

South America

11 August - Doing IT Around the World



Claudia - Brazil: CS Professor

About My Career

About Me



Interview with Claudia – Computer Science Professor: Brazil

What do you do?

I am a CS professor at UNICAMP, one of the top Latin American universities, with teaching, research and administrative tasks.

My picture with a colleague (extreme left in photo) and the students we supervise shows what I love most in my job: interacting with people.

I was president of the Brazilian Computer Society (the largest in South America) for 4 years. I coordinate big research projects, involving many universities and scientists.

Besides teaching, my work requires lots of reading, evaluation of people and papers, intensive traveling (>7 countries in 2008) and supervising students. I don't like endless administrative meetings, but they're needed to keep things going.

Tell us more about your work?

I am an electrical engineer, learnt to program in 1972 during my undergrad studies. My first technological job was systems analyst.

I do travel a lot - for meetings, conferences, thesis defences and also to discuss projects.

I am in several decisory boards (mostly Brazilian, but also international).

All of this adds up to many meetings - the ones concerning research are wonderful, the others are usually very tiresome.

I love my work, and do not intend to quit so soon - teaching, research and supervision of students keep one's brain alive.

What impact does your role have?

My research in database systems is multidisciplinary, in biodiversity and agriculture, having received many prizes. My main long lasting achievements lie in educating people and training researchers, thus contributing to my country's future.

Ex-students keep in touch; they work all over the world, extending to many what they learnt.

Teachers always learn from students and colleagues. We keep extending the scope of what we teach to include others' experiences..

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About Me Interview with Claudia – Computer Science Professor: Brazil

What are 3 words that describe you?

Optimistic, Hardworking, Perseverant

Tell us more about yourself

I hold a PhD in Computer Science (U of Waterloo 1985), having received many prizes for my work in Brazil and abroad.

My many tasks require constant interaction with people, especially students, and studying. I love both, and enjoy learning new things. Enjoying what I do is a big component of my success.

Also, I don't give up easily - an important factor in research - and learnt to put myself in the place of others (needed in today's cooperative world).

Before teaching, I was a tour guide in Rio de Janeiro (7 years) and a systems analyst (5 years).

I love movies, reading (scifi, crime, history) and ballroom dancing.

Can we find out more?

For more on me and my students, see www.ic.unicamp.br/~cmbm

What is your advice to other women?

To succeed in IT, you must like to study and be fluent in English.

Most IT jobs demand interaction with lots of people - hence require interpersonal skills, even in virtual worlds.

To succeed in any career, you must:

- like what you do,
- take pride in it, and
- be able to express yourself clearly - in writing and speech.

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Carola- Chile: Geo Spatial Assistant Professor

About My Career
About Me

Interview with Carola – Geo Spatial Assistant Professor: Chile

What do you do?

During my first day at work, I met new people and learned about the university. Normally, my days at work are always different since they are full of surprises such as last minute meetings.

I arrive at my office around 9am and immediately check my e-mail. Then throughout the day, I prepare classes, read papers, teach, or have meetings with students or colleagues. I have a lunch break with my colleagues every day past 1pm.

I like working with students on research projects and helping them out on different tasks such as data collection. As a result from research, papers are written and presented at national and international conferences. I also teach a Master level class once a week in the evening, and motivate students about research.

What impact does your role have?

In my career as a faculty member, I believe that getting awarded research grants is one of the most significant achievements since they are very competitive.

I received a 3-year grant last year from the Chilean government to fund research related to geospatial technologies applied to transportation. This grant helps fund students, office material, travel stipend, etc.

Recently, my colleagues and I were awarded a grant to work on a 9-month project with the objective of determining the social and economical elements that motivate girls and young women to participate in technology and engineering areas.

Any Travel?

Since I work doing a lot of research, the results are presented at conferences. Thus, I travel a lot. In 2007, I was fortunate to visit Africa and Asia. This year I traveled to Greece with my colleagues to present 5 research papers. I need funding for research and these trips, thus I write many grant proposals.

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About Me Interview with Carola – Geo Spatial Assistant Professor: Chile

What are 3 words that describe you?

Perfectionist, Optimistic, Sociable

Tell us more about yourself

I am a Civil Engineer and worked a few months in Valparaiso, Chile before flying to the United States. I obtained my Master of Science and PhD in Geospatial Information Engineering from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

I like to relax, so I attend yoga and painting classes in the evenings. If I am not too tired I wake up early in the morning and have a short run. I go out during the weekends and meet with friends and family. During the winter, I like to go up in the Andes and go snowboarding.

