

# WHY WE NEED TO LEARN TO LOVE: IT

A CAREERS REPORT



# THE INFORMATION SOCIETY

When BCS was formed in 1957, television was a luxury item. Fifty years on, computing and computer science have revolutionised industry, society, government and culture like nothing before. Now, Information Technology (IT) lies behind everything we touch and do, creating an Information Society.

## THE ROLE OF BCS IS TO HELP ENABLE THE INFORMATION SOCIETY IN FIVE KEY WAYS:

- 1 To help people gain more value from IT
- 2 To build a better integrated IT education system linking the needs of industry and the academic community
- 3 To inform public policy on the social contribution of IT
- 4 To champion the global IT profession
- 5 To support the careers of all IT professionals

These last two goals were the trigger for this research. Without a skilled IT workforce and an IT profession which is exciting, accessible and attractive to young people, we cannot hope to deliver the Information Society we want: one that is open, fair, productive, sustainable, satisfying and rewarding.

“MOST SEE IT AS AN  
EXCITING, INNOVATIVE  
AND REWARDING CAREER”

## I LOVE IT ♥

So, we asked 16-30 year olds in Great Britain for their view of the IT industry and profession. It is reassuring to see so many young people were positive about their job and career prospects (in fact those with IT qualifications are more positive than their non-IT qualified peers). Most see IT as an exciting and rewarding career, which is innovative and open to people of all ages, sex and class. The old, negative image of an industry filled with ‘geeks’ is in retreat, as young people increasingly enjoy the benefits of the Information Society at work and play.

## THE IT CROWD ☺

This research should not be seen in isolation, of course. We have a way to go before we deliver an Information Society we are all happy with. We need more people empowered to use IT, more IT innovators and IT entrepreneurs. We want better qualified IT students, thinkers and users. We need to learn to love IT, more.

## BCS' ROLE 📖

BCS will play its role by enhancing the quality of standards and qualifications, by building better services for its members and volunteers and by working to promote the value and importance of the academics and professionals, without whom an Information Society cannot exist.

**DAVID CLARKE,  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE, BCS**

# RESEARCH SUMMARY

**B**CS asked TNS, one of the world's leading market information companies, to survey the views of 16-30 year olds living in Britain. The key findings are listed below.

## UPBEAT ↑

Young people with IT qualifications (post GCSE) remain upbeat with over 53% 'confident' about their job prospects in the next year. Those without IT qualifications are more pessimistic with only 42% 'confident'.

## SKILLS ✓

Most young people agree that 'those without IT skills will struggle at work'.

"WEB, COMPUTER GAMES, EDUCATION / TRAINING AND SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT ARE THE IT JOBS OF CHOICE."

## MORE JOBS ☺

Nearly a third (32%) of young people anticipate more jobs for IT qualified people over the next five years.

"YOUNG PEOPLE (58%) SEE IT AS A HUB FOR INNOVATIVE PEOPLE"

## GLOBAL INDUSTRY ✈

Over two thirds (70%) of young people agree that 'IT is a global industry offering global careers'.

## INNOVATIVE ❖

More than half of young people (58%) see IT as a hub for innovative people and businesses.

## CHALLENGING ★

Most young people (54%) think IT and computing 'are challenging and exciting'.

## JOBS OF CHOICE ♥

Web, computer games, education/ training and software development are the IT 'jobs of choice'.

## OPPORTUNITIES ☀

IT is seen as the equal opportunities profession, 49% think jobs in IT are 'more open to entrants of different sexes, ages, classes or creeds than other professions', only 15% disagree.

## FINANCIAL HELP £

Nearly half of young people think 'employers should get extra financial help to train people in IT business skills' (49%).

"MOST THINK IT AND COMPUTING ARE CHALLENGING AND EXCITING"

## PARENTS 👨👩

Fifty five per cent of young people think parents should do more to support children who want to study IT at school or university.

# IT: A PROFESSION FOR ME?

## IT: BULLS OR BEARS?

Nearly half of all young people (47%) feel 'confident' about their job and career prospects in the year ahead, with just 16% expressing a lack of confidence. Those with post GCSE IT qualifications were significantly more optimistic than those with no IT qualifications. Looking further into the future, 68% of all respondents anticipate rising or, at worse, stable demand for IT services.

## IT: FOR BETTER CAREERS?

Interviewees were asked if they felt their qualifications would help them forge 'better jobs or careers'. Among those with post GCSE IT qualifications, 72% agreed; while those with no IT qualifications are slightly less positive (68% agreeing).

## IT: BETTER INCOMES?

The majority of young people agree that qualifications boost pay and promotion prospects (69%), with just 8% actively disagreeing. Among those with IT qualifications (post GCSE), the figures were 70% and 6% respectively.

## IT: GLOBAL DEMAND?

Young people were asked about their feelings on IT as a global career. 70% agree IT is a global industry offering global careers. Only 3% disagree. About a third (35%) believes a career in IT means you are always well placed to find a job, even in a recession.

## IT: AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES PROFESSION?

Almost half (49%) of the sample feel IT is more open to people of different sexes, ages, classes or creeds than other professions like law or medicine, with 15% disagreeing. Only 8% disagreed with the statement 'IT is open to entrants from all social classes'.

