

# Computing Educators Oral History Project

## An Interview with *Jenny Edwards*

Conducted Wednesday, January 18, 2006

In Hobart, Tasmania, Australia

Interview conducted by Barbara Boucher Owens

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### NOTES:

- This interview is broken into two parts. The first part begins directly below and was conducted on January 18, 2006. The second part took place later the same day after a minor problem with the equipment. It begins on line 190 in this transcript and at about 14:01 in the full audio.
- There is a brief addendum at the end of the transcript, lines 514-520. There is no corresponding audio for this portion.

1 [0:00]

2 **Part I**

3 **Barbara Owens:** This is an interview with Jenny Edwards from ... would you state the  
4 name of your university for me, please?

5  
6 Jenny Edwards: The University of Technology, Sydney.

7  
8 **B:** The interview is being recorded on the 18th of January [2006] in Hobart, Tasmania. It's  
9 part of the Computing Educators Oral History Series.

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11 **Did I pronounce your name correctly?**

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J: You did.

**B: Very good. Now, would you like to begin way back when and tell us about your parents. Did either of your parents have a college degree?**

J: Yes, both sides of my family have degrees from a very long way back. Most of my forebears are doctors. David Livingstone was my great-great uncle and there were also quite a lot of missionaries and churchmen in there as well. And I think I am about a sixth-generation graduate from the University of Sydney, so that given that it only started in about 1850 that tells you something.

I also had ... my father died when I was quite young, so my mother brought us up by herself, but I had a lot of very strong women relations, who had independent careers, kept their own names, even back in the 1890s. And I still knew some of them when I was very small because a lot of them were very long lived.

**B: I see. Goodness! Were any of them in engineering or mathematics?**

J: No, no. My mother's degrees were in arts, but pretty much everybody else had degrees in medicine or theology or both.

**B: I see. Did you have any siblings?**

J: Yes, I have one sister. She is younger. And she went into architecture. She is very artistic. I am not.

**B: I see. Were you a good student?**

J: Yes, I probably was. I found school incredibly easy.

**B: Were there ... did you take courses in math in high school?**

J: Oh yeah, it was compulsory. We had much more — particularly in those days — much more proscribed school than they have now or I think they ever had in the United States. And, for instance, for the leaving certificate, which I did at the age of 16 — which is for leaving school — I did English, which was compulsory; I did Latin, because you had to have a humanities subject; and I did maths I and II and physics and chemistry.

**B: So you did do maths! Was there a particular teacher that inspired you to go on?**

J: No, not particularly. It was just absolutely taken for granted in my family that you would go to university. I mean, it was never a question. Although I didn't feel any pressure, I mean, I wanted to. I could see that you needed to go to university to get an interesting job. I had a holiday job at one point and I started after an exam in the morning. And I was sitting there thinking, "Gosh, it must be time for afternoon tea!" I looked at my watch and it was only 2

58 o'clock and I thought, "This is why I am going to university!" [laughter]

59

60 **B: So, you're in high school. You know you want to go to college. How did you choose?**

61

62 J: Well I was just always good at maths and science. When I was about 8, in my primary school  
63 desk, there was a piece of graffiti, which was extremely unusual at my school. And it said, "e  
64 to the i pi equals minus one." Now, I knew what pi was, but I didn't know what e was, and I  
65 didn't know what i was, and I didn't see how anything that had pi in it could turn up to equal  
66 minus one. So at that stage I thought, "Well, I have to find out why e to the i pi equals minus  
67 one!" It never occurred to me that maybe it didn't, but I thought, "I want to find this out." So  
68 I suppose that encouraged me a little bit in maths.

69 [4:41]

70 **B: [chuckles] You may be one of the first people that I've heard of that was encouraged by  
71 graffiti!**

72

73 J: Well, everybody thinks this is very funny. But it's true. And if you want to know about my  
74 very first encounter with computers, it was roughly about the same time. At Sydney  
75 University they actually built a computer called SILLIAC, which was Sydney version of the  
76 ILLIAC machine at the University of Illinois. And they had an open day, and my father was  
77 on the staff at the university, and we all went to the open day, and I got to play noughts and  
78 crosses [the same game as tic-tac-toe] against SILLIAC and I won. I think they must have  
79 made it particularly easy because, of course, you can block noughts and crosses. And I guess  
80 that stuck in the back of my mind, because I didn't see another computer for many years.  
81 That was my first encounter with a computer.

