



# TECHNICA

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## 2023 Annual Report



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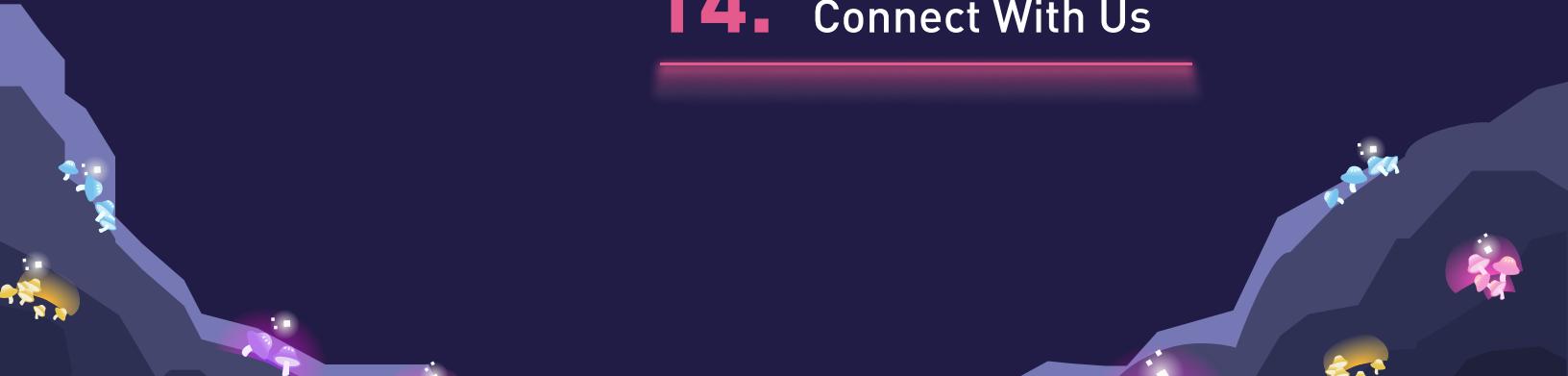
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# Letter from the Executive Directors

Over the course of eight iterations of Technica and years of evolution, our steadfast mission has been to support individuals of underrepresented genders on their journeys in the tech field. While acknowledging that there is still work to be done to achieve gender equality, we take pride in our ongoing efforts to establish safe spaces for individuals of underrepresented genders in tech, fostering learning, growth, and connections.

Recognizing the importance of embracing intersectionality and diverse perspectives, we understand that true service to underrepresented individuals in the tech realm involves accessibility to people of varying needs and reaching out to anyone who can benefit from joining our community. Technica 2023 stands out as our most accessible and inclusive year to date, marked by internal education initiatives, enhanced physical access efforts, and more deliberate and targeted outreach.

In our commitment to expanding access to Technica's unique community, our hackathon maintained its global, hybrid format—both in-person at the University of Maryland and online through our custom virtual platform and the new virtual platform, Gather. This year, we welcomed over 880 hackers, with 700+ attending in person and 100+ virtually. This achievement was made possible by the collective efforts of 100 student organizers, 40 sponsors, mentors, volunteers, donors, advisors, and alumni. Whether through financial support, logistical assistance, or simply cheering us on, we extend our heartfelt gratitude for your contributions to Technica this year.

This report serves as a time capsule for future iterations of Technica, fostering learning and promoting transparency and accountability within our organization. Technica 2023 marked a year of innovation and growth, pushing the boundaries of both the event and the organization. We eagerly anticipate witnessing the continued expansion and improvement of the Technica experience in the years to come.

Looking ahead, we remain committed to growing and fortifying our community of technologists from all walks of life, both during Technica weekend and beyond.

