Lynn Conway
Professor of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, Emerita
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

After studying physics at MIT and earning her BS (62) and MSEE (63) at Columbia
University’s School of Engineering and Applied Science, Lynn joined IBM Research
in Yorktown Heights, NY. While working on IBM’s Advanced Computing Systems
project she made foundational contributions to computer architecture. Sadly, IBM fired
Lynn as she underwent gender transition in 1968.

A gritty survivor, Lynn started her career all over again as a contract programmer in a
closeted and hidden behind the scenes

Recruited by Xerox Palo Alto Research Center (PARC) in 1973, Lynn invented scalable design rules for VLSI chip
design, became principal author of the seminal Mead-Conway text Introduction to VLSI Systems, and in 1978, while
serving as a Visiting Associate Professor of EECS at M.I.T., pioneered the immersive-teaching of these new methods.

Lynn’s methods and teachings quickly spread to over 100 universities, launching a revolution in VLSI microchip
design during the 1980’s. Back at PARC Lynn also invented and in 1979 massively demonstrated an internet-based
e-commerce infrastructure for rapid chip prototyping, thereby spawning the MOSIS System and the “fabless-design
+ silicon-foundry” industrial paradigm of modern semiconductor-chip design and manufacturing.

As Assistant Director for Strategic Computing at DARPA, Lynn next crafted the meta-architecture and led the
planning of the Strategic Computing Initiative, the Department of Defense’s major 1980’s effort to coalesce the
technology-base for future intelligent weapons systems. In 1985 she joined the University of Michigan as Professor of
EECS and Associate Dean of Engineering, quietly continuing her distinguished career. Now Professor Emerita, she
lives with her husband Charles Rogers on their 24-acre homestead in rural Michigan. They’ve been together 35 years.

As Lynn neared retirement in 1998, she faced ‘outing’ as reports about her early work at IBM began surfacing. With
a growing sense of pride in her accomplishments, she overcame her fears, quietly came out via the internet, and
gradually created a major transgender advocacy website. Translated by volunteers into many languages, her site
quickly became a beacon of hope and encouragement for gender transitioners world-wide, and a trans focal-point to
help expose those responsible for the Gender Madness in American Psychiatry.

Since Lynn “didn’t look like an engineer” back in the day, Silicon Valley’s cognoscenti were
clozeless about her accomplishments in the 1970’s. That began to change in 2012, when Lynn
published her "VLSI Reminiscences” in a special issue of IEEE Solid-State Circuits
Magazine, revealing how - closeted and hidden behind the scenes - she conceived the ideas
and orchestrated the events that swept through and reshaped an entire global industry.

Lynn is a Life Fellow of the IEEE, Fellow of the AAAS, Member of the Hall of Fellows of
the Computer History Museum, Member of the National Academy of Engineering and has
been selected for induction into the National Inventors Hall of Fame in 2023. Lynn also
holds honorary degrees from Trinity College, Illinois Institute of Technology, University of
Victoria, and University of Michigan. When awarded the James Clerk Maxwell Medal by
the IEEE and the Royal Society of Edinburgh, her citation included these words:

“Lynn Conway’s work has provided the underpinnings for innovations, discoveries and
achievements in every area of scientific and humanitarian study.”

In 2020, IBM CEO Arvind Krishna apologized on behalf of the company for IBM’s treatment of Lynn back in 1968.
Lynn was also awarded the rare and prestigious IBM Lifetime Achievement Award, signifying that she “changed the
world through technological inventions.”