
The Ada Project Web Site Review

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In *Communications of the ACM*, vol. 40, no. 10, pp. 103-110, there is an excellent article entitled "The Incredible Shrinking Pipeline" that argues that fewer and fewer women are studying computer science as the years go by. Despite the dwindling number of women in computer science, there are a growing number of resources on the Web that encourage women into the field.

Started in July 1994, The Ada Project (also known as TAP, www.cs.yale.edu/homes/tap) is one such collection of resources, developed by Elisabeth Freeman and Susanne Hupfer. TAP is an official volunteer project of the ACM Committee on the Status of Women (which has its own webpage at www.acm.org/women). The short statement on the Committee's page about TAP reads:

The Ada Project (TAP) - named in honor of Ada Lovelace - is designed to serve as a clearinghouse for information and resource related to women in computing. The site includes pertinent information on conferences, projects, discussion groups, organizations, fellowships, and positions. TAP also maintains substantive bibliographies of references relating to women in computing, science, and engineering; early science and technological education; and academic issues. Wherever possible, TAP includes links to existing on-line papers and informational sites, rather than duplicating information locally.

The front page of the website resembles a newspaper, and offers many links to recent news and events that highlight the activities of women in computer science and other high-technology fields. However the real meat of the web site is found through two links at the bottom of the page: TAP Services (<http://www.cs.yale.edu/homes/tap/tap-services.html>) and TAP Resources (<http://www.cs.yale.edu/homes/tap/tap-resources.html>).

TAP Services is the page where you can learn about the purpose and history of The Ada Project. Also on this page is a link to the back issues of TAP, a comments page, a discussion board, and a search engine for the site. TAP Resources holds links to a great deal of information: bibliographies and online papers, conference information, calls for participation, employment resources and information, fellowship and grant information, news and announcements about women in CS, related organizations and discussion groups, a photo gallery of women and computers, a listing of projects and programs relating to women

and CS, statistics on women in CS, and a page for younger girls (called TAP Junior).

The list of bibliographies and online papers is not restricted to those about women in computer science. Also covered are: women in cyberspace, science and engineering; early science and technology education; women faculty and student issues; and women in the history of science and technology. A special addition to this set of bibliographies is a list of Taulbee Surveys, described as follows:

The annual Taulbee survey, conducted by the Computing Research Association, is the primary source of information on North American faculty and Ph.D. production in computer science and computer engineering. It is one of the most complete and accurate surveys of its kind in the science and engineering fields and reveals issues and trends affecting the computing research pipeline.

Similarly, the list of organizations and discussion groups has the categories of women in computer science and computing, women in mathematics, women in science and engineering, and other miscellaneous groups. The "other information sites" link available on the TAP Resources page is an extensive and extremely eclectic list of women-related websites. The photo gallery ranges from the Countess of Lovelace to snaps from "Jurassic Park" and "The Net."

The TAP website is truly an extensive collection of resources. However, many of the pages that are time-sensitive are out of date. This is not too surprising since TAP is a volunteer project, but it is disappointing. As great as TAP is, it could be even better if all the information were kept up to date. Many of the pages ask for help in discovering new links, new resources, and new information sources. It seems they could also use some help in website maintenance. If this subject interests you, why not visit the site and then drop them a line volunteering to help with the upkeep? If you don't have time to help out, at least surf on over and browse through the information...I bet you'll find an interesting tidbit *somewhere* on the site.