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BERKSHIRE BRANCH NEWSLETTER

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WELCOME

Welcome to the BCS Berkshire Branch newsletter for October 2026. We hope to bring you more exciting events in the coming months. Keep an eye on our website for details and other news.

EVENTS



TUE 13 OCT 2026 · 7PM TILL LATE

Reading Geek Night

Every second Tuesday of the month, Reading Geek Night has talks on various topics about science, tech, design & geekery. Doors from 7:00pm, talks from 7:30pm, plus Q&A with a 20-minute break for networking and beer. We meet upstairs at Zero Degrees (9 Bridge St, Reading RG1 2LR).

A great opportunity for networking and discussion about technology, business, and advice. The next talk is titled “The Agentic Age” by Jimmy Minns. Everyone is welcome.

Details: website · Social Tech meetup

BCS AGM

TUE 20 OCT 2026 · 19:00

2026 Annual General Meeting

A reminder that our 2026 AGM is scheduled for 20th October at Zerodegrees Microbrewery Restaurant, 9 Bridge St, Reading RG1 2LR, at 19:00. Phil Lunn from Plator AI will be giving a talk on AI in the current market. Hope to see you there.

Book via either:

Meetup event page
Eventbrite tickets

BCS Women 25th Anniversary Celebration!

BCS Women is 25 years old! Set up by Professor Sue Black OBE in 2021, we are proud to continue her work to nurture a powerful community that supports, inspires, and elevates women across the tech industry.

We are excited to invite you to join our 25th Anniversary Celebration event on Tuesday 27th October 2026 from 6pm. You can join us online or in person at the BCS London office, 25 Copthall Avenue, London, EC2R 7BP.

Come along to learn more about what BCS Women has achieved over the past 25 years and discuss what the future may hold. Join a vibrant panel discussion and share your thoughts on advancing your career in tech and delve into why diversity matters in technology.

Plenty of opportunities to network with other amazing women and our allies. We hope we will see you there!

Sign up here: https://www.bcs.org/events-calendar/2026/october/bcswomen-25-years-celebration/

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BRANCH NEWS

Talk on Databases — Cox Green School — 11 September 2026

Engaging with local schools is one of the most impactful ways BCS Berkshire members can support the future of our industry. Recently, Cox Green School invited our branch to deliver a session on real-world production databases to their Year 13 BTEC IT students.

Rather than sticking purely to textbook concepts, the session gave students a firsthand look at how relational and non-relational data systems operate in live enterprise environments. We explored foundational engines like MySQL and PostgreSQL alongside specialized technologies:

- **Graph Databases:** Live demonstrations of family tree structures in Memgraph and Neo4j to illustrate complex relationship mapping.
- **Vector Databases:** Discussions on similarity search and modern AI embeddings.
- **Time-Series Data:** Streaming real-time flight telemetry into InfluxDB to show high-velocity data ingestion.
- **Enterprise Analytics:** Examining petabyte-scale production data warehousing with Google BigQuery.

The enthusiasm and sharp questions from the Year 13 cohort underscored how valuable industry context is for students preparing for higher education and tech careers.

Get Involved with Local Outreach

Our local schools and colleges are always looking for industry practitioners to demystify real-world technology, share career pathways, or run interactive workshops. Sharing your day-to-day expertise — even for an hour — makes a lasting impression on future developers, analysts, and engineers.

If you are interested in speaking at a local school, mentoring students, or supporting BCS Berkshire's education initiatives, please reach out to the committee. Let's work together to inspire the next generation of computing professionals across Berkshire.

AI History and Ethics Explored at UTC Reading – 29 September 2026

On 29 September 2026, we delivered a presentation on the history of artificial intelligence to students at UTC Reading. The talk traced eight decades of development, spanning early computational logic to modern generative architectures and recent Nobel Prize achievements.

Following the presentation, attendees participated in a dynamic Q&A session. Questions focused on practical and philosophical themes, including algorithmic ethics, responsible AI adoption by teachers and students in schools, and the debate surrounding whether AI models possess consciousness or life.

Grounding AI principles within education ensures the next generation of technologists understands both the capabilities and limitations of modern systems. We remain committed to supporting local educational institutions across the Thames Valley.

Got a story, event, or achievement for next month's issue? Email chair.berkshire@bcs.org.uk to be featured.

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS — BRANCH COMMITTEE

BCS Berkshire is calling on members to consider joining the Branch committee. If you are interested, please contact chair.berkshire@bcs.org.uk.

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS — AI SKILLS CENSUS

We are collaborating with the Thames Valley AI Hub on an AI skills census. While this seems similar to the previous BCS survey from Dan Howl, we have been asked to broaden this survey for TVAI to include everyone. Their survey does not require personal information, but you can provide it if you wish to continue participating. Please help by asking friends and family to respond — the idea is to understand the general public's use and skills with AI, not only IT professionals.

The survey can be accessed here: forms.gle/PMYD4bXoAHs2AAD36 or via the QR code below.

Results will be published at policy.tvaihub.org and will support the Thames Valley AI Hub's AI Skills Taskforce in understanding the current AI skills gap. If you are interested in volunteering on the taskforce, please email p.leroy@reading.ac.uk or p.lunn@reading.ac.uk.