82

83 **B: I see. You said that your father was at the university. What was your father doing?**

84

85 J: My father was a pediatrician in practice. But he was also — in those days, senior doctors  
86 worked in university hospitals for free and that gave him a university appointment, because  
87 they were actually teaching the interns and teaching the medical students. So he was a senior  
88 honorary at the Sydney Children's Hospital. And that, as I said, also gave him an  
89 appointment at the University of Sydney.

90

91 **B: Oh! I see. I see. Where did you choose to go to undergraduate school and why did you  
92 choose it?**

93

94 J: Well, in those days, almost everyone in Australia, if you lived in a capital city, unlike the  
95 U.S., people just went to university in their home city, they tended not to move away very  
96 much. And there were only two choices at that time. There was the University of Sydney and  
97 there was the University of New South Wales, which was quite new at that stage. All my  
98 family had been to the University of Sydney. It was physically closer and easier to get to, so I  
99 went to the University of Sydney.

100

101 **B: I see! When you went to school did you immediately know what you were going to major  
102 in?**

103

104 J: Well, again, it's a bit of a different system here. I think probably somewhat to my family's  
105 regret, I did not choose to do medicine. I already knew at that stage that I didn't think that  
106 was what I wanted to do, so really the only other choice was science. I mean, I suppose I  
107 could have done engineering, I certainly had the background for it. But I didn't really think  
108 about it, so I just did science. In those days you had compulsory in the first year physics,  
109 maths, chemistry, with one other subject, and I chose psychology. But I also did Latin, just  
110 out of interest. But of course you couldn't do that as part of the degree, but I wanted to do it  
111 anyway. And then in second year I did statistics and physics and maths. And then in third  
112 year they actually had a computing course. So I did maths and computing.

113  
114 **B: I see. I see. Then what happened? You received your bachelors degree and then what?**

115  
116 J: Well, then I did honors in computing, but I was still interested in the mathematical side. So I  
117 sort of did it in numerical analysis, which at that stage was really the big push because in  
118 those days, pretty much all the computing being done was in a scientific context anyway.  
119 And then I got a post-graduate scholarship, I got a commonwealth scholarship from the  
120 government, and I did a Master's in computing, again pretty much in aspects of numerical  
121 analysis. And then I got — IBM offered some Ph.D. scholarships — and I got one of those.  
122 And I went on and started my Ph.D., although that then became quite a long story.

123  
124 **B: You may continue!**

125  
126 J: OK! Well, by that stage within the department, I was doing a lot of part-time teaching, which  
127 I really enjoyed, which took up a lot of time. And then I got married. And then I had some  
128 children. And I took ...

129  
130 **B: Do you want to enlighten us what some ... some children?**

131  
132 J: Oh! Well, I actually have two live children, but I had 5 miscarriages as well. And I took a  
133 permanent job at the University of Technology, Sydney, where I have been ever since. So the  
134 Ph.D. went on the back burner for a little while. And then I did quite a lot of work, but didn't  
135 get around to writing it up. And eventually, I got around — well, the university put pressure  
136 on me and said, "Write it up, we want to promote you." So I wrote it up. And I got promoted.

137 [9:59]

138 **B: I see. Was there a particular mentor during this experience?**

139  
140 J: My Ph.D. supervisor was, I suppose, what you would call a benign mentor. He very much  
141 encouraged me. He was very good with introducing me to interesting people. He himself had  
142 done his Ph.D. at Cambridge, UK, just after the War and he had worked with Turing, He  
143 worked on the ACE machine. And he worked with all the real pioneers. And he brought  
144 many of them out to Australia to give talks at conferences and such like. So through him it  
145 was a marvelous experience, because I really got to meet almost all the people, like Maurice  
146 Wilkes and all the early sort of pioneers, particularly from the British era of computing. And  
147 he was also very encouraging in terms of, you know, getting on with things.

