

The romance and reality of IT for young women

Barbara Rohde
PhD candidate
Research Centre for Gender Studies
University of South Australia

In an era where governments are extolling the virtues of becoming a 'knowledge nation' and the information technology industry declares there is a 'skills shortage' women continue to be under-represented in Information Technology (IT) in both the higher education sector and the workforce. What are the factors that are perpetuating this situation? What choices are young women making and how are their choices being mediated? And what are the implications for the VET system in Australia?

These are some of the key questions that I am exploring as part of my doctoral thesis. During the empirical phase of my research, I interviewed three groups of young women aged between 15 and 25: those currently working in IT who may or may not be accessing training; those studying IT; and those who were currently making choices about training more generally. The results have yielded some surprising findings as well as confirming other research in the area.