Richard has gotten involved in zillions of projects and admits that there is too little time to unwind which he accredits to his poor time management skills. When he does unwind the words adrenalin junkie come to mind when one considers that he enjoys mountain biking, boardsailing, hang-gliding, canoeing and snowboarding. He also owns a motorbike (Aprilia Grand Prix Replica), which he speaks of with pride but admits that he is really too old to do it justice on the racetrack. Last but not least, there is his friendly dog Red who he describes as characterful.

Motto: "Work hard, play hard, if the opportunity arises!"

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Success Story: Prof. Derek Keats

(Ex Director of IOI-SA)

Prof. Derek Keats, the first Director of the International Ocean Institute Regional Operational Centre for Southern Africa (IOI-SA), is the current Executive Director of Information and Communication Services (ICS) at the University of the Western Cape.



Prof. Keats all "tied up" in his position as Executive Director of ICS

Background Information

Derek remembers taking boat trips with his dad in Newfoundland, Canada as a boy and fishing but mostly catching 'live rocks', which were in fact, coralline algae. This was the start of his love for, and eventual work with corallines. He later went to Memorial University of Newfoundland where he intended studying engineering, but ended up doing a Biology course as an elective. The biology course ignited his interest in biology, so in his second year he switched from engineering to biology. He worked as a technician, research assistant and research associate at the university during his time there, while completing his postgraduate studies. In 1987 he went to Zimbabwe where he worked as a high school teacher and taught Biology, Agriculture and Computer Science. Derek went on a holiday to Cape Town and stayed with Dr. John Bolton, with whom he had shared a flat in Canada, and by a twist of fate ended up going on a field trip with some of the Botany Department staff and students from UWC. It turned out there was a lecturer post available in the department and he applied and

got the job. He started at UWC in 1989 as a lecturer in Marine Botany.

IOI-SA founding

Derek went to Fiji on sabbatical in 1994, which was where he developed and presented part of a fisheries course as a guest of IOI-South Pacific. Dr. Robin South, the Director of IOI-South Pacific and Derek had a discussion about starting an IOI centre in South Africa. In 1996 he wrote a letter to Elisabeth Mann Borgese, the founder of the International Ocean Institute with regard to this matter. Elisabeth in turn, wrote to Kader Asmal, the then Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry and with that, the wheels started turning. IOI-SA was born in 1997.

The Director, according to the Memorandum of Understanding between IOI and UWC, is someone who is employed by the University and contributes 20% of their time to IOI-SA. Therefore IOI-SA started off just consolidating things that were already happening, in Derek's work as a lecturer, which included his students' projects. Projects form the main core of IOI-SA's functioning. The development of educational courses, including online courses became a part of IOI-SA's thrust and has remained the same since. In 1995 Derek saw the educational potential of the Internet and how it could be used for web work and developing courses that could be done online. Use of the web in support of IOI-SA's goals was eventually integrated into IOI-SA's mission statement, and IOI-SA pioneered the development of environmental informatics at UWC.

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Success story: Prof D Keats cont...

He says that his high point in IOI-SA was the day he was able to pass it on to other people to develop it further and keep IOI moving forward, since he loves creating opportunities and building things that create opportunities for people. The most challenging aspect for him was when he had to struggle for resources in the beginning in order to get everything up and running. IOI-SA had not received seed funds from IOI Headquarters at that time. Elisabeth however managed to obtain seed money from the Ocean Research Foundation, which subsequently has been the source of seed funds for the various centres.

Current work

Derek intends maintaining his link with IOI-SA, but does not want to interfere in IOI's work or development. He also does not want the institute to be dependent on him for survival. He feels that most of his work at IOI has been accomplished, and more importantly that it is at the place where he could let go and continue with other endeavours. He sees his move to ICS as changing the scale of his activities to enable him to make full use of his abilities and talents. He compares it to building a skyscraper as compared to building a house. It is a bigger challenge and certainly will have a huge impact on so many people and institutions. He still has a lot to give and so much to do and he will be achieving it at ICS.

