The Stick is Full

We are building a Computer Science tradition. In 2007 Ryerson received permission to offer the Master of Science program in Computer Science. At the same time, the Department of Computer Science established a tradition of excellence involving a tool borrowed from the military called a "pace stick"--or simply "the stick".

Historically, the stick is a descendant of the lance or pike. In the hands of a skilled instructor, the stick is used to measure the length of "pace" of inexperienced soldiers as they learn the intricacies of "foot drill". Eventually the stick is eliminated as soldiers gain confidence and perform drill on their own. The stick is employed to correct and instruct and represents a standard that all are expected to achieve.

In our program the stick represents the work of our graduates, records their contribution to our discipline, and is present during all thesis defences and ceremonies. Successful graduates are shown their names engraved on the stick during the procession to their graduation ceremony—it is a moment that demonstrates to them that they and their contributions will not be forgotten.

Figure 1 Prof. Ferworn shows new graduates their names before convocation.

"When we obtained our first stick, we expected there would be enough room for ten years of graduates. It has now been less than four years and, with the graduation of 15 new Computer Science Masters students, the stick is full", said Prof. Alex Ferworn the graduate program director for Computer Science. "We have ordered three more 'rosewood' sticks for our Masters program and, in anticipation of our Doctoral program, three 'blonde' sticks. The first stick, and all that follow, will be stored in a display case for all to see in perpetuity", added Prof. Ferworn.

Figure 2 The stick full of names