Linda Octalina

The Developer Happiness Days, Dev8D, made me sad.

Hang on, didn't I just write a happy trip report?

Well, it was great to see so many happy developers of course, but it was a bit sad that so few were women. If there are only a handful of women joining in then we are going to miss out on some great ideas and some inspired coding which is what Dev8D was supposed to be about.

I have a daughter who, at ten, sometimes claims that she will be a computer programmer (and a lawyer and a waiter). Will it have an impact that most of the pictures of the conferences I go to show mostly men participating?

Today, on Ada Lovelace Day I decided to highlight one inspiring young woman working in software development.

Linda Octalina works in our team at ADFI, programming the computer. She built lots of stuff in the ICE system and is now involved in all our projects in a variety of programming languages, across multiple platforms. And she's involved in open source work outside of USQ's employ.

Day to day our programmers are analysing business processes, researching, crafting designs for software solutions and dealing with lots of people with both reasonable and unreasonable expectations.

Linda is very tenacious at problem solving and generous at giving back to the community. For example, in her work on converting legacy FrameMaker course documents to Open Document Format she worked on getting good quality versions of LaTeX equations for the web: see this blog post Converting Transparent GIF to PNG by using pyPIL, which goes into detail about one part of the process. That post is going to save someone somewhere a lot of time.

I asked Linda to give me a bit of background about herself and her journey from Indonesia to Toowoomba. This is a slightly edited version of something she threw together:

> I grew up in small town called Pematang Siantar. Like most of the other children my age, I never saw a computer. At the age of 14, I was transferred to a well known school in the capital city of North Sumatra, Medan, which is three hours drive from my home town. One of the extra courses offered in this school was "Learn how to Program in Pascal". To kill my curiosity about what the computer could do, rather than what it looked like, I took this extra subject. Two weeks in this course and I was addicted.

> When I moved to Singapore to pursue my tertiary education (Diploma), without hesitation, I chose IT as my first Major. With the support from the lecturers, in the third year, I was selected and attached to University of Queensland for my internship program to develop a Seminar system for one of the professors. During my six months attachment, I was exposed to Linux and open source software. I went back Singapore after my attachment and worked as a programmer for two years, mainly dealing with Microsoft software such as asp or dot net. In 2007, I decided to move to Australia to continue my Bachelor degree as I would like to in-depth my knowledge in Linux and open source software. After I completed my Bachelor, I was interested in one particular research topic and I enrolled myself as a Master student.

So I picked Linda because she's a good example of an early-career programmer who has followed her passion and is making a solid contribution to the open source commons. She has a background and and approach which will be a valuable addition to future developer happiness day type events here in Australia and around the world.