What is your advice to other women?

I believe that the involvement of women in technology and engineering has been a tough job to overcome.

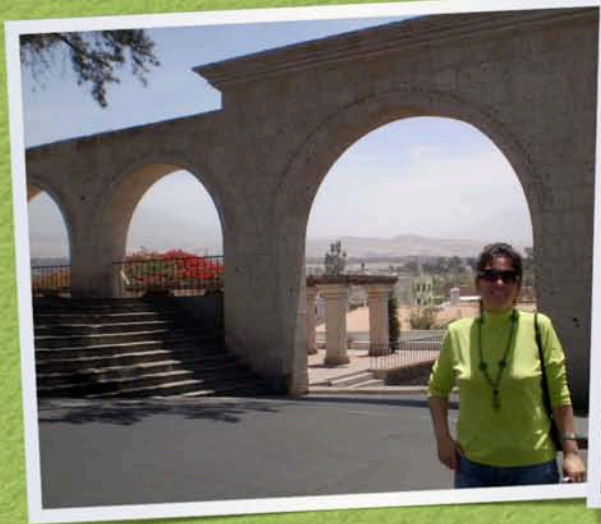
Thus, I think that having the goal in mind to make a difference and like what you do, then you will be successful professional.

You need to be persistent when working in this area and believe that you will contribute with your creative thinking and social interests.

Never let yourself down and always think that you are capable of achieving any task.

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Carmen - Peru: Technology Lawyer
About My Career About Me



Interview with Carmen – Peru: Technology Lawyer

Tell us a little about yourself?

Let me introduce myself, I'm Peruvian, my name is Carmen, I am 44 years old (but look younger!). I am a woman leader. I have been married twice, and have two sons, one 18 and another 13 years old, I have 16 years of professional experience related to women issues. Self regarded as mature person passionate doing my creative and artistic designs and defending women human rights.

I'm not an engineer in technology or something like that, totally different, I am an international lawyer, but for many reasons, I was related with ITs, because of my work at the Ministry of Women and Social Development, promoting projects for women entrepreneurs including the use of IT and others.

Are you also involved in voluntary work?

I
n my parallel work, but voluntary, I'm a member of NGO (Non Government Organisation), where I'm in charge of Coordination of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, promoting women rights and women entrepreneurs.

You are also a technology entrepreneur yes?

Yes - I have a business with my husband, we had 3 Internet Public Cabins in different regions of my country with 25 PC in each one, started 6 years ago.

The business did well for 4 years, but two years ago we hoped to open more branches across the country when the dirty competition, (grrrrrr !! ja! ja!) started to open up cabins next to us. They had lower prices, and a similar business to what we offered. As a direct result our business income was reduced significantly.

The rent of establishments (where we operated with our cabins) was increased twice, so what happened ?, Full competition??, No! our Renter was interested to open similar cabins too, thus two of our cabins closed down. Now we have only ONE Internet Public Cabin with 35 PC and Call and business center.

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Continued Interview with Carmen – Peru: Technology Lawyer

Tell us about your business?

One of my inputs in those cabins and community was implementing a system to help women.

As business owners or managers you need to review and study the customer flow in your business, rush hours, empty hours, likes, dislikes, colors, environments, age, etc. Even with our small business we tried to get different audience or customers, because that was our gimmick, to give access to everybody to get all people near to us feel free to enter to our center.

Thus, we realized two things, one was that more women asked for procedures to demand protection against domestic violence, pay taxes for her business through internet, households and others and they didn't know how to enter and use the Internet or a PC, specially middle age women. On the other hand, many women, housewives, adolescent mothers, teenagers, students and part time workers were free at mornings, thus, we used mornings to promote women rights, women laws, disseminating pamphlets about domestic violence, counseling about procedures to get protection under laws and promoting special prices for women during the mornings.

So you designed specific internet courses?

At the same time, we offered private short courses for women interested to learn about the internet.

Many of them went to our cabins to help their children with home work, and specially in the afternoons with primary students who along with the mothers were not very good at using the internet.

Thus, to give the mothers more time and not be disturbed by others we invited women during the mornings. We offered lower prices to: mothers, aunts, uncles, grandmothers to come during mornings to learn more about the internet. With patience, our young sellers explain the use of internet the easy way. It worked.