## IT: SOMETHING TO ASPIRE TO?

The majority of young people (58%) see IT as an industry which attracts innovative people and businesses (only 7% disagreed). Half feel it attracts clever and entrepreneurial people, with only 10% taking the opposite view. IT is also seen as an industry in which it's easy to start your own business (41% agree and 15% disagree). Asked if IT was as important a profession as law or medicine, 39% agreed.

## IT: JOBS OF CHOICE?

In contemplating a potential career in the industry, 36% of young people listed the web as their main area of interest. Computer games came second and education/training third.

## IT: NOT BORING

Over half (54%) of all respondents believe IT to be challenging and exciting, with just 11% taking a contrary view. Presented with the statement 'IT and computing is boring', only 19% agreed (47% disagree). Moreover, those who perceive IT to be difficult (26%) are outnumbered by the 36% who do not.

## IT: PARENTAL MISUNDERSTANDING?

Young people are embracing IT as an exciting, global career, but almost half (49%) feel parents don't understand IT enough. Moreover, 55% think parents should 'give more support to young people wanting to study IT at school or university' (only 6% disagree). This may suggest parents still don't recognise IT as a serious subject or career for their children. Asked if it is time to 'recognise IT as equal to other professions', only 5% disagreed.

## IT: FUNDING DILEMMAS?

Just over a third of young people (35%) believe IT should receive greater funding from government. When asked if employers should get extra financial help to train people, 49% agreed they should.

### WEB

Total : 36% (Male : 37% Female : 35%)

### COMPUTER GAMES

Total : 33% (Male : 43% Female : 22%)

### EDUCATION/TRAINING

Total : 25% (Male : 17% Female : 33%)

### SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT

Total : 24% (Male : 31% Female : 17%)

### NETWORK DESIGN

Total : 17% (Male : 21% Female : 13%)

# IT AND SOCIETY

## IT ESSENTIAL

BCS research shows young people recognise the positive impact of IT on the world around them. More than half (55%) feel IT is essential to all parts of modern life (only 14% disagree) and nearly half (45%) think we should celebrate the benefits of IT more than we do. Young people are also optimistic about the ability of technology to solve the world's problems. Asked if IT could change the world for the better, 49% agree, while only 11% disagree.

"THE WORLD'S MOST SERIOUS CHALLENGES, WHICH FACE US ALL, INCLUDE GLOBAL WARMING AND FOOD SUPPLY. SOLUTIONS INCLUDE CONFLICT OR WAR, AND PANDEMICS. THESE ARE NOT PLEASANT SOLUTIONS. SO THERE IS A CHALLENGE TO USE SCIENCE, HARD WORK, BUSINESS AND POLITICS TO OVERCOME THE 'NATURAL' SOLUTIONS. ... COMPUTING IS KEY...."

**PROFESSOR ANDREW BANHAM, UEA.**  
GRAND CHALLENGES IN COMPUTING RESEARCH  
CONFERENCE 2008. UKCRC 2008



### 35%

THINK IT WILL HELP REDUCE CRIME



### 37%

EXPECT IT TO HELP CURE CANCER AND OTHER ILLNESSES



### 64%

SAY IT ENHANCES WORK PRODUCTIVITY



### 65%

THINK IT WILL HELP IMPROVE PUBLIC SERVICES



### 51%

SAY IT WILL IMPROVE PEOPLE'S WORK-LIFE BALANCE



### 75%

THINK IT WILL ENHANCE LEISURE AND ENTERTAINMENT

THE ABILITY OF IT TO AFFECT SOCIAL ISSUES

# THE CONCLUSIONS

BCS research shows young people reject the idea that IT and computing is 'dull'. Nearly five times as many young people thought IT and computing to be 'challenging and exciting' compared to those who believed otherwise (54% vs. 11%).

In fact, most young people see IT and computing as both an exciting career which is open to everyone, regardless of gender, race or age and which attracts innovative and enterprising people.

## IT SKILLS

They know that those without IT skills will struggle at work and that as an increasingly global profession it offers

them opportunities to travel, to shift across industries, to run their own businesses and enjoy life more.

It even offers them the chance to make a difference in public service or in solving the 'Big Issues' which challenge the world.

## WORK TO BE DONE

This doesn't mean the future is all rosy. IT does face challenges as do young people coming into the profession. Some parents have yet to acknowledge or understand the professional and commercial potential of IT as a career, for example. The prestige of computing as a profession needs to be raised.

**"IT DOES FACE CHALLENGES AS DO YOUNG PEOPLE COMING INTO THE PROFESSION."**

Demand for IT as an academic subject must be enhanced. Why? Because without IT professionals and academics our society's ability to process, share and manage information will be impaired and we could find ourselves ill-equipped for a new age, where IT is ever-more central to our lives.

**"THE PRESTIGE OF COMPUTING AS A PROFESSION NEEDS TO BE RAISED. AND THE DEMAND FOR IT AS AN ACADEMIC SUBJECT MUST BE ENHANCED"**

## ABOUT THE SURVEY

A sample of 922 GB adults aged 16-30 was interviewed by TNS. Interviews were conducted by CAWI over the Internet from 10th - 20th April 2009. The sample has been weighted to represent the adult population of Great Britain aged 16-30. Differences between those with or without post GCSE qualifications were based on a chi-squared test, significant at 10% level.



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