



The EDGE Newsletter

Equity & Diversity in Geoscience & Engineering

Edited by
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DAWEG at the APEGBC Conference

by Maggie Wojtarowicz, E.I.T.

The DAWEG stream at the APEGBC Annual Conference will take place on Friday, October 25 this year—in Victoria.

The DAWEG stream has a very exciting line-up of speakers and topics. To further entice you to attend, here is a sneak preview:

Dr. Maria Klawe—the Dean of Science at the University of British Columbia, and the NSERC-IBM Chair for Women in Science and Engineering—will be speaking about “Successful Strategies for Increasing Diversity in Science and Engineering”

Brian Conlin—the President of Golder Associated Ltd.—will address the topic of

“People-focused—why bother?”

Elisabeth Walsh—a Senior Consultant with MICA Management Resources—will present the “Six Thinking Hats™” described in the March Issue of The EDGE

And Mark Loader—the Senior Vice President, Transportation Division at SNC-Lavalin Inc.—will give practical tips on “Selling Canadian Engineering to the World”

These presentations promise to be very practical and interesting, so we hope to see you in the audience!!



All DAWEG and APEGBC members are invited to participate

Inside this issue:

APEGBC Conference/ Volunteering as a Tool	1
The Challenge Facing Women in Engineering	2
DAWEG Sponsors Students at ROV Design Competition and ICWES Conference/ Employment Corner	4
Unsung Heroines of Science and Engineering	5
Never Say Never/ Science Fairs/Career Day	6
Upcoming Events	7

A Powerful Networking Tool

by Margaret Li, P.Eng.

It is not what you know, it is who you know. Most of us have heard this before and it is so true. This is true particularly when we are looking for a job. ‘What we know’ is important, but we have to let others know ‘what we know’. In fact, this is true even in little things like finding a good doctor, specialist or travel agent.

In my experience, one of the powerful tools in networking is VOLUNTEERING. In the last 20 years, having been involved in different types of volunteer work, I found that my network has helped me a lot. I have personal friends from various professions who enrich my life and expanded my horizon. Working together on projects enables us to know each other’s abilities,

which helps in future referrals if necessary. I have seen many people benefiting professionally because of the network they built.

Briefly, from what I have seen, some advantages of volunteering are:

1. Learning from each other—people bring different skills to the volunteer work.
2. Developing new skills—there are many opportunities to learn and try new skills when such opportunities might not exist in our own work or personal environment.
3. Allowing people to know our skills—people have a chance to know each other’s skills by working together.
4. Expanding our horizons—we have the chance to know more about various professions, cultures, etc.

(Continued on page 3)

Did you know that:

- In 1995 women in Afghanistan were banned from working. As a result, the country lost approx. 30% of its engineering professionals.

The Challenge Facing Women in Engineering

by Sharon Ho, UBC Engineering Student
(originally printed in the March 26, 2002 issue of the UBC nEUSpaper)

You know, there are other options out there girls - like commerce or arts," Dr. Balzarini joked, as my friend Ann and I were whining about the length of the assignment while others worked studiously in the tutorial. Although the professor was not serious about his remark, there is no question that faculties like arts and commerce are more popular than engineering with female students. The average percentage of women enrolled in engineering at UBC was 10%, 15%, and 20% in the 70s, 80s, and 90s, respectively. Even though the number of female students has doubled since the 70s, it is still much lower than those in other faculties. So what makes engineering so unappealing to girls?

First, there is the myth that female students are mathematically and scientifically inept compared to their male counterparts. The notion that men attain better grades in math and physics classes than women cannot be proved or is proved by the statistics. The numbers may be skewed simply due to the gender imbalance in the sample population. Even though men and women are biologically different, there is no evidence to show that the latter are intellectually inferior, so the lack of female enrollment in engineering is more a matter of interest rather than capability.

A possible reason for the lack of interest is that traditionally, women were believed to be less suitable for technical work due to society's expectations. A high school teacher of mine once said, "In the 50s, a woman had basically four career choices: be a nurse, a secretary, a teacher or a housewife. Any other job would be considered improper for a lady." Times have changed since then, but there is still a stereotype against female engineering students. They are believed to be less feminine than their peers in arts and commerce.

