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The Crossroads of Computer Science: Stories of 'Sideways' and 'Hidden' Computer Scientists

Computer Science and related computing fields have become influential academic disciplines in terms of impact on other disciplines and society in general. Academic computing could be described as a crossroads where there is a constant influx of people from 'outside computing' and an outflux of people moving on from computing to other interesting disciplines. However, many misconceptions exist which contribute to a lack of diversity in computing.

Computing Crossroads was launched to highlight all of the wonderful diversity that comes when focusing on career diversity. To-date we have interviewed 32 people who either work/operate in computing currently but do not have a traditional academic computing background, or who do have a traditional academic computing background but currently do not work/operate in computing. We construct vignettes from these interviews and then publish them monthly at www.computingcrossroads.org. To date we have published 11 (the first month featured 4 vignettes). We have interviewed 21 people identifying as male and 11 identifying as female, from four continents. We promote monthly updates on Twitter (@ComputingXroads) and to-date have over 12,000 Twitter impressions.

The project is currently in place to release vignettes for another six months. We hope to secure funding to continue the project beyond that timeframe. We have also conducted an analysis of the project by interviewing several people in the community including interviewees, those who were aware of the project, and those that were not aware of the project. We received valuable feedback that may help improve the project's reach and impact should it continue beyond the expected lifetime.

Ultimately the goal was to have Computing Crossroads become a regular column in ACM Inroads or similar. Discussions on that front will commence soon, as we approach one-year of monthly updates.

We hope that Computing Crossroads can continue to help to paint an accurate picture of the computing community and its impact on other fields. By highlighting the diversity that we do have in computing while providing a view of who does in fact "do" computing, Computing Crossroads can hopefully improve the diversity, equality and inclusion in computing through awareness, inspiration and by helping break down misconceptions.