
ACM International Collegiate Programming Contest 2000

by [*Lynellen D. S. Perry*](#)

ACM Crossroads interviewed Susan Puglia, Executive Sponsor of the 2000 ACM International Collegiate Programming Contest. Puglia is the Vice President for Server Development and the Director of the Toronto Laboratory of the IBM Software Group.

Crossroads: How did you arrive at your present job?

Puglia: My undergraduate degree was in math and computer science. Directly out of collage I joined IBM as a programmer, I've been with IBM for 19 years and I'm now in engineering lab management.

Crossroads: What has it been like to be a technical woman at IBM?

Puglia: Mentors have been key to steering my direction. As the industry has grown, demand for technical staff far outstrips supply. Thus, one can move around to get experience in a variety of fields. IBM has a low attrition rate partly do to the size of the company, which means that there is lots of opportunity and variety internal to IBM.

Crossroads: In what ways does IBM encourage women staff members?

Puglia: IBM has corporate and regional networking for women, formal mentoring inside IBM with a focus in career development, and IBM takes time to think about how to recruit women to IBM and to information technology in general. IBM also is reaching out to the next generation of technical staff by starting programs for pre-collage students. For example, IBM in Canada has an annual one-day event to interest 7th and 8th grade girls in computing technology.

Crossroads: What are your problem solving techniques?

Puglia: When I encounter a problem that is outside my sphere of knowledge, I find an appropriate expert in the technology and also an expert with a business view of the situation if possible.

Crossroads: How do you get yourself to think creatively?

Puglia: I take a break and return later, or try to look at the problem from a different angle, or talk to someone else about the problem or idea.

Crossroads: How does the ACM programming contest encourage women to study computer science?

Puglia: The ACM programming contest is prestigious. When women compete in this contest, they show students that females can be successful in computer science. In 1999, 471 of the 13,000 participants at the regional contest level were women.

Crossroads: What further steps can encourage women to enter computing?

Puglia: Role models and mentors are very important, especially early. It is interesting to note that 45% of all jobs in America are filled by women but only 4% of the IT jobs are held by women.

Crossroads would like to congratulate all participants in this year's programming contest, and especially the following winners: From St. Petersburg State University, Nikolai Durov, Andrei Lopatine, Oleg Eterevisky, reserve Victor Petrov, and coach Natalia N. Voyakovskaya. For details about the 2000 World Finals or information about how to compete in this year's Regional Finals, see acm.baylor.edu/acmicpc.

Crossroads highly encourages you to consider entering the ACM International Collegiate Programming Contest. For tips and strategies, see our award-winning key resource article called [Teamwork in Programming Contests: 3 * 1 = 4](#).