There is also the stereotypical image of the engineer: the term engineer is usually associated with "nerd," which is enough to turn some girls away from faculty. There is also a widely believed, yet often false, image of UBC engineers as a bunch of obnoxious drunk guys in red jackets. The false interpretation of the engineer extends to the workplace. Many people think of "engineering" as walking around an

a computer for eight hours a day. A very common misconception is the "professional personality" of the engineer: an introvert who prefers to work at his own desk and to be entirely cutoff from any human contact.

"Many women prefer to work on a personal level, face-to-face with their clients, because it is gratifying to know that their work has a direct impact on people," said Dr. Elizabeth Croft, a professor in the Department of Mechanical Engineering and the co-ordinator of the Electro-Mechanical Design Engineering Program, "but it is not a well-known fact that engineering actually involves a lot of teamwork and very often, client interactions." Young women who have an acquaintance in an engineering program or in industry are more likely to enroll in the program because they are aware of the large variety of jobs available to engineering graduates.

Another reason why engineering is intimidating to most high school girls is the gender equality issues that female engineers have to face and cope with everyday. For those who overcome the stereotype and intelligence hurdles, being accepted into the engineering program still does not translate to survival in an industry dominated by men. Dr. Croft was one of eight women, out of a hundred students, to obtain a B.A.Sc. in mechanical engineering from UBC in 1988. "I didn't encounter any discrimination from other students but sometimes there was the odd instructor who would make inappropriate comments," said Dr. Croft on the issue of gender equity. "The comments were probably made due to the lack of awareness."

Without a doubt, the degree of gender discrimination has diminished throughout the years, as the percentage of female enrollment has gradually increased; however, traces of such injustice still linger outside academia. "After I graduated from UBC, I worked as an engineer for a consulting firm and some clients had mistaken me for a secretary!" Dr. Croft said. Most female engineers, including Dr. Croft, who have worked in an industrial environment, have complaints about mistreatment by their coworkers. Even today, when accusations of sexual harassment are rampant, male workers still casually make comments or "catcalls", however inappropriate, to female engineers working in the plant. "Some of the workers are

(Continued on page 3)

Math Competitions for Kids

by Catherine Marr, P.Eng.

You may be familiar with the MathCounts program, a math enrichment, coaching and competition program for Grade 8 and 9 students. MathCounts originated in the US, but has chapters in BC thanks in part to APEGBC who is one of the sponsors and thanks to a number of APEGBC members who volunteer their time for this program. If you aren't familiar with MathCounts you should know there's something special going on here. Ever been to a kids' sports tournament or meet? Now imagine the same level of enthusiasm, fun and camaraderie but at a math competition. I went to a local MathCounts competition once to present awards for APEGBC and ended up in a room with 200 kids all cheering for their teammates in what's referred to as a Countdown Round. Math as a sport and math as fun! It was an eye opener. I've always liked math but my experience was that enjoying math was something you kept quiet about (especially being a girl!)

Then I heard that the Pacific Institute for the Mathematical Sciences (PIMS) was organizing similar contests for students in Grades 5, 6 and 7, so I dropped by UBC on Saturday May 25 and saw the same thing happening with elementary school students. A couple hundred young "Mathletes" spending an entire Saturday having fun with math problems. I decided I have to find out more so I plan to get involved starting with the next school year - maybe we'll even start our own chapter in Kits!

If you want more information or just want to test yourself with some sample questions go to the following websites:

- PIMS Elementary Grades Math Contest <http://www.pims.math.ca/elmecon/>
- BC MathCounts Program <http://www.apeg.bc.ca/students/mathcounts/index.htm>
- MathCounts Organization <http://mathcount.org>

And while we're on the subject, you may also be interested in the Math Outreach Program at UBC at www.math.ubc.ca

The Challenge Facing Women in Engineering (con't)

(Continued from page 2)

cause they feel threatened by competent female co-workers," explained Dr. Croft, "and the others just have little knowledge on the meaning and negative impact of sexual harassment."