What do you love doing?

I'm a woman entrepreneur, I love to design clothes and jewelry, so I'm interested to open a web page for my jewelry I designed and made, I'm building it.

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What are 3 words that describe you?

Passionate, Perseverant, Entrepreneur

Carmen you have 2 funny stories that include lessons learned you would like to share with us?

I'm a professional with some experience in IT, being an International Lawyer, sounds great eh !!! But I have to recognize that technology plays with my level of knowledge in technology.

FIRST STORY: MANAGING UNKNOWN TECHNOLOGY

One of my funny experiences with technology was when I started to manage my Internet Public cabins. I only worked there or supervise/ accompanied husband and 2 workers, during weekends (because I worked at the Ministry of Women from Monday to Friday). It was so, so tiring, I didn't realize it, at midnight we had to reconcile cash flow, check every PC hardware and software, because sometime equipment disappeared i.e. Drivers, Memories. We even used security casing for the Hardware, and placed mirrors, yet every month something still happened.

One day, a Saturday morning, staff who knew more than me about software, in order to help customers in the use of internet or for what they were looking for, was not able to work, thus that Saturday I was alone as the manager, the supervisor, the seller, the cleaner, close and turn on and off PC's so on. So. Time passed normally when suddenly one teenager using one PC, asked me about how to access Chat to get a girl friend ! Plop!!, Ups !! Nervously I went to try to help him, but even though I was able and expert at finding the last important documents from UN or comments from very important people, I had never used Chat to find friends or lovers, I had only used Messenger. Poor Carmen,!! I couldn't ask anybody to help me, It was an error of course, I could ask, but customers were busy with their chats, and all assumed as I was a responsible person in charge of the Cabin that I was able to resolve questions about web sites !! My God ! What can I do ! My first Business, My First Month , My first exam of customers, and I DIDN'T KNOW !!!!!!! I tried to get some websites from Google, Altavista and only got comments about how to get girlfriend and friends, and time pass, MY GODDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDD!!!!!!

But SUDDENLY I had a bright idea – I told myself:.... *Many of my customers are young people, who must save the address of websites,* It worked ! BINGO !!!, Got it ! so I found it and as a reward I received a big smile from my teenager customer, and a big sigh of relief from myself, so I passed the exam that weekend. My lesson learned: be prepared, don't be ashamed to ask others, try many alternatives, and be simple, say I don't know, then, LEARN.

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SECOND STORY :“DORA A FRIEND OF TECHNOLOGY”

I was in New Zealand studying English to improve my level of this language, my friend Olga, was my roommate, but she was sick with gastritis and had lots of insurance paperwork to complete.

Every day in the afternoons after classes, we did library research and homework. We used to go to the Cyber rooms (Internet rooms for students at the university) to send letters to our families and others such as claims by e-mail, for insurance requirements. During this we discussed together the best form (related to grammar) to send the letter, checking our mistakes.

After many letters sent, we received many answers from different people and emails, among those emails, we received were from a person who answered all the time, in a very polite way, all of our questions. Her name was DORA, thus we were very happy, because after many negative answers for the claim, her answers were more positive, giving more opportunities to resolve the case, so we decided to invite her for a coffee in order to thank her for her help for this long time of claiming and ask her how she was working in NZ and to practice our English. We thought, as she has Spanish name, that maybe, she was an immigrant or something like that, we thought, yes that the reason why she is helping us answering our emails, thus we sent a letter of invitation..... After two days, Dora Answered, Dora is a Server, Plop!!! once again, technology K.O. me, and it was only just last year !!, can you imagine,?? So what happened why didn't we realize that Dora was a Machine,? Answering very politely for many questions as a person, who understood all of our requirements??, In my country the names of servers are DHAPNE, NET, SERVER, so we use names that are very easy to know that is not an email of a person, and the answers they gave are very basic. So you immediately identify them as programs not as people, but this, was incredible – so, Technology !!!!! Lesson learned : Be ahead ! run with technology at least you won't be object of ridicule.

Photos below are of Sonja Bernhardt the Doing IT innovator taken when she was in Peru in May 2008 a guest of Carmen at the APEC + LAC Digital Women's Forum. A GREAT opportunity to experience the colourful Peruvian life and visit Machu Piccu©





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