

TEXT OF THE INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS DELIVERED BY: **PROFESSOR JAMES BROWNE**, President, National University of Ireland, Galway, on 1 December 2011 in the Royal College of Physicians in Ireland, on the occasion of the conferring of the Degree of Doctor of Science *honoris causa*, on **DR MICHAEL L BRODIE**

A Sheansailéir, a mhuintir na hOllscoile agus a dhaoine uaisle,

Born in a small rural Canadian town, Michael Brodie now lives and works at the heart of our expanding digital universe.

He serves as Chief Scientist of Verizon Services Operation. His company Verizon is a global leader in innovative communications, information and entertainment.

Dr Brodie works on strategic information technology challenges. He seeks opportunities to deliver value to Verizon's customers from emerging technologies and practice in very large-scale distribution systems considering the business, economic, social, application and technical aspects of information ecosystems.



NUI Chancellor Dr Maurice Manning presenting Dr Michael L. Brodie with his Honorary Doctorate of Science

His interest in large-scale tele-computing systems stems from his early work in database technology.

He completed a PhD programme in databases at the University of Toronto in the mid 1970s. Since then he has had an interesting and varied career in academia and industry.

In the early years of career he served as Assistant Professor of Computer Science in the University of Toronto, and an Associate Professor of Information System Management and Computer Science at the University of Maryland in the United States.

He then served as Director of Research at Computer Corporation of America, and in a number of senior technology roles in GTE Laboratories. His work at GTE included the development of a workbench for database design and the implementation of large-scale Enterprise Planning and Management Systems.

In the late 1990s he was chairman of the Global SAP Telecommunication Special Interest Group, an international organisation of 200 telecom companies focussed on the evolution of Enterprise Resource Planning for Telecommunications.

When GTE and Bell Atlantic merged to form Verizon Communication in June 2000, Michael became Senior Technologist, Verizon Technology Organisation, and later Chief Scientist, a position he still holds.

If you take the time to check Michael Brodie's personal website, you will find the following question to the fore, and I quote:

" *Whatever you are doing with computers, you are changing the world; is it for the better?*"

As early as 1988, in a keynote lecture to over 2000 computer scientists at the American Association of Artificial Intelligence, Michael received a standing ovation when he encouraged his audience to consider how their work contributes to improving the world for all human beings.

He urged his fellow computer scientists to, and I quote:

"Find the strength to refuse tasks which do not contribute to your world view, and to delight in the creativity that comes from the alignment of their intellectual, spiritual and physical beings. Each of us is capable of these things and much more. Our work in computer science is as important in its way as that of Mother Teresa of Calcutta. Let us make our work worthy of such a comparison."

Despite his demanding responsibilities at Verizon Corporation, Michael has made time for important *pro bono* contributions to professional bodies, academic research and to universities around the world.

His professional and academic background in database technology, his technology leadership role in Verizon Corporation, and his ethical and holistic world view, mean that he is in a unique position to offer advice and guidance to young researchers, and indeed, to all of those engaged in fundamental research in large-scale computing and database systems.

Michael has given generously and frequently of his time and expertise. He has been a Visiting Professor at the University of Hamburg, Germany and at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

He is Adjunct Research Fellow at the Digital Ecosystems and Business Intelligence Institute at Curtin University of Technology in Perth, Australia; chairs the Advisory Board of the Semantic Technology Institute in Vienna, Austria and the Scientific Advisory Board of DERI (the Digital Enterprise Research Institute) at NUI Galway.

He is an honorary member of the School of Computer and Communications Science at the prestigious École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne, Switzerland and an advisor to the Information Society Technologies strand of the EU Framework Programme.

Michael is a member of the editorial boards of several research journals, has authored over 160 technical papers and presented over 150 keynote lectures and short courses in over thirty countries. He has made important technical contributions to areas such as database systems, intelligent information systems, system interoperability, distributed computing, and semantic web technology and applications.

He is a world class scientist, whose publications confirm his status as a researcher and a human being. He is a leader whose commitment to his fellow human beings informs the direction and the context of his research and the follow on translation into products and services for humanity.

He has combined a career in research, academia and business in a manner which provides for a seamless transition between the world of academia and high-tech business. Furthermore, he has made available on a *pro bono* basis his unique insights and leadership to emerging researchers and research institutes.

NUI Galway owes him a great debt of gratitude. His support for the SFI-funded research institute, DERI, has been critical to its ongoing success.

Fear agus eolaí den chéad scoth is ea Michael Brodie. Gan aon amhrás tá an honóir seo tuillte go maith aige.

PRAEHONORABILIS CANCELLARIE, TOTAQUE UNIVERSITAS:

Praesento vobis, hunc meum filium quem scio tam moribus quam doctrina habilem et idoneum esse qui admittatur, honoris causa, ad gradum Doctoratus in Scientiae, idque tibi fide mea testor ac spondeo totique Academiae.