Schools computer animation competition launched to inspire the next generation

Computer scientists from the University of Manchester are challenging children and young people in the UK to create their own animations, as part of a drive to inspire the next generation of computer scientists.

Staff at the University's School of Computer Science came up with the idea for the UK Schools Computer Animation Competition last year (2008), to mark the 60th anniversary of the world's first stored program computer, designed and built in Manchester.

And now in 2009 they are to repeat the competition – which has been called Animation09 – to encourage a greater interest in computing amongst young people.

To enter the competition youngsters – aged between seven and 19 – have to create an animated film, of one-minute or less, using the animation programs; Alice, Scratch or Flash.

More than 430 schools across the country have already registered to take part in the competition.

The winners will have their films showcased at a high profile animation festival at the Manchester Museum of Science and Industry in June.

Staff at the University's School of Computer Science hope that that the competition will give young people a chance to explore computer animation for he first time.

Toby Howard from the School of Computer Science, said: "The animation can be used to tell a story, to explain or demonstrate a topic or idea.  It must be inspired in some way by the National Curriculum – but the only real limit will be the students' imaginations.

"Since the launch of the first stored program computer at the University of Manchester 60 years ago, the progress of computing has been rapid.

"That progress is continuing to accelerate and it is likely that computing will change the world even faster over the next 60 years.

"If that progress is to continue apace, we need to encourage the brightest and the best of the next generation to engage in the challenges facing computing.

"And we hope this competition will go some way to raising the profile of computer science amongst children in a fun and exciting way."

Prizes for the competition include notebook PCs, digital cameras and MP3 players.

Entries – which must be received by Friday 1 May, 2009 – can be submitted by individuals or teams in four age categories: aged 7-11, 11-14, 14-16 and 16-19.

They will each be reviewed by a panel of judges. And the winners will be announced on Friday 26 June, 2009.

The competition is being run in partnership with Electronic Arts and with the Manchester Museum of Science and Industry. Further information can be found at www.cs.manchester.ac.uk/Animation09

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Notes to Editors

Further details about the competition and last year's winners can be found at www.cs.manchester.ac.uk/Animation09

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