148  
149 And I suppose when I went to the University of Technology, someone who was actually

150 quite a good friend — he was not much older than me, but he was more senior within the  
151 university — was John Hughes, who was my dean for a very long time. And he was very  
152 encouraging and he often pushed me on to things I didn't really want to do, saying, "It will  
153 be good for your CV." And he was right. It was normally good for my CV.  
154

155 **B: I see. Did you enjoy the research?**  
156

157 J: Yes, I did. But I also really enjoyed teaching. And like many people who enjoy both, I often  
158 had a tough time balancing. One of the problems with research, as everybody knows, is that  
159 — I'm not the sort of person who can just pick it up and put it down. I need concentrated  
160 time. And I often found that between teaching and small children, it was hard to find  
161 concentrated time. So it tended to get done in bursts. So I'd get a lot done when I was on  
162 sabbaticals, and not so much done in between, and things like that.  
163

164 **B: It looks from the little resume that I saw that you never really took a break other than  
165 the sabbaticals. Is that right?**  
166

167 J: That's right.  
168

169 **B: You've been completely on the career path.**  
170

171 J: I also did a lot of consulting. Do you want to know about that?  
172

173 **B: Sure!**  
174

175 J: And while I call it consulting, it was very much research consulting. I mean, it wasn't a  
176 routine application of anything. It was always people with quite nasty problems in my sort of  
177 area of expertise. Really, as I said, I was very interested in numerical algorithms and I tended  
178 to specialize in mathematical programming and in very large matrices. And I've moved from  
179 there into — as soon as parallel computers and things started coming along — I moved from  
180 there into working on parallel computers. So I have always maintained that interest in  
181 numerical algorithms and such like for parallel computers.  
182

183 So the consulting was to some extent in the early days and it largely came to me through my  
184 professor, who was the Ph.D. supervisor. And it was a lot of very interesting different sorts of  
185 jobs in various kinds of industries and quite nasty problems, so that you actually developed  
186 new theory in order to be able solve those problems. And my research has always been like  
187 that. It's always been: Well, here's a problem — existing [theory doesn't solve it, what do we  
188 need to do in order to solve the problem.]  
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[14:01]

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## 190 **Part II**

191  
192 **B: We just had a minor glitch with the equipment and we are going to continue on our  
193 interview with Jenny Edwards.**  
194

195 **Jenny was just very animated about talking about her consulting research experience**

196 **and the support of her major professor during her studies. One of the questions we ask**  
197 **if people aren't talking is did someone on the faculty mentor you? And the answer to**  
198 **that was yes. But how about — you were very interested in education, you said that.**  
199 **Would you tell us more about that interest? Were there other people with whom you**  
200 **worked who were encouraging about that teaching?**  
201

202 J: Well, not really. It's always expected here, that Ph.D. students will do some teaching. But I  
203 found that I was doing more and more because I enjoyed it. I just enjoyed, I guess, helping  
204 people to learn things.

205 [15:20]

206 **B: You haven't talked about any female colleagues.**  
207

208 J: Didn't have any. [chuckle]  
209

210 **B: Did that pose a problem or didn't think about it?**  
211

212 J: No, I went to an all-girls' school. And then, when I went to university and I did honors maths  
213 in first year, there were 600 males and 3 females. And it was very interesting. I don't know if  
214 you want this sort of digression, but two of the girls — and I am still very friendly with this  
215 particular one — we both come from professional families, been to all-girls schools, led  
216 fairly sheltered sort of lives. The other girl came from a very well known communist family.  
217 She had also been to an all-girls school. But her parents were always on TV and always in  
218 the thick of politics and such like. Now, when we got to university, the first girl and I, we —  
219 I suppose we just sort of we joined in some group, I don't even know how I became friends  
220 with who I became friends with. We were both roughly in that group. And sometimes we  
221 would ask this third girl, you know, if she'd like to join us — because she used to sit right at  
222 the back of this very huge lecture theater. And she always said no, she didn't want to join us.  
223 And at the end of the year she changed. She changed from doing science. She moved over  
224 into arts and started doing philosophy. And she just seemed to have enormous trouble in  
225 fitting in. And we thought this was strange, because our backgrounds — one would have  
226 expected we would have more trouble fitting in that she did. And a couple of years ago (she's  
227 now a professor of philosophy, the other girl is a professor of stats, and, of course, I'm a  
228 professor of computing, so we all got on), but I saw this professor of philosophy interviewed  
229 on TV recently. And she said what an absolutely horrible time she had in first-year science,  
230 how nobody would befriend her — it was a sea of males. And I got very angry about this  
231 because I thought, "Well, we tried!"  
232

