

Escape from the ivory tower: the Haskell journey

Simon Peyton Jones

Amphi 34B

4, place Jussieu
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Haskell is my first baby, born slightly before my son Michael, who is now in his mid-20s. From somewhat academic beginnings as a remorselessly pure functional programming language, Haskell has evolved into a practical tool used for real applications and, amazingly, is still in a state of furious innovation.

In this talk I'll discuss Haskell's birth and evolution, including some of the research and engineering challenges we faced in design and implementation. I'll focus particularly on the ideas that have turned out, in retrospect, to be most important and influential, as well as sketching some current developments and making some wild guesses about the future.

Simon Peyton Jones, FRS, graduated from Trinity College Cambridge in 1980. After two years in industry, he spent seven years as a lecturer at University College London, and nine years as a professor at Glasgow University, before moving to Microsoft Research (Cambridge) in 1998.

Simon's main research interest is in functional programming languages, their implementation, and their application. He was a key contributor to the design of the now-standard functional language Haskell, and is the lead designer of the widely-used Glasgow Haskell Compiler (GHC). He has written two textbooks about the implementation of functional languages. He is particularly motivated by direct application of principled theory to practical language design and implementation – that is one reason he loves functional programming so much.

Simon is chair of Computing at School, the grass-roots organisation that was at the epicentre of the 2014 reform of the English computing curriculum.

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