Jean Sammet: Programming Language Contributor and Historian, and ACM President.

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Thomas J. (Tim) Bergin

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In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

Jean Sammet:
Programming Language Contributor and Historian, and ACM President

Thomas J. (Tim) Bergin (bio)

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Jean E. Sammet, when she was inducted into the National Academy of Engineering.

Jean E. Sammet[1] was born on 23 March 1928, in New York City. Her parents, Harry and Ruth Sammet, were both lawyers. Harry's legal practice included wills and estates; Ruth stopped working when she married. Jean and her younger sister, Helen, attended public elementary schools in Manhattan. Jean's interest in mathematics surfaced at a very young age but she could not attend the Bronx High School of Science because it didn't accept girls. Instead, Jean went to Julia Richman High School, an all-girls' public school, where she took every available math course.

After examining a number of college catalogs from women's colleges, Jean chose Mount Holyoke on the strength of its mathematics program.[2] Jean majored in mathematics and took enough education courses to be certified to teach high school mathematics in New York; she minored in political science. After graduation, Jean pursued graduate studies at the University of Illinois, receiving her MA in 1949. She was a teaching assistant in the Mathematics department from 1948 to 1951 while taking courses toward a PhD.

In 1951, Jean began looking for a teaching position. New York City was not hiring new high school teachers

Background of Jean E. Sammet

Born: 23 March 1928, New York City.

Education: Mount Holyoke College, BA (mathematics), magna cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa, 1948; University of Illinois, MA (mathematics), 1949. **Professional Experience:** University of Illinois, teaching assistant, 1948-1951; Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, actuarial work, 1951-1952; Barnard College, teaching assistant, 1952-1953; *Sperry Gyroscope*, engineer, 1953-1958; *Sylvania Electric Products*, section head, Mobidic Programming, 1958-1959, and staff consultant for programming research, 1959-1961; *IBM*, manager, Boston Advanced Programming Department: started and oversaw the development of the formula manipulation language (Formac), 1961-1965; various management and staff positions, 1965-1988; senior technical staff, 1986-1988. **Professional Service:** Short-Range Committee (Cobol) 1959-1961; Codasyl Language Structure Group, 1960-1964; charter member, USASI X3.4 Committee on Programming Languages; DoD Ada Distinguished Reviewer, Ada Board and ISO Working Group on Ada, 1980-1989; organizer and 1st chairman of SIGSAM (Symbolic and

Algebraic Manipulation), 1965-1968; Northeast regional representative and ACM Council member, 1966-1968; chairman of ACM Committee on SIGs and SICs, 1968-1970; chair, SIGPLAN (Programming Languages), 1971-1972; ACM vice president, 1972-1974; ACM president, 1974-1976; Chairman, ACM Awards Committee and Fellowship Investigation Committee, 1976-1978; general and program chair, History of Programming Languages Conference, 1977-1978; chairman, AFIPS History of Computing Committee (recommended creation of the *Annals of the History of Computing*), 1977-1979; editor in chief, *Computing Reviews* and *ACM Guide to Computing Literature*, 1979-1987; program chair, History of Programming Languages II, 1991-1993; member of the board of directors of the Computer Museum, 1983-1993; member of board and executive committee, Software Patent Institute, 1992-1998. **Honors and Awards:** IBM Outstanding Contribution Award for "Formac", 1965; Honorary Chairman for 2nd Symposium on Symbolic and Algebraic Manipulation, 1971; Mount Holyoke College Alumnae Association Centennial Award for "Major contributions to the technological advance of programming science," 1972; one of the first two people elected to honorary membership in Upsilon Pi Epsilon (national computer honor society), 1975; elected member of National Academy of Engineering, 1977; honorary doctor of science, Mount Holyoke College, 1978; ACM Distinguished Service Award, 1985; Augusta Ada Lovelace Award from the Association for

Women in Computing, 1989; ACM Fellow (initial group), 1994; ACM SIGPLAN Distinguished Service Award, 1997; Fellow, Computer History Museum, 2001; ACM SIGAda Distinguished Service Award, 2002. **[End Page 76]**

of mathematics and so Jean looked in New Jersey. The authorities there determined that she was missing two courses: one in education and one in the history of New Jersey—Jean argued that knowledge of New Jersey did not enhance her ability to teach mathematics to high school students. This, however, was one of the few arguments Jean ever lost, and she decided to seek other types of employment.[3]

Professional employment

That fall, Jean took...

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Thomas J. (Tim) Bergin
American University

Editor: Thomas Haigh

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