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# The Summer of Science

Royal Institute of Navigation Editor Tony Fyler says never mind the credit crunch, navigation scientists are in for a great summer.

Navigation science is sexy science. I hardly need to tell you that, you're interested in the staggeringly varied world of GIS, so you know what I'm talking about. But you'd be surprised at the raised eyebrows you get in the wider world when you mention the fact that navigation science is hot, hot, hot.

Navigation science is the science that broadens our horizons, expands our understanding, and alters our perception of the world around us, making tomorrow a fundamentally different place from today. It's the science that means we may be the last generation ever to understand the concept of being 'lost', because our phones send constant signals to any friends we like saying 'we are here.' It's the science that takes us into the unknown worlds of animals, and opens up their lives to us through satellite tracking. And, all unseen, it's at the heart of a growing percentage of our critical infrastructure, defining the timing mechanisms for everything from national power grids to modern missile systems. It's already revolutionised how we drive, how we communicate and how we live our lives. What it will do tomorrow depends on the next generation of brains who 'get it' – who feel the spark of innovation and excitement that navigation science can give you, and yet have the intellectual rigour to apply themselves to the barriers of our current capabilities and break them, dissolve them, or think their way around them, in order to change the world.

## **This summer is going to be a good time to have that kind of brain.**

Firstly, the UK SatNav Challenge kicks off on 1 May. This major competition, previously known as Galileo Masters, has established itself over the last four years as a leading forum for developing new ideas and new ways of using satellite navigation technology to improve the world and make a profit. As part of the larger European Satellite Competition, it allows new and existing businesses to put forward ideas, submit them to a panel of expert judges, and have them rated.

The UK winner and runners up are then submitted to an international panel of experts who decide on an overall international winner. In a linguistically confusing but prestigious development, this European competition now draws entries from 11 European regions and countries, but also from places like Taiwan and Australia, and even, now, from the USA.

What's more, the UK's got form in this competition. In 2006 the UK regional winner (Geosynch) became overall Galileo Master, developing seismic simulations for oil companies. Then in 2008 the UK regional winner went on to become the first ever triple winner picking up the Galileo Supervisory Authority's special topic prize and becoming the overall international winner. The triple winner, Sci-Tech Systems, is now developing a system to locate people who fall overboard in cold water within their 15-60 minute life expectancy window.

Told you navigation science was sexy – Baywatch has nothing on this.

If you have the next fantastic idea using satnav technology, visit <http://www.galileomasters.co.uk/> today and stake your claim.

As if that wasn't enough, the RIN is also doing its bit to advance the cause of navigation science, bringing students working in navigation-related fields together with the top names in the industry at the Institute's New Navigators' Seminar at Imperial College London on 17 June.

We scour the country's academic establishments for some of the best and most innovative work being undertaken by PhD, MSc, final year students, academic or post-doctoral researchers in fields with a navigation bent, and we get them to present some of their work to a crowd composed of their peers, tutors, friends – and representatives from the companies who turn innovative research into viable marketable products. This year, we're delighted to be running the event in partnership with the Location and Timing Knowledge Transfer Network, a managed net-

work of more than 650 organisations that research, develop, operate and apply location and timing technologies.

## **That's a lot of exposure.**

Students who are judged to have given the best presentation on the day win themselves £100 and a year's membership of the Institute. But more important than the money, and more important than the prestige is the opportunity to speak to leading navigation-related businesses and the chance to make longstanding and valuable contacts within the industry. Likewise, the day-long event offers those in the know within the industry the chance to meet tomorrow's commercial innovators today, and highlight the work their companies do in an accompanying exhibition. This exhibition has already proved extremely popular over the last four years, but in 2009, given the economic downturn, many companies are facing the reality that they have to innovate or die, so we're expecting the students to be in even more demand than usual. If you want to find out more about participating or exhibiting at the New Navigators' Seminar, contact Kathy Hossain at the RIN on +44 (0)20 7591 3135 or by email at [conference@rin.org.uk](mailto:conference@rin.org.uk).

Navigation science is sexy. This summer, it's also going to be dynamic, innovative and even potentially profitable. You're gonna want to be a part of that.