There is also a less blatant form of sexism in the workplace: opportunity and salary discrepancies. Some employers assign more technical projects to male engineers and leave the clerical ones to the females, even if all the engineers are equally qualified. During one co-op term, another student and myself, both in the same academic year, were hired by the same company. I spent four months making CAD drawings, while he built a new component to be added to the existing product. There are cases where two engineers of different genders, but having the same rank and similar duties, receive different salaries: the female engineer is usually the one being given the smaller paycheque. To prevent this kind of discrimination, it is the female engineer's responsibility to investigate salary discrepancies and discuss the issues with her employer, in order to protect her rights to fair wages and meaningful and challenging projects.

Being a woman carries the extra burden of juggling motherhood and work. "We are all the same as the male engineers... until we have babies," Dr. Croft commented on the issue of maternity-leave and childcare. Some companies feel that women miss more workdays because of

maternity-leave, so they might be more reluctant to hire female engineers. The right to maternity-leave is actually necessary for both men and women, because childcare is a responsibility for both parents. Defending this right for women would in turn raise the same concerns for men. "Women's issues are people issues. When workplaces are improved for women, everyone benefits," said Dr. Croft. Some engineering companies, nowadays, provide daycare services and have flexible working hours, which cater to the needs of employees with children.

Although the engineering industry has evolved to accommodate the increase in the number of female engineers, there is still a lot to be done to ensure gender equity. What is necessary to advocate change? "More women!" exclaimed Dr. Croft. "We need more female engineers in the industry and more female professors in the university. My goal is to reach 30%, that's the critical mass required to have a real 'voice' in the workforce. We are still far short of that."

The problem of recruiting female engineers is a vicious circle. To have enough women in the engineering industry to make adjustments, there needs to be more female students enrolling in and graduating from the engineering program; however, changes to the industry has to occur first, in order to increase female enrollment. What should the university do to promote engineering to female students? "The university should have recruitment programs targeting young girls in elementary school. By the time they reach

high school, such programs have less effect because the girls have already made up their minds about their goals," responded Dr. Croft. It is also crucial to have female engineers and professors speak at these recruitment seminars, because girls would feel more encouraged to pursue careers in science and technology, knowing that women do play an important role in the industry.

In the engineering program, it is very encouraging to female students to have female professors as role models. The fact that someone else has faced the same issues and has still succeeded is comforting for most girls in engineering. The university is in need of more female engineering professors, but only a very small percentage of engineering graduates go on to the PhD level, so female professors are rare commodities.

Engineering professors like Dr. Croft have paved the way in the struggle for gender equity in engineering. Dr. Croft is confident there will be more female engineers in the near future, because companies are starting to realize that women are not only competent workers but are also good team players. It should be emphasized that in order to make a difference, we, the female engineers, have to work together and to speak and be heard.

A Powerful Networking Tool (con't)

(Continued from page 1)

5. Forming lasting friendships—many of my good friends originated from working together in volunteer work.

I have been volunteering with DAWEG and APEGBC for the last four years. I have met many interesting people from various disciplines of engineering. There are many opportunities to

volunteer our time and talents.

The DAWEG AGM will be held on Saturday, Sept. 28. I would like to encourage you to come and network with your fellow engineers. There may be some activities you would like to participate in and share the fun while expanding your network.

In the world there is nothing more submissive and weak than water.
Yet for attacking that which is hard and strong, nothing can surpass it.
This is because there is nothing that can take its place.
That the weak overcomes the strong,
And submissive overcomes the hard,
Everyone in the world knows yet no one can put into practice.
Straightforward words
Seem paradoxical.

Tao Te Ching Reprinted from Earth Poems, 1996, HarperCollins
San Francisco (submitted by Gloria Coombs, P.Eng.)



Lower Mainland All Girl Team Places Third Overall in ROV Design and Building Competition at the Kennedy Space Center

by Daniela Constantinescu, E.I.T.

The MATE/MTS Remote Operated Vehicle (ROV) Design and Building Competition was held in conjunction with the NOAA/NASA Link Project's Exploration 2002 Symposium May 20-22 at the Kennedy Space Center. The goals of the competition were to increase awareness of marine technology fields and to encourage students to participate in them, while helping students develop the skills they need for a career in marine technology.

The competition attracted 29 North American high school and college teams. One of them, partly sponsored by DAWEG, was the Lower Mainland team, whose scientific coordinator is Peter

Thain, WRCHE. The team was unique in the competition. Not only were they one of the only four all girl teams, but they were also the youngest and the only Canadian team in the competition.

