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From the Editor (Editor's Note)

Gerry Boyle

CONTRIBUTORS

Claire Sykes ("Opening Doors" P. 16) is a freelance writer who lives near downtown Portland, Ore. She writes about a wide range of topics, including business and community, arts, and health. Her work has been published in hundreds of national magazines.

Jui Shrestha '07 ("Women at the Helm," P. 64), lives in Kathmandu, Nepal. She's a public opinion researcher, currently assisting the statistics bureau in planning for the Nepal Living Standards Survey. Before that, she worked on statewide polls in California, election exit polls in Kathmandu, and earthquake assistance surveys in Nepal.

Scott Lainer '87 ("Colby Confidential," P. 59) is a creative director, screenwriter, and humorist. He is the founder of Singles Day in America, lectures college students about life after graduation, and obsessively loves all things Colby.

Kardelen Koldas '15 ("Opening Doors," P. 52) is a staff writer for *Colby Magazine*. Koldas is a native of Izmir, Turkey, and holds a master's degree from the Columbia School of Journalism. Prior to returning to Mayflower Hill, she was a staff reporter for *Hurriyet*, a Turkish national daily newspaper.

Kristin Yorke '20 ("The Sound of Silence," *Colby Magazine* online) is a global studies and history major and English minor from Fair Haven, N.J. When she is not playing lacrosse on the Bill Alfond field, she is a staff writer for *Outside Colby* and an editorial assistant for *Colby Magazine*.

I remember my first brush with data science at Colby.

It was 1976, and I was an English major taking an ecology course, partly to meet my distribution requirement, but also because I was interested. The course required us to do a crude (by today's standards) piece of analysis using *the computer*.

I ventured from my usual Miller Library haunt to find this singular piece of space-age equipment and located it in a hallway in the spanking new Mudd Science Building. The computer was the size of a chest freezer with a tiny keyboard and a roll of paper that would spew out as it hammered out the data. If only you could figure out how to turn it on.

Standing alone before this mysterious machine, I searched for a switch. Or a button. Or a lever. I tapped it in random places hoping it would magically whir to life. It did not. I crouched to peer into its nooks and crannies. Nothing. The computer remained cold and silent, like a treasure-guarding door baffling Indiana Jones.

Stymied, I had to resort to problem-solving skills that any Professor Benbow-trained Shakespeare student of the time would understand. I waited for a science major to show up.

One eventually did. I watched discreetly as she found the hidden button and started the machine humming. Stepping up after her, I tapped out the assignment, which, if memory serves, involved lots of 1s and 0s. Task completed, I scurried back to familiar territory. *Hamlet* never looked so good.

Oh, how the world—and Colby—has changed. The relationship between data and scholarship, nascent in my student days, has been a long and fruitful one. Today we have more processing speed in a phone than you could harness with 10,000 of those chest freezers. And we have a universe of data at our fingertips. Being able to convert that data to knowledge is a skill needed and embraced by students of every discipline.

I point this out to make sure you read about the just-announced Data Science Initiative (P. 33) and consider this moment in time. As Professor of Computer Science Bruce Maxwell will tell you, his rapidly expanding department is no longer only for majors. With the new initiative, more students from across disciplines will be trained in coding languages. Faculty in multiple departments will receive funding for new data science courses. All of this will produce graduates who know what data can tell us, whether they're studying English or art history or economics or genomics—or ecology.

So many questions will be asked, and so many answers will be considered from so many perspectives. And no longer will an English major have to stalk a science student to join the discussion.

We're all in it together now. Hang on to your hat.

Gerry Boyle '78, P'06
Managing Editor