

Supporting STEM Women Who #ChoosetoChallenge

Recognising the efforts women have made to STEM on a global scale is imperative, according to Marie Howarth, Vice President of Women in Technology (WiT).

Speaking in the lead-up to International Women's Day, Ms Howarth said organisations such as WiT were 'choosing to challenge' by creating a platform to champion women's achievements.

"At WiT, we represent women from all fields of science and technology and are all about helping them build the confidence, skills, recognition and networks they need to truly unlock their potential," said Ms Howarth.

"Gender bias often develops at very young age and can discourage young girls from pursuing a STEM education and career."

Ms Howarth said, however, it was also important to acknowledge women throughout history who had paved the way for others to follow STEM professions.

She said historical figures like Ada Lovelace had helped secure a seat 'at the table' for women in STEM, and insisted we pause to acknowledge historical trailblazers like Lovelace who often did not receive appropriate recognition of their significant contributions.

Brisbane-based mathematics education expert and co-founder of ORIGO Education, Dr Calvin Irons, is also determined to highlight the significant contribution women have made to mathematics in the lead up to International Women's Day.

Dr Irons, who has been involved in mathematics education for more than 50 years, said one woman in particular, Ada Lovelace, should be acknowledged in the year where people are being asked to #ChooseToChallenge.

Lovelace is regarded as one of the first computer programmers of our time. Unfortunately, very few know her name.

Dr Irons, who recently researched three historical female mathematicians and their influence on mathematics development today said, "In the history of machine computing, there are only two computer languages named after people - Blaise Pascal and Ada Lovelace."

"Interestingly, however, Lovelace's contribution is much more significant than Pascal's, and she is correctly described as the world's first computer programmer."

In 1833, Ada Lovelace met Charles Babbage, who shared his thoughts about a machine that could complete the tedious and often erroneous calculations in tables of data.

"Babbage thought a machine should be able to do the calculations. But Ada was the person that analysed and applied the mathematics that was necessary so that it could work," said Dr Irons.

The machine was never built during the 1800s. But in 1990, the British Science museum made the Difference Engine based on Lovelace and Babbage's work and, in their words, it "worked flawlessly".

Unfortunately, Ada Lovelace died at a very young age, but Dr Irons said it is interesting to theorise what might have happened if she had been able to make further contributions to mathematics.

MEDIA NOTE – For further information, contact Wings Public Relations Director Deanna Nott on 0422 504540 or email deanna@wingspr.com.au

ABOUT ORIGO EDUCATION

ORIGO Education was established in 1995 by co-founders James Burnett and Dr Calvin Irons. ORIGO Education is focused on creating a love of mathematics. ORIGO Education publishes and covers all facets of primary mathematics education from traditional printed products to digital interactive resources and professional learning throughout the world, supporting primary teachers across 14 countries, including Australia, the US, Canada, Singapore and Thailand. To find more information about ORIGO Education, visit www.origoeducation.com.au.

ABOUT WiT

Women in Technology (WiT) is one of Australia's most respected and active technology industry associations, with more than 7,600 members and 24,500 supporters. The not-for-profit is dedicated to supporting, developing, recognising and promoting the achievements of women across all branches of science and technology. The organisation delivers professional development, advocacy and networking, including exclusive mentoring and Board Readiness courses, and the prestigious annual WiT Awards. Visit www.wit.org.au.

Contacts

Wings Public Relations Director, Deanna Nott

0422 504 540

mailto: deanna@wingspr.com.au