

TCD lecturer wins Oscar for visual software

Katherine Donnelly

A LECTURER at Trinity College Dublin will be awarded an Oscar this weekend for his visual effects software used in a string of Hollywood movies.

Dr Anil Kokaram will receive the Academy Award at the Scientific and Technical Awards ceremony tomorrow, a fortnight ahead of the acting awards.

These awards are presented for devices, methods, formulas, discoveries or inventions of special and outstanding value to the movie industry.

High profile

The visual effects and image-processing software developed by Dr Kokaram and former colleagues has been used on a host of high-profile films including 'Casino Royale', 'X-Men', 'The Last Stand', 'The Da Vinci Code' and 'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory'.

Dr Kokaram and colleagues at UK-based software developer The Foundry, where he worked as a consultant, developed a package that performs tasks that were previously difficult to carry out at the post-production stage, unless

through manual editing.

His particular expertise is in a process known as motion estimation, required for many special effects and enhancement operations in motion pictures or videos.

Unique

As well as creating unique special effects, the software can also perform touch-up tasks and remove blotches or objects, or create new frames in an image sequence.

Dr Kokaram said the process could, for instance, remove "wings" that hold people up in the air to make them look like they are flying.

He said he was delighted to have won this award, especially given the stringent examination process employed in selecting the winners.

"It involved six months of deliberation and assessment by two panels made up of both academics and members of the film industry," he said.

Dr Kokaram, a lecturer in the Department of Electronic and Electrical Engineering, is currently working on the restoration of some footage of John F Kennedy's visit to Ireland in 1963 for the Irish Film Centre.