233 But ... so there were really never many women around at all. There were very few female  
234 staff in those days in the science faculty. And, as I said, I didn't have very many female  
235 colleagues in my classes. But it didn't really worry me, even though, as I said, I'd come from  
236 an all-girls school. Perhaps because — I mean, my mother had brought us up all by herself  
237 since she was very young. I had great-aunts who had been widowed in the First World War  
238 and who had lived very successful professional lives since, you know, 1916, 1917, something  
239 like that. And as I said, many of them kept their own names. So, I don't know if it was that. I  
240 had a lot of strong independent women in my family. And maybe ... certainly at my school,  
241 as I said it was a girls school, it was taken for granted. It was a Catholic school. It was totally

242 run by nuns. There was only one male, who was the gardener. And it was just taken for  
243 granted that we would all go to university and that we would all do things. And so it was  
244 never an issue for me.

245

246 **B: Well, I see. Could you talk about some professional organizations? You're here**  
247 **[EVENT?] as part of a professional organization. So what kind of professional**  
248 **organizations have you belonged to and how have they helped your career?**

249

250 J: OK! I suppose I'm in a few professional organizations.

251

252 Because of my interest in numerical methods, I've always been involved in the Australian  
253 Society for Operations Research, and through that, of course, to INFORMS, which is the  
254 international body to which ASOR belongs. And in the Australian one I've had a number of  
255 positions, such as secretary, and I've been the chair of the New South Wales, the state  
256 branch. And I've been a national secretary at various points along the way. And, in fact, I  
257 met my husband at a meeting of the Operations Research Society; I think, their one and only  
258 romance. So I have been quite active in that for many years. And I have also been very active  
259 in the mathematical programming society, because that's the particular sub-discipline, if you  
260 like, that I'm really quite interested in. And I've been to very many of their conferences and  
261 made quite a lot good professional colleagues through that.

262 [20:25]

263 And then the other area, of course, is the computer science. I've been a member and am now  
264 a fellow of the Australian Computer Society, gosh, since about 1972, I think. And ... I mean,  
265 I haven't been a fellow that long, but I've been a member that long. And I've had no actual  
266 positions in the Australian Computer Society, although I am on the accreditation boards and  
267 such like. But, within Australia, we have a group which was founded in the late 1970s ,  
268 which is now known as CORE — Computing Research and Education — and that's the  
269 association of Australian and New Zealand academics in computing. And I've had a number  
270 of positions in that, and I'm now the national president.

271

272 **B: Hmm. I see, I see. I noticed in looking at your website that you had ... some of your**  
273 **research had taken a different tact, away from, not necessarily ... the cognitive**  
274 **research? Would you like to talk about that?**

275

276 J: Yes, well ... A friend of mine wrote in the introduction to his thesis, "With thanks to  
277 Professor A., without whom this research would never have been started. And thanks to  
278 Professor B., without whom this research would never have been finished." And quite often  
279 I'm Professor B. I'm very good at helping people with theses. I'm very good at getting them  
280 to order them logically, at being a devil's advocate — you know, every time they make a  
281 statement, I'll say, "Why? How? When? Justify." So in quite a few cases I've actually had  
282 theses where people have come to me fairly late, and I've been asked to pick up the pieces.  
283 Where my actual technical knowledge was not so important, but my ability to turn their  
284 research into something resembling a logical thesis, where one could see a beginning and an  
285 end and a progression of ideas, is quite good. So I've tended to be pulled in on quite a  
286 number.

287

288 I've also ... quite a few people ... we have a different system in Australia. And most people  
289 have two supervisors, but that's all. I think in the States, sometimes, you have whole panels  
290 and things. And we don't have any coursework here, you just do a written thesis. And the  
291 two supervisors are often picked for different abilities. So on a number, I've been brought in  
292 because people were going to have quite a lot of quantitative data, and I was sort of brought  
293 in to help with the quantitative data. Whereas the other supervisor might have been more,  
294 say, on the cognitive / human factors or something like that. So that's — in a way, I'm often  
295 still doing the stuff that I'm good at, but the papers that my name might be attached to look a  
296 little bit different. And I've supervised some projects where people have just said, "Look ..."  
297 — I've almost always had very mature-aged Ph.D. students and very often they knew what  
298 they wanted to do — they wanted to get ahead — but they wanted someone like me that was  
299 very good at helping with the overall structure, and their logic, and so forth. And they've  
300 specifically come to me to and said, "Look, you know, I want you to guide me through the  
301 whole process." And if it's interesting stuff, I've thought, "Well, why not?"  
302