Vision for ICS:

Derek is using what is called the *UWC Integrated Information Strategy* in his quest to take not only ICS forward, but also the entire university.

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PiM 2002 Conference

"The Ocean in the New Economy"

When: 8-14 December 2002

Where: University of the
Western Cape, Cape
Town, South Africa

Contact: The Secretariat
PiM 2002
P.O. Box 2760
Clareinch 7740
South Africa

Website: www.ioinst.org/pim2002

Email: PIM2002@uwc.ac.za

The Pacem in Maribus (PiM) conference is held every year under the auspices of The International Ocean Institute (IOI).

The new economy and the current trend of globalization exacerbate existing problems, and bring new challenges for the Ocean. At no time in history has the Ocean been under the pressure it is today, but also at no time has the Ocean been such a source of exciting opportunities. It is vital that we accept the challenge not only of creating opportunities, but also of using these in a wise and sustainable manner to bring benefits to coastal communities in both the developed and especially the developing world.



From an artist's point of view

Staff Profile: René Frans

René Frans, IOI-SA's very talented graphic artist has always had the ability to create amazing images on what was once a blank canvas. This childhood hobby led to his registration at Peninsula Technikon where he completed a three-year national diploma course in graphic design.

He joined IOI-SA in December 1997 just after completing his studies. His stunning portfolio that included hand drawn images secured him what was initially a month long contract. However, Prof. Derek Keats (previous Director of IOI-SA) was so impressed by René's work, that he offered him a more permanent employment.

René's position ranges from creating graphics for



web sites and posters to covers for folders. Currently, he is working on graphics for the Division for Lifelong Learning (DLL) site, Programme for Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS), University of the Western

Cape's Masters in Psychology site and IOI-SA's posters and brochures. He is also the Programme Co-ordinator for the "IOI-SA Online Services" programme.

He claims that the job can be quite stressful at times, so therefore it is important to prioritize. It is however quite clear that René enjoys the whole creative process including all the technological 'gadgets and toys' that according to him makes it his dream job which he would never trade.

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Success story: Prof D Keats cont...

His aim is to build up UWC so that it is known for its wise application of technology and introduction of new technology as well. Here is an insert from the ICS website, <http://www.uwc.ac.za/ics/>:

Through the creative application of information and communications technology, UWC will make the right information available independently of space and time constraints, will have creative people with the skills to construct and use information effectively, and will help to promote learning in which information is constructed into knowledge by learners. In doing so, UWC will become a leader in the creation, application and management of information in teaching-and-learning, research, community engagement and the provision of institutional leadership and management.

Little known personal facts

Derek has been married to Esther for 13½ years and they have two children, Jamie (12½) and Melissa (4½). His extracurricular interests include spending time with his family, in-line skating and listening to music. He has an eclectic taste in music and listens to classical, African, African jazz, folk, opera and, wait for it: country music. He plays guitar and is currently learning how to play the piano - with some help from his daughter. He loves spicy food and when it comes to reading, he loves historical novels and biographies. If you are interested to know more about Derek, you can visit: <http://www.botanyuwc.ac.za/derek/>

IOI-SA Programmes: “People, oceans and coasts”



As populations become concentrated on the coastline, people use marine resources, develop infrastructure in the coastal zone and operate industries on the shore. Coastal communities thus become more dependent on the long-term availability of marine resources and competition for seashore space and usage increases, resources become limited and exploitable stocks depleted.

Many coastal communities are historically disadvantaged and impoverished, and access to fishing rights is competitive and difficult to obtain. Through its “Peoples, oceans and coasts” programme, IOI-SA facilitates sustainable livelihoods in local communities based on the harvesting and culture of marine and coastal resources.

IOI-SA has embarked on a number of projects to assist communities in respect of poverty alleviation and sustainable livelihoods.

