

# WOMEN IN ENGINEERING – NEWSLETTER

This year is our 9th annual celebration for International Women in Engineering Day and this year's theme is Enhanced by Engineering, it is also the RNLI's 200th birthday, and we are looking to Inspire the next generation of future lifesavers and engineers! Join us for all news STEM related in our monthly updates.

APRIL 2024



**DEBRA**  
**HEAD OF APPLICATIONS**  
**AND GOVERNANCE**



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My role at the RNLI is to manage the Applications & Governance Team, which translates the strategy of the institution into a co-ordinated set of applications that (hopefully) do everything we need them to in order to run our fabulous institution. Believe it or not, we have 876 of them, which is crazy, and something we need to simplify.

Growing up went to my local school which luckily had an amazing music department as I was originally set to be a pianist, with my place at music college sorted, However, deep down I knew that I was never going to overcome my performance nerves. Luckily, I was always a Hermione Grainger when it came to study, so armed with A levels in Music, German and Double Maths, instead, I set off to Cardiff University. Here I could still sing as much as I liked alongside gaining a first class degree in law. However I also gained a healthy realisation that I definitely did NOT want to be a lawyer either.

I actually worked briefly in academic law and research, before joining Lloyds Bank's management training scheme, before continuing in Financial Services with RSA Insurance. It was in RSA that I did my six-sigma training and my secret came out – I was a total maths monster. My leader at the time wanted someone to lead combining three reporting functions into a single central team for analytics, and my path was set. I was really lucky to have some brilliant technical colleagues, and I quickly realised that I was in my happy place. I stepped off the career ladder for a while when I had my two children, moving into Project and Programme Management,. When I was ready to go full-time again, I moved to Allianz, and shortly thereafter again merged the reporting teams into a central function including data governance. I was seeking something more meaningful in my life though, and when the opportunity to join the RNLI just as we set up a Data, Evidence & Insight team came up, I couldn't believe my luck. I still feel lucky every day to work for something meaningful.

Strange as it may seem one of my most memorable moments at the RNLI was the first time the RNLI's Solution Architect showed me the dashboard he'd built that made it super easy to see all the applications we had, what they were doing, what they cost, when they were due to renew... I cannot tell you how happy it made me that we'd been able to translate a LOT of effort over a long period to fully understand our estate, into something so beautifully simple to understand.

A close second would be the new dashboards that are helping our crews track our operational competence framework – again just knowing the complexity of the modelling and the code and seeing such a simple end product, it's just brilliant. (I warned you I was a geek right?)

## Debra's word of advice:

- My advice to women considering STEM is that your **gender really doesn't need to be a factor here**. In fact, if you are interested in this field, I strongly suspect that you are going to find yourself surrounded by like-minded people and love the constantly changing knowledge that roles in technology demand. It's a growing field with lots of opportunity for a lifetime of variety in your career, and there are so many ways to learn now that not having studied technology at degree level is not a barrier at all. Your natural curiosity will love it!
- What you may need to work on is your **imposter complex**. I find it so often in women in this field – we are amazing at seeing others' skills and feeling inferior, but then invariably find that when we set our mind to learning the something new (which is always around the corner in a tech world), we love the new skills and knowledge. If this is you, find yourself a great mentor who can help you stay connected with your strengths.

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## VIRTUAL REALITY IN THE CLASSROOM

Schools are using cool virtual worlds called the metaverse to teach in new ways. With virtual reality, students can explore, play with stuff, and work together on projects, all without leaving their desks. Teachers can take them on trips to historic places, outer space, or other countries right from the classroom!

In super cool VR worlds, you can do things you can't do in regular classrooms, like seeing Earth from space or exploring the human body up close. Labster's virtual lab has over 250 experiments, so you can do lots of science safely.

With augmented reality, we can add digital stuff to real classroom things. Froggipedia is an example: it lets you study a frog's insides without actually cutting one open!

**Read more.**