

## Preface

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Even before beginning this study, I was implicated in it. I had been a member of Webgrrls myself for a few years before deciding to use them as a population. During that time, I had experienced technology as a positive, empowering force which provided me with a range of opportunities for research and activism. When reading much of the preliminary literature on women, work, and technology for this project, I was struck by the observation that this literature did not describe my own experiences with and feelings towards technology. I stumbled across, for example, a feminist collective which refused, on ideological grounds, to purchase and use a computer to do their business. Perhaps in the years since I mentally footnoted their technological rebellion they have since come to see the opportunities rather than the limitations of information technology. Nor did the literature seem to have a place for my female friends in software sales and network engineering, for my mother-in-law who was officially "just a secretary" and unofficially a web and graphic design whiz, for my acquaintances who found personal, professional and political resources online (ranging from mainstream to marginal), for my septuagenarian grandmother-in-law who spent many pleasant hours at her email and online games, and for my youngest sister who simply substituted ICQ for the telephone as the stereotypical and ubiquitous teenage female communication device.

Rather than constraining my choices, technology opened a variety of doors for me, and continues to do so. Much of this research would have been impossible before the development of email, the Internet and the World Wide Web. The technology meant that in the course of this study, much of the information came to me, rather than the other

way around. This has greatly facilitated my research. The reader will hopefully excuse what may be perceived as untoward optimism about the potential of information technology. I anticipated that elements of this experience would be shared by women who have chosen to work professionally in information technology.

I was not surprised to discover that the respondents in the study were as passionate, excited, positive, and inquisitive about the technology as I was. Flying in the face of received wisdom of women as hesitant and incompetent technology users, my research subjects expressed emotions ranging from exuberance to adoration about the objects and practices which formed part of their daily lives. I hope that these female technophiles will provide a sorbet to the palate of the feminist researcher who is feeling a little bit of indigestion from the smorgasbord of "commonsense knowledge" about the negative relationships that women should and do have with technology. Technology (and technological culture) still deserves our critique, but it also deserves our interest and exploration. The possibilities for future activism and organization which technology provides to women globally are exciting, and I hope that I have captured a tiny amount of that potential in this study.