letters

Selinger's Inspiring Words

The *Queue* interview with Pat Selinger (April 2005) was very interesting and a great review of major developments in database technology. I recognize how much computer science has advanced in the past 30 years, but when I read her answer about what areas she thinks need more research, I could not take from my mind that image of Captain Picard saying, "Computer, investigate all cross-references of this incident in the last 200 years and narrow the search to relevant information." I really hope to ask the same kinds of questions to my computer in 2035. Of course, that will require a lot of investigation, research, and some changes in the way we develop and work with computers.

I also agree with Selinger's opinion about women in engineering. I'm an engineer from Chile, and it's encouraging to see that some fields, such as biology and computer science, have large numbers of women, both as students and as professionals.

Great interview!

Vladimir Sanchez, Alta Loma, California

Plug-in Predecessors

Dorian Birsan's article, "On Plug-ins and Extensible Architectures" (March 2005), provided me with vocabulary to express these latest implementations of modularity. Plug-in concepts seem to be extensions to older ideas such as modular programming, subroutines, and objects.

They all share many of the same advantages. For example, with well-defined interface requirements, developers don't need to know the details of the kernel's operation. For decades, this idea is what has enabled development of an integrated system to proceed at multiple locations.

They also have common disadvantages, such as the impossibility of testing all combinations of modules or plug-ins for correct operation. As the author points out, though, this is more complicated in a plug-in environment because software users can often select their own collections of plug-ins from disparate sources.

I found the piece worth reading to the end.

Heidi Markovitz, Key Biscayne, Florida

We edit letters for content, style, and length. To submit a letter, e-mail us at feedback@acmqueue.com. Q

rants: feedback@acmqueue.com