

# *Thriving Together:*

## Stories and Reflections to Share as Women in Technology

Women in Technology Annual Event

***“Empowerment – Live Without Limits!”***

- ▶ December 7, 2023
- ▶ University of New Mexico






First, thank you for having me.

It is a privilege to share my story, as it is happening. We'll meet some early women leaders in technology whose stories are still emerging— years, decades, and centuries later.

As we journey toward empowerment, we must remember that we don't walk alone. We are joined by many people, men and women, who walk with us.



A song from Daft Punk that sets the motif of our times, in an appropriately robotic voice that fits into our current obsession with AI.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D8K90hX4PrE>

# *Techno-Logic* by Daft Punk (Album: Human After All)

Buy it, use it, break it, fix it, trash it, change it, mail, upgrade it

Charge it, point it, zoom it, press it, snap it, work it, quick erase it

Write it, get it, paste it, save it, load it, check it, quick rewrite it

Plug it, play it, burn it, rip it, drag it, drop it, zip unzip it



Our lives are yoked to and by technology.

My mother, Maitili, taught herself to do email at an Internet café in Bengaluru, India.

**At age 80.**

She broke the mold for Indian women in her life. **She inspires me everyday.**



Maitili



I have two questions for us to ponder:

My first question: ***Why are women still underrepresented in technology?***

My second question:  
***What does it take to thrive in technology?***





When I first started in Technology, it was a male-dominated field. ***And it still is.***

I was sometimes the only woman in my department.

Some roles I have held in industry and education:

- ❖ Developer (in-house and in Professional Services)
- ❖ Applications Development Manager
- ❖ Warehouse Systems Project Manager (Dev, BA, QA, Help Desk)
- ❖ Faculty in universities in GA and IA: taught technology courses in core curriculum, BIT, MBA courses

- ❖ Road warrior experiences (fun, but sometimes lonely, scary)
  - ❖ Of car phones and door alarms
  - ❖ Quiet times, productive times
  - ❖ new adventures and new friends
- ❖ Regen code rewrite (challenging, hard work)
- ❖ Teaching cutting-edge tech (exciting, empowering)
- ❖ Warehouse Systems experiences (high pressure, fulfilling)



The adjectives that sum up my love for IT:

**Rewarding (I made a difference to someone)**

**Enriching (I learned a lot)**

**Empowering (I forged new horizons)**

## The struggles:

- ❖ The uphill work of overcoming people's skepticism about a woman being an expert in an area of IT
- ❖ Dealing with being excluded within my work family
- ❖ Battling stereotyping and being assigned roles that were thought to be a "woman's job."

***The struggle is real and it gets old.*** But I was fortunate to have some bosses who recognized the value I brought to the team. And a very supportive spouse who believes in equality.

A lot of research has gone into this. Why girls and boys do equally well in school and somehow fewer young women arrive in IT...

- ❖ Language, images, and social conventions enforce separation of careers through images, and unquestioned assumptions:
  - ❖ Computing portrayed as something only “nerds,” “geeks,” or “hackers” do....“white males hunkered around a computer in a dark room alone” - IT is much broader than these visualizations...
  - ❖ Women as “meant to be” mothers, children minders, home makers
- ❖ Work cultures that are oriented to male expectations and stereotypes
  - ❖ Hazing, sexual harassment, jokes, demeaning attitudes and exclusion of female coworkers in activities, perpetuation of “old boys’ clubs”
  - ❖ Hours of work, pay gaps, conventional roles, tea making or note taking...

- ❖ “Pinkification” or the enforcing of gender stereotyping through the marketing of toys, clothes and careers to girls in ways that diverge from that for boys
- ❖ Marketing to children/young adults by gender: peer pressure
- ❖ Marketing for adults by gender: My trip to JC Penney
- ❖ Examine the clothes idols wear at awards ceremonies. The emphasis is on body rather than mind, for women.
- ❖ The social pressure (all ages) to conform or be ragged on and excluded.
- ❖ Even we women unwittingly buy into these biases. Sometimes it is just easier to cave in.



We can't ignore the intersectionality of social categorizations and stereotyping: gender, race, ethnicity, skin color, language....

The key takeaway is that we should build empathy through these very real, shared, concerns. Each of us may be privileged in some ways and disadvantaged in others. Some may be more disadvantaged than privileged.

Let's be passionate about empowering one another wherever there is a disadvantage.

***We are all in this together!***

Back to women in technology.

Another reason these inequities continue is that we don't always hear about women who have accomplished great things in IT.

Historically, women in "male" domains have been sidelined and marginalized and their roles ignored.

❖ WWII role shift/re-shift

But lately their stories are emerging.

We all should do more to lift one another up to celebrate one another, men and women, as contributions are made and milestones are reached. It does not need to take half a century.



# Ada Lovelace (1815 – 1852)

Ada, daughter of poet Byron, wrote code for Babbage's Analytical Engine, the prototype for the digital computer.

Her work was published with initials, not with her real name, because she was a woman.



[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ada\\_Byron\\_daguerreotype\\_by\\_Antoine\\_Claudet\\_1843\\_or\\_1850\\_-\\_cropped.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ada_Byron_daguerreotype_by_Antoine_Claudet_1843_or_1850_-_cropped.png)

# The ENIAC 6

6 women programmed the ENIAC (Electronic Numerical Integrator And Computer), the first programmable, electronic, general-purpose digital computer, completed in 1945.

<https://eniacprogrammers.org/>

<https://spectrum.ieee.org/untold-history-of-ai-invisible-woman-programmed-americas-first-electronic-computer>



# Grace Hopper

- ❖ Rear Admiral Grace Murray Hopper wrote the first compiler (software that translates programming code to machine code)
- ❖ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grace\\_Hopper](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grace_Hopper)





Consider these questions....

- ❖ What is a time when you tried to walk in someone else's shoes?
- ❖ Do you like helping people?
- ❖ Do you take risks?
- ❖ Have you boldly asked what might at first be considered a stupid question?
- ❖ What are you passionate about?
- ❖ Who are your role models?
- ❖ Are these role models quiet wall flowers?

What are some qualities that would help you thrive as an Information Technology professional?

IT can offer you a wide range of job types from code development to user interface design, from project management to help desk services, networking, security or infrastructure, or training and documentation.

Most positions require a combination of these skill areas.

***But what's common to them all?***









Again, here's why I love being an IT professional:

**It is rewarding (I make a difference to someone)**

**It is enriching (I learn a lot)**

**It is empowering (I forge new horizons)**

The struggles can be overcome, when we tell our stories and recognize how each of us leaves an imprint on others and the world.

- ❖ **Don't let the tides of social stereotyping overwhelm you!**
- ❖ **Be an active participant in creating an inclusive landscape.**
- ❖ **Follow your calling!**

***You can do this!!!!***

Look around you.

**You are not alone.** There is a universe of women and men who are behind you. Use that support nexus to prepare for the challenges of being a woman in technology.

Here in UNM, we have a vision, in which you have a role:

*Be a global leader in realizing human potential, addressing critical community challenges, and demonstrating the power of **inclusive diversity**.*