The girls worked long hours and it paid off. They placed third overall in the competition. They also placed first in their static display for design and innovation. Their ROV was one of five displayed at the Link Symposium Reception on the first day. The Discovery Channel chose them as one of the main focuses in a program coming out this fall. They met Sylvia Earle – scientist who lived underwater and built her own submersible – and many other scientists at the Link Symposium. The competition was an incredible experience for the girls, which they fully deserved. We are proud of them and we wish them much success in the future. Well done!

DAWEG Sponsors Student for ICWES Conference

by Catherine Marr, P.Eng.

DAWEG is pleased to announce that we will be sponsoring Shirin Farrahi, an engineering student from SFU, to attend the 12th International Conference of Women Engineers and Scientists (ICWES). Shirin is in her third semester of systems engineering at SFU. In addition to being the first-year class representative to the engineering student society, she is currently the President of the SFU organization for women in engineering. She is also a recipient of a number of awards and honors including the SFU Gordon M. Shrum National 4 year scholarship, a 2001 Governor General's Academic medal and first place in the Ottawa Science Olympics in 2000. Shirin is eager to learn new ways of improving the situation for the women in her faculty at SFU and, in particular, to gain advice and inspiration on mentorship programs for female engineering students as a result of her attendance at the conference.

In exchange for sponsorship, Shirin will write a 1000 word essay (to be published in an upcoming issue of The EDGE), summarizing her experiences at the conference and how these experiences have impacted her vision of women's roles and contributions in the areas of science, engineering and technology.

A number of DAWEG Executive will also be attending the ICWES conference.

- Nicole Kohnert, APEGBC Council Member
- Margaret Li, DAWEG Chair
- Daniela Constantinescu, DAWEG Vice-Chair
- Karen Savage, DAWEG's CCPE Representative
- Lianna Mah, DAWEG's CCWEST Liaison

We look forward to hearing about the DAWEG Executive experiences as well as Shirin's at the DAWEG AGM in September.

The ICWES conference is being hosted by Canada in Ottawa from July 27 to 31, 2002. This year, the theme of the conference is "Women in a Knowledge-Based Society". For more information on the conference go to www.icwes12.org.

DAWEG Employment Corner

Job Postings

Several job openings at the National Research Council of Canada:
<http://hr.nrc.ca:8080/hrb/jobpost.nsf/poste>

E-mail employment opportunities for DAWEG members to dawegnews@yahoo.com.

If you are looking for a professional position in the Engineering or Geoscience field, why not submit a little ad for yourself into the next issue of The EDGE—DAWEG can help you build your network.



"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our Light, not our Darkness that most frightens us"
Marianne Williamson

Unsung Heroines of Science and Engineering

by Jocelyn Read, Resident Historian
(originally prepared for the March 26, 2002 issue of the UBC nEUSpaper)

Throughout history, there have been many women who proved their abilities in science and engineering, despite the odds against them. Unfortunately, as

plasma physics and fluid dynamics pioneer Hertha Marks Ayrton said in 1812,

"An error that ascribes to a man what was actually the work of a woman has more lives than a cat."

Here are a few of the women who made major contributions.

EMILY ROEBLING

1843 - 1903

Supervised the building of the Brooklyn Bridge.

Emily Roebling began her studies of mathematics and engineering to assist her husband, Washington Roebling, when he became master bridge builder on the Brooklyn bridge project.

Her knowledge became invaluable when he fell ill from decompression sickness and was left partially paralyzed, without the use of his voice. He wanted to stay on as director, so Emily became his liaison with the outside world, making inspection visits to the bridge. She soon took on the responsibility of meeting with and answering the questions of the bridge officials, representatives and contractors.

Many of these businessmen believed her to be the actual Chief Engineer on the project. She also became the first woman to address the American Society of Civil Engineers, successfully defending her husband's continued ability to supervise the project. Her name was listed on the plaque dedicating the bridge as one of the builders.

