THE COAT OF ARMS

An international association of Corpus Linguistics has commissioned a coat of arms. For readers not familiar with the medieval French used in heraldry, some brief explanations have been added in the notes.

The arms feature an escutcheon[1] depicting a mouse rampant Gules armed and langued Azure[2], within a double tressure flory counter-flory of the second[3]. When flown correctly the mouse should respect[4] the lance or, in most cases, the flag pole.

Atop the shield sits Ada Lovelace. She wears a gold mantle lined with ermine and holds a tree with 64 branches from which hang 128 golden apples. On either side of the shield sit Charles Babbage and Alan Turing, forward facing. Babbage holds two cog wheels and Turing holds a vacuum tube.

Above the shield appears the motto of the arms, "Habeas corpus"[5]. Surrounding the shield is the collar of The Most Ancient and Most Noble Order of the Counters of Bits.

The supporters[6] are two crowned and chained spanners. The dexter supports a banner which depicts the text "Veni, vidi, vici"[7], the sinister supports a banner which depicts the text "Velocius Perlus quam asparagi coquantur"[8]. Between them hovers a silver awk.

In machine-readable versions of the coat of arms, translations of the mottoes appear when the cursor is hovered over them. If the zoom function is used, a small inescutcheon[9] within the main shield becomes visible: it contains 256 apples, alternating black and white, which proclaim the dominion of quantitative methods *en surtout*[10] over the territorial claims of sloppy qualitative methods.

Some easter eggs have also been hidden by bored programmers. A double click on Babbage's cog wheels makes them turn and a series of pseudo-random numbers fly around the screen. A double click on Turing's valve produces a small bang and an endless tape containing a string of symbols appears. Double-clicking the awk makes it fly around squawking something rather rude. (If you find a way of stopping any of these, please let us know.)

No decision has yet been taken by the organization as to the design of livery for PhD students.

Notes

1. Shield.

2. A red mouse standing upright, with the claws of a lion and a blue tongue.

3. We have no idea what this means either.

4. Face towards.

5. Traditionally translated as "I am more empirical than thou".

6. Figures placed on either side of the shield and holding it up.

7. "ICAME, I saw, I conquered".

8. "My Perl program runs faster than asparagus can be cooked".

9. An inescutcheon is a smaller escutcheon that is placed within the main escutcheon. Couldn't you work that out for yourself?

10. Don't you know any French at all?