With love,  
Ashlee, Joy, and the Technica 2023 Team



**Ashlee Nanze**  
Co-Executive Director



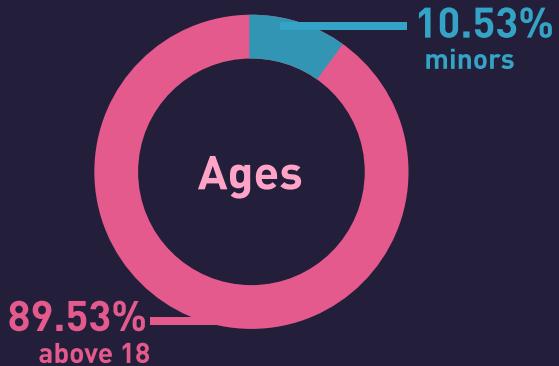
**Joy Wang**  
Co-Executive Director

# Quick Statistics

**800+**  
Total Hackers

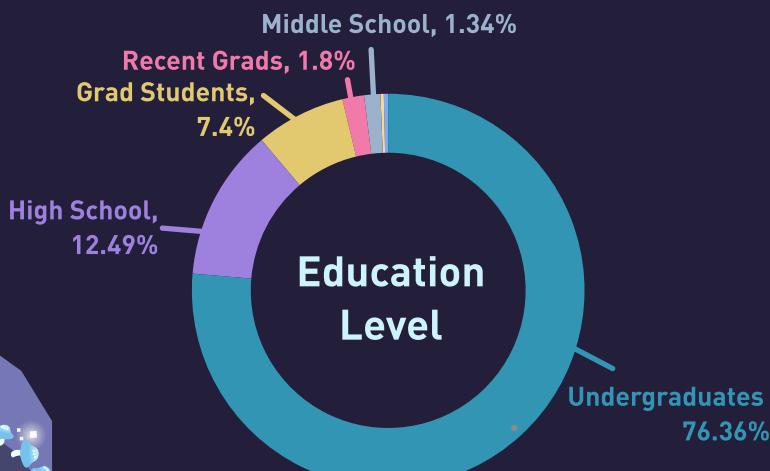
**700+** in-person hackers  
**170+** virtual hackers

## Hacker Demographics



<b>793</b>	cisgender female hackers	<b>9</b>	transgender female hackers
<b>34</b>	non-binary hackers	<b>5</b>	transgender male hackers
<b>8</b>	genderqueer hackers	<b>4</b>	other

## Education



## Weekend Events

- 42** Workshops
- 6** Mini-events
- 2** Techni-chats (community building events)

# Notable Achievements

## Focus on Event Diversity, Accessibility & Inclusivity

At Technica, it is very important that we reach and serve as many people of underrepresented genders as possible, including intersecting minority groups. In an effort to enhance the awareness and education of our organizing team regarding crucial topics that consciously and subconsciously influence our decisions, our D&I team led discussions on gender identity and pronouns, web accessibility, mental health practices, inclusive event and marketing strategies, microaggressions, and bystander intervention.



To enhance accessibility for members of the deaf and hard of hearing community, our team implemented alternative text and closed captioning across our social media platforms, YouTube videos, livestreams, Zoom rooms, and our new virtual platform – Gather. The relocation from The Armory, Technica's previous venue, to The Hotel at UMD was primarily aimed at improving physical access with the addition of elevators and ramps. Committed to further enhancing the diversity experience within the venue, we introduced a ramp for the stage, quiet rooms and areas, and accessible layout changes. Our marketing efforts were targeted to better include lower-income communities, local high schools, historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs), Hispanic serving institutions (HSIs), and global universities. For Technica weekend, we provided laptops on loan, implemented an incident reporting system, established an accessibility hotline, and offered internal conduct guides. Despite our new initiatives, we acknowledge that Technica must continue evolving to enhance diversity and inclusion.

## Exploratory Track

In the current year, Technica introduced the Exploratory Track as a novel initiative designed to assist participants in delving into the crossroads of technology and various other disciplines. This track facilitated exploration of the tech facets within fields such as law, graphic design, international relations, and diplomacy, among others. The Exploratory Track empowered hackers by equipping them with the necessary tools to navigate the diverse applications of technology and enabling them to identify their preferred modes of engagement within the technological landscape.



# Notable Achievements

## Gather

This year, we introduced Gather, a virtual platform designed to facilitate seamless proximity video chat within digital spaces. Unlike conventional tools, Gather operates in a manner reminiscent of a game, providing a more dynamic approach to online interactions, fostering natural and human connections. At Technica, we utilized Gather to strengthen connections among virtual hackers and virtual sponsors. Our platform hosted various virtual attendees, featuring events such as the sponsorship fair, a custom-made go-kart course, and the Expo, seamlessly integrated into Gather's virtual environment. This immersive online experience aimed to provide hackers with a more realistic, efficient, and engaging platform, redefining the possibilities of virtual interaction.



## Keynote Speakers

We were honored to host exceptional voices at Technica this year. Ashley Huynh, our opening speaker, is a distinguished queer Vietnamese-Malaysian Chinese software engineer based in Atlanta, GA. With a background deeply rooted in hackathons, Ashley has navigated various career paths, currently serving as an Open Source Software Engineer at Slack. Our closing speaker, Emma Mitchell, founder of InspireHER STEM, is a leader in Kenya's charitable sector. As the president of the Mirror of Hope Foundation and a board member at Quilts for Empowerment, Emma focuses on educating, mentoring, and empowering underserved women. Both generously shared valuable life lessons from their tech journeys, offering enriching insights for Technica attendees.

