

## Grace Hopper Trip

BY Jessica Huynh

The Grace Hopper Celebration officially started on Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> October. Went through registration, grabbed the free bag with goodies, a nametag; got some breakfast, and the sessions begun. I went off to hear about Affective Learning and how it could be used to monitor student learning – Affective Learning is mostly about using sensors (agents) etc to detect things like interest, tiredness, posture and can consist of software and hardware. As much as the concept of Affective Learning is extremely good, the cost of purchasing all of the equipment and software to make it work is extremely high, especially if you consider a classroom environment.

After that was a lunch, where I met a group of students from Georgia Tech Institute, who were amazed that I had come halfway around the world to go the Grace Hopper Celebration. Soon enough, lunch passed quickly and I was off to the next session which was about “recession-proofing your career” – a networking session. Jo Miller, who was hosting this session, explained that to recession-proof one’s career they had to be well networked – *the most important asset you will build in your career is your network or sphere of influence*. There was something in particular that Jo Miller said that stuck a lot with me though. In school, we have the equation: REWARD = RESULTS + RECOGNITION. Yet, this doesn’t hold true in the workforce because not every manager has the time to recognise you for your work, and so the equation changes to: RESULTS + VISIBILITY = REWARD + RECOGNITION.

After that session ended I went off to a Resume Clinic. For me, this was vital, as I needed to know how to make myself look attractive on a piece of paper. My mentor was from the Anita Borg Institute of Women in Technology. She explained a lot to me about how to make my resume look better, and also gave me a double-sided sheet which had a lot of information about restructuring resumes. This was one of the sessions I was most looking forward to, and I was not disappointed.

Once the Resume Clinic ended, I went off to have a break because it was late and I was getting hungry. Later, I headed back to the conference center to start grabbing some free giveaways. Heaps and heaps of companies were there – Microsoft, Google, Yahoo, IBM, HP, Symantec, SAP, Facebook (yes, even Facebook), Cisco, Sun Microsystems, Amazon, eBay, Skype.. then a heap of US based companies as well.

Soon enough was an opening reception and technical poster session which was mostly wandering about exhibits looking at posters done by postgrads and corporations on topics such as combatting plagiarism, and crafting girls into computing. The night ended quickly, and we slowly headed back to the condo to get some sleep before the next day came.

After continental breakfast this morning was an official welcome by the Grace Hopper chair this year – Anna Condon – who also welcomed today’s special guest speaker Fran Allen who won the Turing Award for her continuous work in IT. Soon enough sessions commenced – I went to one about Risk Taking. The Risk Taking session was very interesting. The speaker clearly outlined that *everybody has to understand the strategy and align themselves to that strategy* – it’s not as easy as it sounds, and requires trust, no weak links in the group, and most of all the members in that group need to be transparent in that they all should work together with no problems.

Soon enough lunch came, and this time it was the Women of Color Lunch. I had a pretty awesome time there meeting up with people; expanding my already-expanding network. I got mistaken for a Masters Student (each table was discussing about certain topics raised by a speaker, and I got asked by my group to speak up to the rest of the tables) by a senior Faculty member in Jackson State University (I don't know how, I just did) who wants me to invite her down under in the summertime. We'll see about that.

Everything after the lunch was a bit of a blur, I went to a session on Information-Integration, and two different sessions on outreaching to High School girls. As a facilitator for the Computer Club for Girls and as the Program Coordinator for WICT, I kind of felt it was my duty to go to these, and I learned a lot. Hearing that other corporations were doing similar things that we did, and that they also did things like summer camps, made me realise that there are countless ways to reach out. When those sessions ended it was off to the Awards Ceremony – yet I was a bit tired for some reason and so headed back to the condo early. Might as well, tomorrow was another packed day.

It started as usual – Continental Breakfast, then a Welcome session. This time, the guest speaker was Mary Lou Jepsen, CEO of Pixel Qi and creator of One Laptop One Child. Her speech was inspirational; talking about how she wanted to make a difference in third world countries that didn't have the stuff that we did – laptops – and that she along with other people made this laptop which could be charged in any way – by cranking, through car battery..., and the laptop only consumed 1W instead of current laptops consuming 20W, or current desktops consuming 80W+. The whole room exploded into applause when she finished; it was completely amazing.

Soon enough it was time for lunch, then listening to a session on Women in the Open Source world and how they were represented even worse than with normal IT – less than 10% of people in the Open Source community are female! That was a shock to hear. After that I went to a session promoting the career of Software Engineer in Test, and one about Virtual Teams. The Virtual Team session was informative, and gave me some good advice.

My last session of the conference was once again about outreaching to high school girls – successful women in industry mentoring high school girls who are interested in IT – yet I was slightly disappointed with it. I understand that women in industry can actually say they are successful, but studies have shown that high school girls will get better on with those similar to their age – that is, university students like myself. Soon enough they'll probably realise that it really should be university students; not them – they're already busy enough, and how will young girls relate to things with much older women? Anyways once again it was about finding out another method that the US industry took to try and combat the decreasing number of females in the industry – one extremely similar to ours.

Then, it was finally IT. The Sponsor Night – the disco I was extremely looking forward to. It was pretty good. I met up with an academic professor from Murdoch University, and also other members of Microsoft and Google. The best thing about this event for me was being able to see all these women letting their hair down and having some fun – tech goddesses (aka technological women like myself) enjoying what little time they had left before going back to sitting at their desks (well ok, minus Google and Facebook at least – those workplaces are pretty awesome). Seeing Microsoft girls and Google girls dancing together on the stage and having fun was something though – most likely I'll never see that again unless I go to another Grace Hopper Celebration, which I intend to sometime in the near future.

To summarise, the Grace Hopper Celebration was over my expectations. I enjoyed it a lot – and anyone who goes to that will definitely enjoy it too. Thanks enormously to Swinburne University for paying me to go!

If you would like to see photos, please go to this URL:

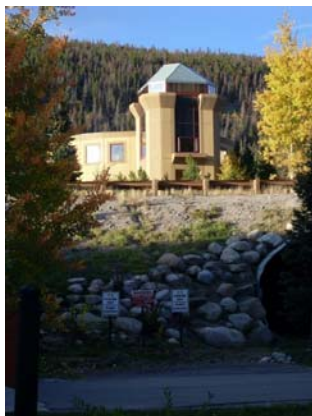
<http://www.facebook.com/album.php?aid=44876&l=fe88c&id=726407086>



One of the many beautiful views around Keystone



Overlooking the boat rental area which looks quite lonely



The conference center