303 **B: I see, I see. That does explain the sort of strange combination of articles that I saw on**  
304 **the site.**

306 J: That has been commented on by people like promotion committees. [both laugh]

307 [24:50]

308 **B: Well, how has this varied outside work affected your promotion and career path?**

309  
310 J: Well, I'm the only person — in Australia, we go from Level A to Level E, which is sort of  
311 associate lecturer all the way up to full professor, which is a different nature here from the  
312 way it is in the U.S. — I was the only person at my university who has ever gone from Level  
313 A to Level E and I was promoted first time every time. So, it could be said that it hasn't  
314 affected me all that much. I was probably slow in going for a lot of promotions. One of the  
315 things — my university has done quite a lot of work on women's promotions. And the  
316 findings are that when they go, the women tend to be more successful than the men, but the  
317 women often wait longer before applying for a particular promotion. So, I did wait in some  
318 periods probably longer than a male might have done, but then, on the other hand, I was  
319 successful when I was promoted. And in many ways promotion didn't matter all that much to  
320 me. I was actually pushed into applying for quite a few, which is also typical. The women  
321 often actually wait till they are pushed into applying for promotion, whereas the guys apply  
322 the minute they meet the rules.  
323

324 **B: I see. You did talk about things slowing down a bit with family, but were there**  
325 **particular challenges you faced through this career?**

327 J: Needing sleep! I didn't do very much research when the kids were little at all. But an  
328 academic job is quite a good job to combine with family. I mean, I always got to their sports  
329 days and, you know, their school plays and all that sort of thing. Because I could always duck  
330 out for an hour or two and go to those sorts of things, which I thought was quite good. And  
331 I've had other advantages, I suppose. The kids got to travel a lot, because I'd often take them  
332 to conferences and when I went on sabbaticals. So, what they missed by my being at work, I  
333 suppose, they got advantages in other ways.

334  
335 No, I did find — I suppose I put a lot more of my effort, probably, into teaching and into  
336 various kinds of service, being on all these various committees and societies and things. And  
337 I do — around the university, I'm on quite a lot of committees of things that I'm interested  
338 in. We get promoted under three criteria: teaching, obviously, research, and service. And you  
339 can vary your combinations. Research was never my top criterion, although I always scored  
340 very well on it.

341  
342 I mean, I have actually done some quite interesting research. One of the things we haven't  
343 talked yet about is in 1990, I was invited to go to IBM Research Labs in San Jose  
344 [California]. And they actually offered me my own whole parallel computer all to myself.  
345 And parallel computers were very rare in those days, so this was a wondrous opportunity.  
346 And I then went on to an IBM joint study agreement, which has persisted ever since. In fact,  
347 it caused some hassles, because their forms only go up to nine renewals, so they had to start  
348 me all over again when it came to the tenth renewal. But that's been a very productive  
349 collaboration over many years and I've had access to wonderful facilities through them. And  
350 I've managed to do a lot of really interesting work with them and become very involved in  
351 the sort of parallel computing environment and met a lot of people. In Australia, parallel  
352 computing is run through the national association, which is called APEC, and we have state  
353 members of APEC. And so I am quite active in ac3 [the Australian Centre for Advanced  
354 Computing and Communications], which is the New South Wales one that I belong to. But I  
355 was also the national education person for APEC for a number of years. So my interest in  
356 education and my technical interest in parallel computing is sort of combined through the  
357 work I do for ac3 and APEC.

358 [29:59]

359 **B: I see. I looked at the various categories in which you are involved, it looks like not only**  
360 **involved with service to your university, but service to the discipline. You seem to go**  
361 **out and evaluate other programs.**

362  
363 J: Well, a lot of Australian universities have rules that every committee has to have at least 20%  
364 of each gender and there are very few female professors of computing in Australia. So I get  
365 to go on quite a lot of committees, not only within my own university, but in Australia and in  
366 New Zealand. And some of that is because I am female and they need a female computing  
367 professor. And some of it is for me. I have a reputation for being very blunt and people have  
368 sometimes rung me and said, "Look I want you on this committee. There are all sorts of  
369 things that are wrong here. You'll find them out and you won't be too scared to say them.  
370 And that's what we need." So, yeah, I find it very interesting.

