

# C o n f e r e n c e   R e p o r t

by [Ronald B. Krisko](#)

**The Big Event was an opportunity for students to meet ACM chapter leaders from other schools.**

The 1995 ACM Big Event was held in the very beautiful and huge Opryland Hotel in Nashville, Tennessee on February 25-26. A combination of interesting speakers, a large number of participants, and good weather helped the Big Event go well.



Among other things, we learned that the student members and student chapters did not have much contact with the professionals and professional chapters, and the students wanted this changed somehow. This discovery was made after the first day of the Big Event when the students went on one schedule and the professionals went on a totally different schedule. Tim Williams ([t\\_williams@acm.org](mailto:t_williams@acm.org)) of ACM HQ announced at the end of the Big Event that the students' concerns were being heard and that next year's Big Event would have more joint workshops and meetings between students and professionals.

On Saturday, the students and professionals were in a joint session listening to the communications speaker, Dadie Perlov. It was an excellent session on leadership development that Ms. Perlov kept humorous and informative. I feel that it did, at times, focus more on the professional chapters and ACM HQ than the student chapters. Overall though, many people learned much about how to get members interested and involved, how to create a clear and focused set of goals, and much more. I believe this session was up to the level with many other leadership development seminars I have attended and speakers I have heard. Since all of this information was crammed into one really long presentation, it became boring and overwhelming at times. My suggestion to the ACM HQ people is that they hold more similar leadership development seminars next year that are in one hour or two hour chunks instead of one almost all day session.

After this speaker, the students heard about The Electronic Society of the ACM and its benefits to student members. The one big question that was asked at that session was "Why VAX/VMS?" This was asked by an eager student who has tried to work with VMS and been very unsuccessful, since most students are used to working on UNIX machines. The answer from the ACM's network person was that VMS was much more secure than UNIX so that is why they have stuck with it so far. I am not sure if I, or my fellow students, agree with that answer, however. The participants were told though that the ACM was investing in a few UNIX boxes in the future, but no date was specified.

On Sunday morning, Lorrie Cranor, Jonathan Stark, Saveen Reddy, and myself gave our Crossroads

presentation. It went very well, although I am biased, but ran one hour over schedule, because we were getting so many great ideas for future issue themes, article ideas, and new sections for the magazine. The amount of participation overwhelmed, surprised, and delighted all of us.

After our presentation, the conference participants got to hear about the ACM's Career Services for Student Chapters. Presentors Lillian Israel ([israel@acm.org](mailto:israel@acm.org)) and Lisa Ernst ([ernst@acm.org](mailto:ernst@acm.org)) found out in this session that almost nobody in the room had heard about the ACM's Career Services or tried to use it. This seemed to have shocked them, but it gave them a good idea of how to get the word out about the benefits of joining the ACM as a student member. You should be getting information in the near future from the ACM about the Career Services so keep your eyes open.

After a short break, Hans Domjan and Frank Moehle of the ETH-Zurich Switzerland ACM Student Chapter gave a presentation about their chapter and the international student chapter programs in general. It was a very impressive presentation. Participants got to hear about what activities they do in that chapter and the publications that they publish each year. With over 600 members, Hans and Frank must be doing something right! They joked about partying a lot to relax from schoolwork, but they also showed us a few of the issues of their publication, *Visionen*.

Following a presentation on the World Wide Web, everybody broke for the luncheon banquet. The food was excellent and the awards presentation went well. It was nice see how many people participated and worked together to get the Big Event off the ground, many of whom were volunteers.

Professor Gotterbarn from East Tennessee State University was our after lunch speaker who did an excellent job of trying to make us all understand that we are simply not just coders but responsible computing professionals. He told us many real stories about people who just saw their job as coders and might have ended up writing a program for something that either ended up killing or hurting somebody. If we want to be considered professionals then we have to take responsibility for our actions and code.

Some ACM HQ people, after lunch was over, gave us a presentation about how to communicate with the ACM via e-mail, postal mail, etc. After this, a chapter management forum was held. It was put on by the members of the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign Student ACM Chapter. Overall, they accomplished what they set out to do, which was to get the chapters to interact and talk to each other. They also had little games along the way to encourage us to talk to each other. Although it was a little crazy at times, the games were fun and did allow us to break down any barriers in order to talk to people outside of our own chapter.

Since there were more student participants this year than ever before, I hope that next year's Big Event and Computing Week will be even bigger and better and will have even more student participants than this year! I believe that everybody who presented at the Big Event tried their best and were successful at it so, from one student to another, thank you for your efforts. Thank you also to the ACM HQ people who listened to us students and are trying to respond to our requests. See you there next year everybody!