JEAN JENNINGS, BETTY SNYDER, KATHLEEN MCNULTY, MARLYN WESCOFF, FRANCES BILAS AND RUTH LICHTERMAN

The programmers of ENIAC
~1946

Many people know of Ada Lovelace, who wrote the first computer program, and predicted in 1843 that computers could in future be used to compose complex music, to produce graphics, and would have practical and scientific value. Jean Jennings, Betty Snyder, Kathleen McNulty, Marlyn Wescoff, Frances Bilas, and Ruth Lichterman were also key figures in the development of computer science.

Near the end of the Second World War, the U.S. Army built ENIAC (Electronic Numerical Integrator and Computer),

the first electronic general purpose computer in history. To program it, they selected these 6 women from a pool of 100 female "Computers" who had so far been calculating firing tables aided only by electronic calculators. At first they were only given a stack of blueprints for the machine, as they didn't have enough security clearance to actually see or touch the hardware, and told to make it work.

After the war ended in 1945, they were finally granted permission to work on the machine directly. There were no manuals or operating systems. They broke the differential equations into parts, determined computing times for various operations, and optimized the calculations so that the right data would hit the right place at the right time. By 1946 the massive machine was able to calculate trajectories that used to take 20 hours of computation in less than 30

seconds. But at a press conference, amazed journalists were told nothing of the women's contribution to the project. Later, a photo released showed three of them working with a man standing behind them to watch. Several of them quit.

However, Jean Jennings went on to develop ENIAC's ability to store programs, eliminating the need for constant reconfiguration. John Von Neumann is usually given credit for developing internal programming, but it was Jennings who wrote the first code. Betty Snyder later worked with Jennings at Eckert-Mauchly in the creation of UNIVAC. Snyder created the instruction code that allowed UNIVAC to be programmed by typewritten code instead of dials and switches, and inserted a numeric keypad to the right of keyboard. She later went on to help design and standardize FORTRAN and COBOL.

Beautiful Women:

Age 3: She looks at herself and sees a Queen.

Age 8: She looks at herself and sees Cinderella.

Age 15: She looks at herself and sees an Ugly Sister (Mom, I can't go to school looking like this!)

Age 20: She looks at herself and sees "too/fat/too thin, too short/too tall, too straight/too curly" - but decides she's going out anyway.

Age 30: She looks at herself and sees "too fat/too thin, too short/too tall, too straight/too curly" - but decides she doesn't have time to fix it so she's going out anyway.

Age 40: She looks at herself and sees "too fat/too thin, too short/too tall, too straight/too curly" - but says, "At least, I am "clean" and goes out anyway.

Age 50: She looks at herself and sees "I am" and goes wherever she wants to go.

Age 60: She looks at herself and reminds herself of all the people who can't even see themselves in the mirror anymore. Goes out and conquers the world.

Age 70: She looks at herself and sees wisdom, laughter and ability. Goes out and enjoys life.

Age 80: Doesn't bother to look. Just puts on a purple hat and goes out to have fun with the world.

Maybe we should all grab that purple hat earlier.

Submitted by Gloria
Coombs, P.Eng.

Never Say Never

by Gloria Coombs, P.Eng.
edie@icehouse.net.

When I was a kid, I could never imagine moving to the U.S.A. I never imagined that I would choose to put my professional career on hold to become a full-time stay-at-home mom. I never imagined that taking care of babies could be so rewarding. I did imagine that taking care of a toddler would be difficult, but I never imagined how truly taxing it would be. I never imagined I would climb a mountain. I never imagined myself to be an athlete. I never imagined myself to be a sculptor. I never, ever imagined that I would get divorced. I never ever imagined how hard it would be to re-enter the workforce.

And yet here I am. I've been in the U.S., and unemployed for 7 years now. I need to be an engineer, again. And now

I want to share a dirty little secret, which young professional women don't want to believe. Perhaps I shouldn't generalize, but when I was younger, I believed that once I earned my Bachelor of App. Sci. degree it would be mine forever and I would be an engineer forever. I now have my name on a piece of paper that is not the ticket to success that I once hoped. Our society does not reward women for staying home to raise children.