# Featured Hacks

We gave away  
**\$9,048**  
in prizes this year!

Total Projects Submitted

**118**

# of Participants that Submitted a Hack

**500**

A few of our favorite winning hacks....

## SustainU

<https://devpost.com/software/sustainu>

*Best Hack for Sustainability – Optiver*

*Best Social Good Hack*

SustainU is a multifaceted platform designed to inspire and empower individuals to take meaningful actions to combat climate change and promote sustainability. Upon entering the platform, users are prompted to register or create an account, after which they can immediately begin their journey towards sustainable living. After completing a survey, users are presented with a variety of tasks, from simple daily actions to larger eco-friendly initiatives, earning points for each completed task. These tasks are personalized for each user with the help of AI. Financial contributions to climate action projects also contribute to points, fostering financial support for sustainability efforts. Community engagement is encouraged through volunteer events. Points can be redeemed for rewards, adding a gamification aspect to the platform. The app fosters a sense of community and showcases the real-world impact of individual actions, promoting awareness and sustainability in an engaging and user-friendly way.

# Featured Hacks

A few of our favorite winning hacks....

## Study Conquest

<https://devpost.com/software/study-conquest>

*Best Education Hack*

*Best Hack Promoting Education or Public Health - Bloomberg*

A study program that scans and translates class notes into an interactive system that utilizes both an AI chat “study partner” and games such as matching and quizzes. The AI chat was created using an open AI API, in which the model was instructed to answer questions in forms that were more accessible to students who often report lack of focus and engagement when studying.

## Explore More



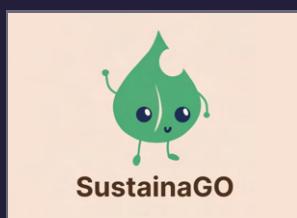
Terp2Table



SentiShelter



SnapBot



SustainaGO



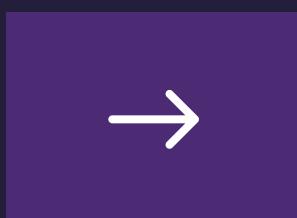
ConnectED



MatchAbility



Make Cents



Visit Our Devpost



# Year-Round Community

## Regular Community Events

We broadened our influence and made a meaningful impact by organizing frequent events and workshops throughout the year, extending beyond Technica weekend. Our gatherings, which attracted hundreds of attendees both virtually and in person, featured educational initiatives such as TechConnect—a session aimed at introducing community members to hackathons, a resume-development workshop, and an insightful panel discussion on Underrepresented Genders in STEM careers. It was a rewarding experience engaging with community members consistently throughout the year!

## Summer Fellowship Program

Our fellowship program seeks to democratize entry into the tech industry by offering incoming university freshmen both technical exposure and career guidance. Over the summer, a group of 15 fellows from the local area crafted engaging web games, honing their technical expertise in game development. This process not only fortified their skill set but also instilled confidence in pursuing a career in the tech sector. It provided them with an excellent platform to showcase their creativity, problem-solving prowess, and collaborative abilities in the realm of game design. In addition to project work, our fellows participated in workshops covering topics such as git and GitHub, cybersecurity, entrepreneurship, technical and behavioral interviews, tech career paths, adjusting to college life, and networking. Beyond the learning sessions, bonding events, and social meet-ups fostered a close-knit community, immersing these enthusiastic and impressionable students in a supportive environment as they commenced their journeys through both college and the professional world.



# Year-Round Community

## Fall Big/Little Mentorship Program

In the current year, we enhanced Technica's mentorship program, designed to offer emerging college students the chance to broaden their network, establish a support system, gain insights from the real-life experiences of mentors and fellow mentees, and develop relevant skills and authentic connections to advance in their professional and academic journeys. With a total of 46 participants from UMD and beyond, each "little" (mentee) was paired with a "big" (mentor), providing guidance on various tech-related topics and offering professional and career insights. The program commenced during Technica weekend, and big/little pairs continued to meet and engage throughout the fall semester.

