Transcript of Karen Smyth, Information Technology

The coolest part of my job is… I get to work in an industry that impacts everyone's life in today's world!

I'm heading up the department who's responsible for all the technology on campus. Modern universities are very technology-rich spaces. There's technology in the classrooms, there's technology the students use when they're in open spaces like this, when they're in residence rooms, there's the technology the departments use to administer the university functions, and to make sure people get paid. The role of my department and the people who work with me is to make sure the technology all works.

My interest in information technology is probably not standard. I started off as a scientist. As an undergraduate I took Biology, and then I moved on and took a PhD. I did a few years of research, and at the time, that's what really introduced me to computers—they were just starting to come into research, and I learned to program doing that, and when I finished my PhD, I was looking around for my next step, and there were many opportunities in the commuting sector at that time. I retrained with a Masters in Computer Science, and I've been working in the computer science industry ever since.

The thing I found when I changed my program, was the training I received as a scientist was very transferrable to the work I do as a computer scientist. Years in information technology can be very varied. I often describe it as thinking about the traditional trades you would think of when you're constructing a building. You have joiners, you have plumbers, and you have electricians. Everyone has a different skill set, and you all come together. The exact same is true of Computer Science. There are so many different roles within the computing sector, that there really is one to fit every personality type.

One of the women in my team is Nancy Kerr. Nancy's role in the university is the LAN Administrator. Nancy's responsible for making sure that the people have access during their work, their access is secure, and you only see what you should see.

Yvonne Chute is an Analyst Programmer in the department. Analyst Programmers are responsible for supporting and developing the systems that sits on our infrastructure on campus, and Yvonne's particular area of expertise is our enterprise system, which is what the university uses to manage all its records, and to make sure that accounting is working, and to make sure people get paid.

Amanda MacPhee is our Business Analyst. Business Analyst is a relatively new role in the IT world. The best way to describe a business analyst is they act as a bridge between the technical people and the non-technical people who need to use the systems to do their job. Business analysts can really understand the IT mindset, and they can also the non-IT mindset, and translate between the two.

The thing I love most about my work is that it changes every day. Technology is constantly renewing itself, and I have to stay very much on top of that. So I really am a life-long learner. I never know one day to the next what's going to happen when I come to work.

The advice I would give you when choosing your future career is: choose subjects that interest you. It'll make your learning much more enjoyable. But also keep your subject choices open—don't narrow down your choices too early on, and the greatest way of doing that is to keeping your science and math going.