

Position Papers from The 7th Workshop for
PhD Students in Object-Oriented Systems

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Preface

This book contains the position papers accepted at The 8th Workshop for PhD Students in Object-Oriented Systems, which took place July 20-21, 1998, in Brussels, Belgium, in connection with the ECOOP'98 conference.

It is a tradition at ECOOP conferences to have a workshop for PhD students, conducted by the network of PhD Students in Object-Oriented Systems (PhDOOS). The purpose of this network is to help leveraging the collective resources of young researchers in the object community by improving the communication and cooperation between them. In a year of the PhDOOS network the workshop is the main event where we meet face-to-face. Between workshops we stay in touch through our mailing list. More information on the PhDOOS network can be found at <http://www.phdoos.org/>.

A conference workshop typically concentrates on a few topics chosen at the outset. For this workshop, the technical topics covered were derived from the research interests of the participants. Since the workshop had 37 participants, we partitioned the main group into several subgroups, each having a more focused research area as topic. The work in these subgroups had been prepared extensively by the participants. A little less than half of the participants had submitted a position paper. Everybody had prepared a presentation of his or her research work—a longer presentation for those participants with a position paper, and a shorter one for those who just provided a short abstract of their research work. The position papers are presented in this report. A comprehensive workshop report containing a short presentation of the research work of each of the 37 participants has appeared in the ECOOP'98 Workshop Reader, LNCS 1543, Springer Verlag.

The technical sessions in subgroups were an important part of the workshop, but there were also other activities. In plenary sessions we heard two

invited speakers, and we discussed various issues related to the PhDOOS network itself, collaboration between us and others, the conditions of being a doctoral student in various countries, and more. So many OO PhD students collected in one room is a great opportunity to generate discussion.

Our invited speakers were Prof. Eric Jul from the University of Copenhagen and Prof. Dave Thomas of OTI. Eric Jul gave a brilliant talk about the process of getting a PhD, how to write the thesis, how to obtain the right balance between its topics, how to use the time reasonably during those years, and many other things. Dave Thomas gave a talk, not less interesting, about all the subtle (or sometimes less subtle) differences between the academic world and the industry, thus helping us to understand some trade-offs between different potential career paths. We were indeed happy to have these two outstanding personalities as speakers at our workshop.

There was quite a lot of discussion dealing with the network, and with collaboration between us in the future. We felt that the network is too inactive during the year, and that communication needs to be improved. On the other hand, probably everybody felt that the PhDOOS workshop at ECOOP is a good tradition, and it will be continued. However, to make a lot of other things happen, too, the activities in the network should be a natural and valuable resource for each of us, not just a beautiful idea that we can play with after having finished our *real* work.

An obvious idea which has been discussed before is to create a framework for reviewing each other's papers or other written work. The idea is that the large number of PhD students in the PhDOOS network—and their local friends out there—is a too good source of information and inspiration to leave unused! For example, send out a section about “Related Work” from an article you are working on, and have people tell you about the things you overlooked. We have to make sure that the authors feel assured their work is not “stolen” by anybody in the process. Since cooperation is a basic tool in research today, keeping the work secret is not an option. On the contrary, as soon as many people know that a particular idea or approach originally came from one group of persons, it will in fact be *better* protected against “theft” than without this community awareness. The network is a great resource of knowledge and inspiration, we just have to push the idea a little bit.

Another idea was to use the Internet more intensively to get in touch,

possibly on a more regular basis. This has already been the case for the organizers of this workshop for years—usually the organizers come from different countries, and there are many things to discuss during the year. Real meetings are great, but difficult and expensive to arrange, and well-known technologies like IRC can already do much. However, whether in real life or via network cables, meeting other people and getting to know them is a necessary precondition for good, lively cooperation, and an event like this workshop is an excellent way to meet new people—and, next year, also well-known ones. . .

The homepage of the 1999 workshop will be reachable from <http://www.phdoos.org/>. Also, if you want to join the network, take a look at that web-site.

The following sections contain the position papers in a revised version which the authors produced shortly after the workshop. The articles are also available electronically, on the URL <ftp://ftp.daimi.au.dk/pub/empl/eernst/phdws98/positionpapers>.