[**Lynn Conway**](http://www.lynnconway.com)

*Professor of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, Emerita*

*University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.*

Earning her BS (62) and MSEE (63) at [Columbia University’s School of Engineering and Applied Science](http://engineering.columbia.edu/), Lynn joined [IBM Research in Yorktown Heights, N.Y.](https://www.research.ibm.com/labs/watson/), and while working on [IBM's Advanced Computing Systems project](http://ai.eecs.umich.edu/people/conway/Memoirs/ACS/Lynn_Conway_ACS_Reminiscences.pdf) made [foundational contributions](http://www.computer.org/web/awards/pioneer-lynn-conway) to computer architecture. Sadly, IBM fired her as she underwent gender transition in 1968.

A gritty survivor, Lynn started her career all over again as a contract programmer in a covert new identity. Advanced rapidly, she soon becoming a computer architect at Memorex, but also began decades living in fear of being 'outed' and losing her career again.

Recruited by [Xerox Palo Alto Research Center](http://www.amazon.com/Dealers-Lightning-Xerox-PARC-Computer/dp/0887308910/) (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*](http://www.edn.com/electronics-blogs/other/4307325/The-book-that-changed-everything), and in 1978, while serving as a [Visiting Associate Professor of EECS at M.I.T.](http://www.eecs.mit.edu/docs/newsletter/VLSI.pdf), pioneered [the teaching of these new methods](http://ai.eecs.umich.edu/people/conway/Memoirs/MIT/MIT_Reminiscences.pdf).

Lynn’s teachings [quickly spread](http://ai.eecs.umich.edu/people/conway/VLSI/MPCAdv/Instructors.html) to over 100 universities, [launching a revolution](http://ai.eecs.umich.edu/people/conway/Impact/FundingaRevolution.html) 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](http://ai.eecs.umich.edu/people/conway/VLSI/MPCAdv/MPCAdv.pdf), thereby spawning [the MOSIS System](http://www.computer.org/web/awards/pioneer-lynn-conway) 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](http://ai.eecs.umich.edu/people/conway/CSE/SCI/HighTechnology4-85.pdf), the Department of Defense’s major 1980's effort to expand the technology-base for modern 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](http://ai.eecs.umich.edu/people/conway/Awards/Emerita.jpg). Now Emerita, she lives with her engineer husband Charles Rogers on their [23 acre homestead](http://ai.eecs.umich.edu/people/conway/Land/Land.html) in rural Michigan. They’ve been together over 28 years.

As Lynn neared retirement, she faced ‘outing’ as stories about her early work at IBM began circulating. 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](http://www.lynnconway.com). Translated by volunteers into [many languages](http://ai.eecs.umich.edu/people/conway/conway-Translation%20status.htm), her site has become a beacon of hope and encouragement for gender transitioners world-wide.

Since Lynn “[didn’t look like an engineer](https://twitter.com/lynnconway/status/628930663593414656)” back in the day, Silicon Valley’s cognoscenti were clueless about her accomplishments in the 1970’s. That began to change in 2012, when Lynn published her ["VLSI Reminiscences"](http://ai.eecs.umich.edu/people/conway/Memoirs/VLSI/SSCM/VLSI_Reminiscences.pdf) in a special issue of *IEEE* *Solid-State Circuits Magazine*, revealing how - [closeted and hidden behind the scenes](http://ai.eecs.umich.edu/people/conway/Memoirs/VLSI/Commentaries/Covering_by_Ken_Shepard.pdf) - she conceived the ideas and orchestrated the events that swept through and reshaped an entire industry.

Fellow of the IEEE, Member of the Computer History Museum [Hall of Fellows](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d0mBjP-gBik) and the National Academy of Engineering, Lynn’s also received honorary degrees from [Trinity College](https://issuu.com/tcdigitalrepository/docs/1998winter/24) and [Illinois Institute of Technology](https://iit.edu/news/iittoday/?p=31501). Awarded the 2015 [James Clerk Maxwell Medal](http://ai.eecs.umich.edu/people/conway/Memoirs/Talks/RSE/Life_In_Stealth_of_Microchip_Genius_The_Times.pdf) by the [IEEE](https://ieeetv.ieee.org/history/2015-ieee-honors-ieee-rse-james-clerk-maxwell-medal-lynn-conway) and the [Royal Society of Edinburgh](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bw2mPAp4XGk), her [citation included](http://ai.eecs.umich.edu/people/conway/Memoirs/Talks/RSE/Maxwell_Medal_Citation_by_Barry_Shoop.pdf) these words:

*“Her influence on modern electrical engineering is deep and profound,*

 *arguably on the scale of* [*Armstrong*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edwin_Howard_Armstrong) *and* [*Steinmetz*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Proteus_Steinmetz)*.”*