- Our staff and students study coastal communities to understand their problems and needs, and to find solutions (Project: Coastal Sustainable Livelihood Studies)
- Develop appropriate training for communities and authorities
(Projects: UN/Train-Sea-Coast Marine Pollution Control Course and GloBallast Course, seaweed mariculture course, skippers and diver training)
- Research, design and implement new businesses in conjunction with poor coastal communities as a means of generating sustainable livelihoods
(Projects: St Helena Bay Seaweed Mariculture Initiative, Bergrievissersvroue Vereeniging Seafood Cookbook Project, Saldanha Seabait Project)



If you want to become involved in this programme contact the Programme Coordinator at:

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P. Bag X17, Bellville 7535
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Tel +27 21 959 2594
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<http://www.ioinst.org/ioi-sa>

Staff Profile: Carmen Ras

Carmen Ras is the Programme Co-ordinator for the "Biodiversity, conservation and environment assessment" programme at IOI-SA. She is the ideal candidate for this position considering her interest in marine biology.

Carmen attended Ravensmead High School where her interest in Biology was triggered. This interest in Marine Sciences was further fueled by her need to find something different to do than what was the "in" thing at the time. And like many other families on the Cape Flats, frequent camping on the beach and trying to keep up with her brothers catching octopus also sparked this interest.

Although Carmen will admit to being more interested in studying marine animals, the opportunities offered in the Botany department "forced" her into another line i.e. Coralline Algae! She completed her Honours degree studying these unusual marine plants and furthered this interest with a Masters degree, which she is in the process of completing. If she were to study further Carmen would make a slight shift by studying the medicinal values of marine plants. Besides her studies, and responsibilities of being the Programme Co-ordinator, Carmen would like to become more involved in projects tackling marine pollution and animal-plant interactions (I'm sure we can make a plan there!).

In her capacity as Programme Co-ordinator Carmen feels that her contribution to the success of



IOI-SA includes bringing the skills that she has acquired during her studies to the unit. Carmen says that the possibility of working on a number of interesting projects and with experienced staff in different streams makes working at IOI-SA a unique experience.

A few personal facts

Carmen will be married for exactly one year in August of this year to Jonathan van Uys (Congratulations!). And to top all the work she does at IOI-SA, she is also mother to Tristan. Carmen enjoys jazz music with a number of favourite artists including South Africa's very own Jonathan Butler (Could that have anything to do with the fact that her husbands name is also Jonathan?).

To contact Carmen regarding any of the projects in the "Biodiversity, conservation and environment assessment" programme:

E-mail: cras@uwc.ac.za
Tel: +27 21 959 2743

IOI-SA's new Associate cont ...

Additional Comments/Facts

- Richard is very excited about the Associate position.
- Likes the new IOI-SA's management system and the relevance of the institution.
- Undergraduate lecturer to Kim Prochazka (current IOI-SA Director) at UCT
- Passionate about increasing amount of technology available at UWC

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Tel: +27 21 959 3381

Notice!

Eight of IOI-SA's staff and students will be attending the South African Marine Science Symposium (SAMSS 2002) in Swakopmund, Namibia from 1 to 5 July 2002.

Enjoy it guys!

IOI-SA: Mission statement

The International Ocean Institute, Southern Africa (IOI-SA) promotes the peaceful and sustainable use of ocean space and resources in a southern African context by facilitating sustainable livelihoods of coastal peoples through awareness creation, education, information dissemination, research, and community initiatives.

IOI-SA is one of 22 operational centres of the International Ocean Institute. Established within the Botany Department at the University of the Western Cape in 1996, IOI-SA exists to serve the Southern African region.

Our goals include:

- Environment research, awareness,
- Sustainable livelihoods supporting research, community initiatives, mariculture,
- Awareness - computer technology
- Education, training, capacity-building
- Research
- Networking & collaboration with other organisations

IOI-SA achieves its goals through its 4 programmes:

- Education through Technology,
- People, Oceans and Coasts,
- Biodiversity, Conservation & Environmental Assessment
- IOI-SA Online Services

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