Concerning Society Jewelry

I am a doctoral student in computer sciences at Columbia University as well as a member of IEEE Computer Society and I don’t want a tie bar or tie tack. I don’t wear a tie. I understand that the tie tack is also a lapel pin, but why should I have to buy the one with the other? For form’s sake, the lapel pin should have been offered separately. (Or else you could have offered earrings that convert into cufflinks). A masculine item (the tie-tack) that converts into a neutral item (the pin) doesn’t seem fair.

I’m no “women’s libber”, but this is the kind of small thing that isn’t so small because it is repeated so often in the publications of the professional societies I belong to. By the way, how many of the Society’s members are women? (Mrs.) Martha H. Stillman

Your point is well taken. For a positive reaction see the column opposite. Less than 1% of our members are women; hopefully we’ll see a steady increase as more become computer professionals. —Ed.

More on Merging

Dear AI:

This is a response to your interview in the 1972 May-June issue of COMPUTER in which you solicited member reaction toward CS merger with ACM. I strongly support the concept; I will now rationalize.

There is a large and growing area of technical overlap in the interests of the two societies. Mike Flynn has said it well: “Computing’s Baroque Era is behind us,” and many important developments in hardware will consist of “software” (or, after Opler, “firmware”) logic developments in a highly generalized hardware environment. I expect that Communications and even Journal papers will begin to resemble more and more Computer and Transactions papers. The fact that they appear in different places (as do our respective Annual Conferences) is not helpful to the effectiveness of intercourse.

Your comment that membership overlap between CS and ACM is only 1/3, according to the 1970 AFIPS study, surprises me, but I feel that this overlap must be growing. Just as ACM is now attracting more and more business-problem people who are getting more and more “ACM-ish” as they start to use more formal and analytical, as opposed to intuitive and empirical, approaches to problem solving, CS is also attracting more and more people who are interested at least as much in the use of computers as in their design (perhaps their use in design?).

Unlike you, I feel that in minor ways the two societies are now in competition: I think this is a nonsensical situation. In several ways we are duplicating effort. Like you, I doubt that we could avoid much duplication of costs; but there would certainly be at least some economy to be gained through scale, and the complementarity of interests would certainly bring added values to members of both societies.

Several perceptive people in both societies have spoken to me about this issue. They are not unanimous at this time that immediate merger is appropriate, but they are openminded. They agree that at very least we should find more ways to improve access by each membership to the other.

Jointure would bring on some disadvantages; for example, our Annual Meetings would get larger and more diffuse, with more parallel sessions, less flexibility as to location, and more bloated Proceedings.

On the other hand, those subgroups that have similar or related interests should benefit from modest increases in their membership rosters, in numbers of submitted papers per topic (justifying more “excellence”, to use your word, in selection standards), and in availability of well-qualified referees, discussants, and topic leaders.

Several controversies (e.g., patentability of software, CPM workload profiling) that are of interest to members of both societies are being debated by one society or the other but not both. Definitive papers contributing to the growth of important sub-disciplines (e.g., Boolean algebra, data structures) that are important to, and that should be readily available to, many members of both societies, are being published by “one or other not both”.

Acting as chairman of both ACM’s SICARCH and CS’s TCCA, which have similar scopes (computer architecture) and have been acting as one, Mike recently passed on to Tony Ralston, ACM’s President, an expression of the SICARCH/TCCA membership’s interest in merging at this technical subunit level. Mike pointed out that most of this membership are members of both societies anyway, and that the merger concept might make sense for other kinds of subunits too. As he put it, “... at (the local and student chapter level) ... merged chapters would be — both technically and financially — much better off.” It seems obvious that there would be less paperclip busywork if the two groups, in each such case, were not obliged to “... (keep) separate books and (stay legal) in procedural matters.” These are eminently sane thoughts, and I feel that they make sense beyond the technical and geographic subunit level for both societies.

Many CS members may not be aware that ACM is moving toward use of the IEEE administrative support computing software and facilities, at least in part because membership administrative support requirements are almost indentical. Even more CS members are probably unaware that when (at SJCC’72) a resolution was moved in the ACM Council Meeting to instruct the incoming President to appoint a committee to study joint actions with CS, the motion passed unanimously. This committee is chaired by Eric Weiss, who is also chairman of ACM’s Publications Board. It has been given the broad charter of “ACM-IEEE relations at all levels,” including publications matters (exchanges, near-member rates for members of “the other society”, expanded coverage in ACM Computing Reviews to better serve CS member needs), as well as strengthened cooperation at the SIG/SIC-TC level and between chapters of all kinds, and any other matters of concern to all members of both societies (including possible merger).

Setting up favorable cross-subscription rates and inter-society relations committee (or committees?) are of course sensible steps to take; but the two societies already know a great deal about each other. We could study and equivocate for years, or we could take precipitate action.

I feel that there’s a case to be made for getting revved up for precipitate action.

Yours truly,
Herbert S. Bright
(Member, IRE-PGEC thru IEEE-CS; Member, ACM)
The Last Word on “Bring Your Wife”

I would like to comment on the “Bring your wife…” Compon ’72 display ad.

Perhaps if Bob Warr used a little empathy he would see why there has been criticism. Would he like it if his wife were an engineer and received an ad that read “Bring your worst computer design problems to San Francisco… Bring your husband… You might leave one behind.”? The ad speaks to men only when, in reality, some professional women attend the conference too.

I found his response to the criticism distasteful also. Perhaps we should see a picture of Mr. Warr. This would give us a chance to pass judgment on his physique and thereby decide on the merit of his ideas.

It is unfortunately true that women are sometimes their own worst enemy. (This is the case with many oppressed groups.) Some career women are so jealous about their status as a female who has achieved success in a male world that they perpetuate the oppression in an effort to keep other women from intruding on their territory.

I am glad that the ad seemed to produce the results intended. However, there is never just one way to do something, and I hope next year your advertising staff will put their talents to work to create an ad which is imaginative and, at the same time, not offensive.

Barbara Ash

Computing Reviews

Expanded Computing Reviews Now Available to IEEE Computer Society Members

The Publications Committee of IEEE Computer Society and the Publication Board of ACM have agreed that Computing Reviews should expand its coverage to provide reviews of considerably more material (books, technical papers, symposia proceedings and the like) of prime interest to members of IEEE, particularly of its Computer Society. These will be critical evaluations as characteristic of Computing Reviews, and not abstracts. It is hoped this step will enhance the usefulness of Computing Reviews to a wider range of computer professionals. Much of the additional material will fall in the Computing Reviews category for Hardware, but the sections on Electrical and Electronic Engineering, on computer systems, real-time, telecommunications, and related categories will also grow.

This expansion of coverage will be achieved by a working level cooperation between the IEEE Computer Society and the Computing Reviews staff. Robert A. Short, Editor-In-Chief of the IEEE Computer Society, has issued a call for volunteer reviewers from the ranks of the IEEE Computer Society, asking them to accept assignments from Computing Reviews in their fields of interest. Members of the Computer Society are urged to indicate their availability by writing to Lee Reves, Executive Editor of Computing Reviews, at ACM Headquarters, 1133 Ave. of the Americas, New York, N.Y. 10036.

This extended coverage is regarded as sufficiently significant to IEEE Computer Society members that it has been agreed by the two societies to offer Computing Reviews to members of the Computer Society at the special price of $15, rather than the regular $25 price to non-ACM members. A complimentary copy of Computing Reviews will be mailed to those interested in subscribing at this special $15 rate. Please write to Harry Hayman, Box 639, Silver Spring, MD 20901.

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