About the first ACM-W Europe womENcourage Celebration of Women in Computing

"I wanted to change the world... So I became a computer scientist." declared a PhD student of computer science at Cambridge University during a discussion called "What can you do to change the world?" part of our first ACM-W Europe conference.

Computer scientists from 28 countries convened in Manchester, UK on Saturday March 1st for the first womENcourage celebration of women in computing.

Fresh from a BBC Radio interview about the event, Dr. Eva Navarro Lopez on the ACM-W Europe executive committee delivered the opening speech which reflected the international nature of the audience.

Welcome... bienvenidos, bienvenidas, benvinguts, اسهلاً وَأهلا(ahlan wa sahlan), marhaba, (خوش آمدید khosh amadid), k αλώς ήρθατε (ka los orisate), hoşgeldiniz, bienvenue, bem-vindo, benvenuto, Гизер Наталья (dabro pazhalavat), bun venit, pro-she, valkommen, willkommen.)

Networking as well as learning was very much on the agenda. The exceptionally well received keynote titled "The Power of Networks" presented by ACM Europe Vice President Professor Dame Wendy Hall was very inspiring to the over 200 attendees.

Beryl Nelson of Google, a member of the ACM-W Europe executive committee, chaired the first panel discussion which focused on career opportunities. Panellists' Philip Su, Bloomberg; Claire Vishik, Intel; Christine Flounders, Facebook and University of Greenwich Professor Cornelia Boldyreff discussed the incredible number of possibilities for computer science graduates.

Hearing the speeches and panellists and the conversations all round it was in the end hard to disagree with the words of Facebook's Philip Su that "It's a magical time to be in technology." It was also time to reflect on the magical history of the computer. Manchester was among other things home of the first stored computer and base for much of Alan Turing's work.

Technical talks at the event included "Helping Scientists do Science: Confessions of a Computer Scientist" by Professor Carole Goble of Manchester University. Yasemin Altun from Google Research spoke about Text Summarisation. Altun's session alone was in fact a major draw for delegates.

Following the technical talk, we spent an hour in the Unconference discussing about the topics developed for the unconference, we used multi-coloured stickers in the morning to write the topics and then discussed the most popular topics in the afternoon. Unconference allows the current attendees to determine the topics to be discussed.

One attendee wrote 'as a first time unconference attendee, I thoroughly enjoyed the session.' Feedback showed that the attendees would like more time for the unconference sessions which will be incorporated into the next conference.

The final panel discussion entitled "What can you do to change the world?" chaired by Lynda Hardman, IE, The Netherlands, and Panellists Jessa Lingel, Microsoft Research, Flora Ponjou-Tasse, University of Cambridge, UK, and Luz Rello, Universitat Pompeu Fabra & Cookie Cloud, Spain was according to the evaluations, the best rated of entire conference. The discussion was lively and at the end the attendees agreed that the discussion was uplifting, inspiring and one that needs to be repeated.

During the breaks and lunch, we were able to review the Poster Session. Cyber security, education, healthcare are a few of the topics that delegates came from all over the continent and even further afield to share. Just under 50 research topics were featured during the poster session - including those of young researchers Jekaterina Novikova, Maria Taramigkou, Maria Gaci, María González García, Ilyena Hirskyj-Douglas to name a few. Topics were wide ranging: from AI to animal-machine interaction; healthcare to security. See the listing of the posters at http://womencourage.acm.org/accepted_posters.cfm.

We want to thank our very generous supporters Google, Bloomberg, Intel, Facebook, Microsoft Research, Yahoo and Cisco. We could not have done it without their support.