371  
372 But also you can bring a lot back to your own institution. In 1991, I was on a national  
373 committee which went around looking at computing right throughout the country, every  
374 single university. And there were just two computing people on that committee, the rest were  
375 people from the national department of education, which was called DETYA [Department of  
376 Education, Training and Youth Affairs] at that stage. And there was an engineer, because  
377 there is always this dichotomy between where does software engineering and such like fit in.  
378 So that was a wonderful opportunity, because you got to see all kinds of interesting work that  
379 people were doing all over the country. We were predominately looking at teaching. But of

380 course we looked at research and such like while we were there. I didn't get to go to every  
381 university, we split them up a bit. But I did get to go to many interesting places. And of  
382 course I read all the stuff that went into the fairly substantial report we produced.  
383

384 **B: I'm getting tired listening to all you do! One of the things we like to hear in this project**  
385 **is if you have any outside interests, other than computing, teaching, research,**  
386 **evaluation, mentoring, ...**  
387

388 J: Music is a big interest. Fairly recently the university has a women's choir, so I sing in that. I  
389 find that extremely enjoyable, we have a fantastic conductor. And I've met a lot of very  
390 interesting people from all over the university that I hadn't met through some of my other  
391 activities. I've sung in my church choir for many, many years. And unfortunately, our  
392 fabulous conductor has just moved away. So for the last year or so I've been conducting,  
393 which I find very challenging to the extent that I'm actually hoping to go and do some sort of  
394 conducting course. Singing I like; conducting is really, really tough. But I'm about the only  
395 person in the choir who can read music. The others have great voices, but they just sort of  
396 follow along; they can't read music at all. And so I think that's why they asked if I'd be the  
397 conductor. So I really want to go and do something about conducting.  
398

399 I have a native garden, which I enjoy working in very much. I swim a lot. And I like bush  
400 walking a lot. And I read a lot. And I sew a lot. And I go to a lot of theater and opera, both of  
401 which I also love.  
402

403 **B: And the other thing that I noticed is that you have been doing a lot of traveling recently**  
404 **outside Australia and New Zealand.**  
405

406 J: Well, all the earlier activities, I didn't always take all my annual leave. And the last couple of  
407 years, the university has become very strict and basically said, "You have to use up your  
408 leave." And I've learnt that if I take my leave at home in Sydney, people will keep ringing up  
409 and say, "Oh please, it's only half a day," and you don't get any leave. So I figure it's best to  
410 actually get out of the country. So, yes, I have been doing quite a lot of traveling. My  
411 husband is not well and we figure that we should travel while we can.  
412

413 **B: What type of career did your husband follow?**  
414

415 J: He did an engineering degree at Carnegie Mellon. And then he did an MBA at the University  
416 of Pittsburgh. And then he worked for Kaiser Aluminum in West Virginia. And then, of  
417 course, he went into the army. And he was the first ever MBA in the US Army; they didn't  
418 actually know what to do with him. But he had a lovely time. He was in Korea for quite a  
419 while. And then he went to Washington and he got to work on the cryptographic machines  
420 from the World War II. So he really had a very interesting time. And then he worked as a  
421 metallurgical engineer for a while. And then he decided — he was a great traveler also — he  
422 decided to come to Australia ... there was a government scheme to come to here for two  
423 years. Well, that was about 35 years ago and he's still here. So in Australia he really worked  
424 as a business analyst most of the time, so vaguely in a sort of computing area.  
425

[35:52]

426 **B: I see. We're kind of ... are there things that you'd like to talk about as we wrap this up**  
427 **that we didn't touch on?**

428  
429 J: Uhm, I don't know. You asked about female mentors and I've ... I guess I've had a bit of —  
430 well, she's not been a mentor, but she's been a very good friend, a professor at the London  
431 School of Economics, Ailsa Land, whose husband, Frank Land, is actually very big in  
432 information systems. We've been friends with them for a very long time. We took a canal  
433 boat trip with them in England and we're still friends, which apparently is very rare. They  
434 have a beautiful house in Devon, very historic, and I enjoyed seeing them down there and  
435 hope to see them again later this year. So Ailsa has always been an interesting person. She's  
436 a no-nonsense sort of person. She's just got on with her life and family and career. So I  
437 suppose in a way, she's someone that I've looked up to, although she's never really mentored  
438 me.