I find myself very alone. Where are all the I-had-to-re-enter-the-workforce engineers? Am I the only one? I am frustrated, but there is no one to blame. I am frustrated with a situation that has no flaw, or at least none that I know how to fix. I can't blame prospective employers for wanting to hire fresh graduates with current technology under their belt. I can't blame

my ex-spouse for not sacrificing 7 years of his career, and for not wanting to support me now that I want to get re-educated. I can't blame my peers for continuing to advance in their careers while I chose to stay home to care for my children. I can't blame the economy for not having more entry level jobs. (Oh wait, maybe I can blame the economy, but it doesn't make it any better!)

I don't have any solutions in this article. Mostly just questions. I ask myself what I would have done differently. Not stayed home with my babies? Not had children? Not married and moved to the U.S.? I don't regret any of my choices, but I don't know where to go from here. If I could offer advice to my younger more idealistic self, I would probably suggest: Earn a master's degree while still at home. Write the U.S. Funda-

mentals of Engineering exam before I graduated from UBC, when it would have been soooo much easier. (I now have to study for the FE exam in order to get my Professional status here in the U.S.). Don't depend on the financial security of a marriage.

I'm finding that there are few professionals who have taken this road. And yet, when I'm most frustrated, networking is where my salvation comes from. I haven't yet found other professionals who had to re-enter after a long absence, but I have found the Society for Women Engineers (SWE) in the U.S. to be chock full of sympathetic ears and information. So if you need contacts in the U.S., check out the web page for SWE, <http://www.swe.org/>. And if you know of anyone in Washington who is hiring Water/Wastewater Environmental Engineers, let me know!

DAWEG Supports Science Fairs

by Catherine Marr, P.Eng.

Again this year DAWEG sponsors prizes for the Greater Vancouver, Victoria and Fraser Valley Regional Science Fairs. Winners of DAWEG prizes at the Greater Vancouver Regional Science Fair were Guy Northcote and Rehan Lalani of West Point Grey Academy with "Eggsperiment" Andrew

Rusk and Peter Hunt of West Point Grey Academy with "Water Dams: What Makes Them Work?" Melissa James of Hyland Elementary with "Thermal Ice Scraper" Winners of the DAWEG prizes at the Victoria and Fraser Valley fairs were not available at press time.

For more information on science fairs in BC visit www.sciencefairs.bc.ca

Career Day at Minnekahada Middle School

by Catherine Marr, P.Eng.

Margaret Li, electrical engineer, and Cathy Marr, petroleum engineer, joined a doctor, a dentist, a plumber and a sheet metal fabricator at Minnekahada Middle School in Coquitlam in April. We each had a number of 40 minute sessions to give groups of grade 8 students insight into our respective

careers. Although Margaret claimed she had never spoken to students about careers in her field before, she was quite a hit. Her explanations of how telephone switching works proved to be quite relevant and interesting to an age group that invests significant time with this technology. If you are interested in participating in a career fair in the future, please contact Cathy Marr at cmarr@istar.ca.

www.unbc.ca/conted/women/

Women in Leadership
'Managing Our Future'

Three Day Residence
Course at The Hills
Health Ranch (108 Mile
House, BC) in August
designed to increase
leadership capacity and
create positive change
on personal,
organizational, and
community levels.

DIVISION FOR THE
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ENGINEERING AND GEOSCIENCE

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We're on the Web!!
batman.mech.ubc.ca/~daweg

DAWEG Strategic Plan

Vision Statement: To make Engineering and Geoscience Appealing, Rewarding, and Equitable.

Mission: To advise our profession on issues which impact on women in Engineering and Geoscience.

Core Values: Professionalism & Equity & Inclusiveness

See DAWEG Web Site for more information.

A quick e-mail to say how much I enjoyed reading this newsletter (March 2002 Issue). I am so totally impressed!!! Thank you for all the work you do to keep us informed and inspired.

Nicole Kohnert, P.Eng.
(comment submitted to the DAWEG Executive Committee)

DAWEG Upcoming Events

DAWEG AGM
Guest speaker TBA

Saturday, September 28, 2002
8:30 am - 12:00 noon (with lunch to follow)

Holiday Inn Metrotown
4405 Central Boulevard, Burnaby
(across from Metrotown SkyTrain Station)

For more information and to Register
watch for further DAWEG announcements,
visit the DAWEG web site batman.mech.ubc.ca/~daweg
or e-mail daweg@mech.ubc.ca

All DAWEG members are invited to attend and new members are welcome.