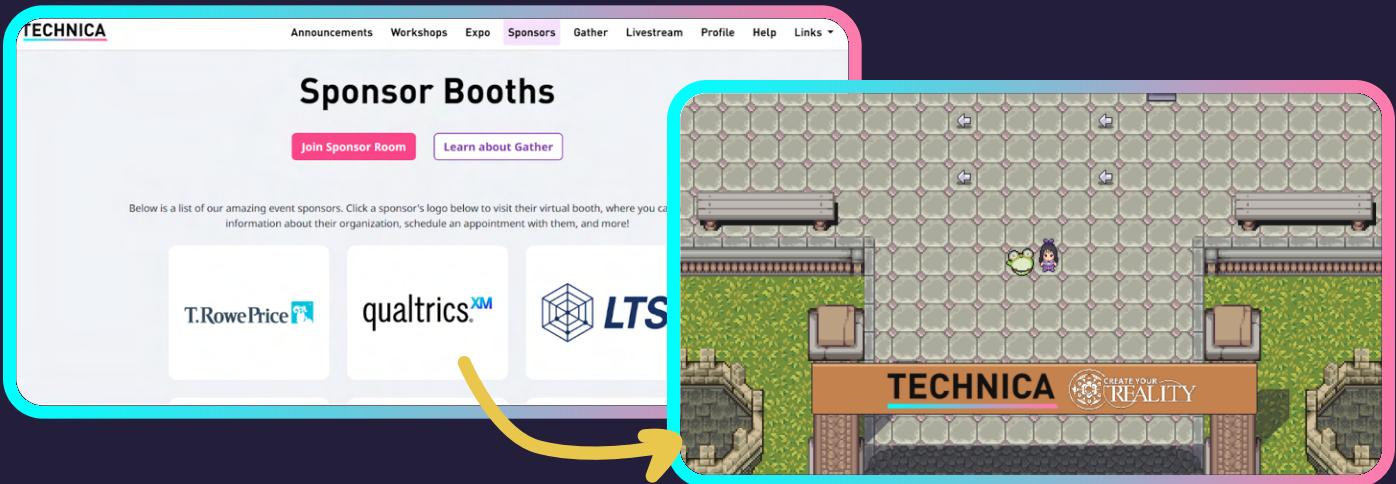
## Discord Server and Monthly Newsletter

To maintain our community's connection beyond Technica weekend, we actively engaged in the Technica Community Discord Server—an online platform facilitating engagement across the globe. Additionally, we enhanced the Technica newsletter, aiming to keep our community abreast of Technica-related updates and opportunities throughout the entire year. Distributed via email at the start of each month, our Techni-News provides insights into upcoming events, program applications, highlights our Fellowship and Ambassador cohorts, and disseminates information on internships, awards applications, and other hackathons.



# Our Technology

Changes to both our in-person and online event logistics and experience necessitated innovation of our technology. This year, our Technology team launched a suite of custom-built technology solutions designed to support attendees throughout Technica weekend: a custom website and registration form, web-based virtual event platform which supports our new use of Gather, check-in scanner web app, and expo scheduler.



Our Technology team modernized the tech stack of this year's website from Vue.js to Vue.js 3 in order to increase overall performance and maintainability for developers. This year's registration form included a track recommendation system to customize the attendee experience. We added new functionality to our schedule page to allow hackers to star events and filter them by category and favorites. This year, we integrated Gather into our virtual hacker experience, and adapted our expo scheduler to automatically assign demo timeslots to all teams and judges whether they were in-person or on Gather. The team also made improvements to the check-in app to further streamline the process and mitigate data inaccuracy. All of these products were built with our attendees in mind, whether they joined us from home, all around the world, or in The Hotel.

[Click here to visit our Github!](#)

The image shows a screenshot of the Technica event schedule. At the top, there are filters for "Event Categories" including Main Events, Workshops, Mini-Events, Techni-Chats, Food, and Virtual. Below that is a checkbox for "Show favorited events only" and a dropdown for "Timezone: America/New York". The main area shows a grid-based schedule for Saturday, October 21 and Sunday, October 22. The grid has columns for time (11:30 AM, 12:00 PM, etc.) and rows for different sessions. Some sessions are labeled with their names, such as "Opening Ceremony", "NCWIT Aspirations in Computing", "Decoding Your Coffee with DCC", "Website Creations", "What They Don't Tell You", and "Tricks and Tips with Microcontrollers".

# The Team



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## The Team



# Our Supporters



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UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND



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MAJOR LEAGUE HACKING



startup shell

# Connect with Us



## Every Donation Counts

Individual contributions also make a huge impact – we appreciate all levels of support!

**\$50**

The cost to provide electricity and internet to a hacker, so they can stay charged up and logged in all weekend

**\$20**

The cost of each meal we provide to hackers at Technica, keeping them fueled and properly fed

**\$10**

The cost per hacker to keep Emergency Medical Services and Security Personnel on hand throughout Technica weekend, just in case

[Donate](#)