439  
440 I do find that being a woman in computing, a lot of people look up to me, which I sometimes  
441 find a bit scary, particularly at conferences like this where I have all sorts of younger people  
442 coming up to me and making comments, "It's great to see a female president of CORE."  
443 Needless to say, I'm the first female president. And I'm often the first female anything,  
444 which has never really worried me and I've never really thought about it. I mean, I don't  
445 consciously think, "I'm going out and doing this for women." I just get on with doing, really,  
446 what I enjoy doing. And if good things come out of it, well fine.

447  
448 **B: Is there some advice that you would give a young woman thinking about going into**  
449 **computing, in computing education in particular?**

450  
451 J: Uhm, I guess not to be intimidated. It's worrying, yet again, at this conference ... I have run  
452 a lot of women-in-computing programs for school children, school girls, and I've done quite  
453 a lot of work looking at things that turn girls off into coming into computing and such like.  
454 And needless to say, actually, most of the things that turn the girls off turn the guys off as  
455 well. Anything you do to improve the lot of girls coming in usually improves it for boys as  
456 well. But I'm still hearing all these things about when they get to university they feel  
457 intimidated, or they feel stressed, or something like that. And I don't know, this worries me,  
458 maybe because I was really lucky and I never felt any of those things. I can only say to  
459 people: Have the courage of your convictions. If that's what you want to do, just do it. Ignore  
460 what other people say. Find someone who you can be friends with, who you can sound off to  
461 about, or who you can work with. Just ignore other people. Let it wash over you. If you want  
462 to do something, just go ahead and do it. That's about really all I can think of. And generally  
463 the women are better than the blokes. Certainly, at our university, if you look at all the  
464 averages and things like that, they tend to do better academically. They tend to have a lower  
465 attrition rate, they get better jobs. Part of this, of course, is because they take things such as  
466 communication seriously. And just go for it.

467  
468 **B: Thank you!**

469  
470 J: In fact we produced a CD called "Go for IT!" Go for I-T.  
471 [39:58]

472 **B: Is that available?**

473

474 J: Yes, it's ancient now. And that's one of the problems with a lot of these things you do. By  
475 the time you've actually finished this wonderful CD or video or whatever, practically half of  
476 it's out of date.

477

478 **B: You're probably right. If there were one thing about your career path that you would**  
479 **change, can you think what it might be?**

480

481 J: I probably would have finished my Ph.D. earlier, which I could have done. I had actually  
482 done most of the work. I just hadn't bothered to get around to writing it up until people put  
483 pressure on me to write it up. And then I wrote it up at the same time as I was doing this  
484 national survey all around Australia. So I was sort of writing it up in airports and on  
485 aeroplanes and things like that.

486

487 **B: What year did you complete your ...**

488

489 J: 1991.

490

491 **B: You had been involved in the field for 25 years about that time?**

492

493 J: Yeah.

494

495 **B: If there were one little story that you would tell about yourself that you'd like to be**  
496 **remembered for, what would that be?**

497

498 J: Gosh. I think you'll have to turn off the mikes while I think! I can't really think of anything.  
499 Perhaps that is that I was the first women, say, president of CORE and I do appear to have  
500 inspired some younger people. And I think that would be a nice thing to be remembered by.  
501 Can't think of any actual stories as such; other people might, but I can't.

502

503 **B: I think that you've summed up very nicely what you have talked about and to put it**  
504 **into one sentence. And I really appreciate you spending time with us and thank you so**  
505 **much.**

506

507 J: Fine. If it helps other people, well then that's great!

508

509 **B: Thank you.**

510 [42:20]

511

512 NON-RECORDED ADDENDUM:

513

514 J: I was asked to include a postscript on my children. Neither did computing! My daughter did  
515 civil and environmental engineering and has Master's degrees in environmental management  
516 and environmental law. She has a senior engineering management position in one of our city  
517 councils, which she gained at a very young age, so perhaps you could say she has followed in

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518 my footsteps to some extent. My son is just finishing a Ph.D. in chemistry. He does not want  
519 to be an academic! He hopes to find a job in industry, perhaps where he can use his  
520 chemistry in the service of the environment.  
521