The following text is from a blog by Sean O’Sullivan <http://www.seanosullivan.com/>

[Careers Evening & Computers](http://www.seanosullivan.com/post/12925341054/careers-evening-computers)

Taxi Man: “What do you work at yourself buddy?”

Me : “Computers”

**Why work in computers?**

About a year ago, I was asked to take part in a careers evening for a Dublin School. It was a 5th year class, and the idea was that they were going to have a selection of people with different jobs turn up, sit at a small desk, and then the students would come around in groups and chat to each person, hear about their career, and have a chance to ask them questions.

I was there to represent “computers”, and around the hall they had doctors, lawyers, builders, nurses, pilots, architects and a range of other activities and walks of life represented.

I’ve been asked to do it again this year (different school, different format), but I thought I should jot down why I think “computers” is a totally brilliant area to work in.

By the way, what I mean by “computers” is anything to do with either designing and making them (the hardware) or making them do something useful (the software). Sometimes people combine both of course, but sometimes not. And yes, I am typically including “internet” or web businesses in my thinking, especially where they are offering some kind of service over the web (as opposed to shipping goods).

In no particular order then, here’s why computers is a killer 21st Century Career

**Portability and Travel**

Whether you work in hardware or software, it turns out that you can pretty much work in the “computer business” all over the world. This can be a great thing, for a variety of reasons. So for example, if I decided to go and work “in computers” in Australia, or perhaps China, or the US, then many facets of the job, from the point of view of what I need to know from a technical perspective, will be remarkably consistent, if not the same, from place to place. As a result, it can be a great industry to work in if you plan to travel, or want to leave yourself the option of travelling while sating in the same kind of career.

And in software companies, and especially software companies based in Ireland, there’s often an opportunity to travel, either because the company is multinational (Facebook, LinkedIn, Microsoft and Google all have large bases here in Ireland), or because the company is an Irish startup, selling and promoting its software and services worldwide. Many software startups in Ireland are export-oriented, as the Irish market is typically too small to sustain certain kinds of software or internet businesses.

**Pervasiveness**

One of the amazing things that has happened over the last 30 years or so, is that computers, in some form or another, are now EVERYWHERE. Your phone turned in to a smartphone and quietly became a computer. Your car now has more compute power on board than NASA had when they put men on the moon. Pixar movies are made using humungous amounts of computing and software resources. And so on, and so on. The things we engage with day to day: music, movies, phones, cars, twitter, Facebook, Google - all in some way have computers stitched in to their fabric and in many cases cannot exist without them. As a result, “working in computers” can mean contributing to the rendering of Toy Story, adding a feature to Facebook, helping create the next Angry Birds, or finding a way that local Government could be more efficient and responsive to its Citizens.

They’re everywhere - and as a result - if your interests lie in the Arts, in politics, journalism, engineering, fashion, retail, or whatever - there’s often an option to work in that filed, but with “computers” as part of your key “thing”. Steve Jobs described Apple as a company that works at the intersection of technology and the liberal arts. You could do that too. As an aside, talented user interface or “user experience” designers - people who can suggest the “right” way to have an app behave on your phone or in the browser, are currently some of the most sought after talents around, And these guys are \*exactly\* at the intersection of liberal arts and technology - they combine knowledge of the platform (say, the iPhone) with knowledge of design, colour, human nature and more, to arrive an an app - an “experience” - that “just feels right”.

**Variety**

As a follow-on to the last point - there’s an amazing variety of work roles and careers available in what people call “computers”. While everyone tends to focus on either the software geeks writing the code that makes the latest greatest app or the people in white coats making computer chips, the truth is that a career in computers can also involve the full life cycle of a product: the people who design it are sometimes different to the people to sell it, market it, support it, figure out how to integrate and install it, and so on. So there are a whole load of interesting careers based around (for example) marketing technology whether hardware or software, or deciding and controlling how and what sort of product should be built next (product managers), or explaining what they hell some new startup is doing and why it’s better (PR and Communications). And so on. So remember that, it’s not all writing Java code on your laptop in the cafe or your bedroom :-)

**Pay**

Yep. In general, it pays reasonably well. Are there exceptions? Yes of

course. But in general, the world of computers is what your Mammy might have called “a good job”. It often pays well, and has great prospects, either for more cash (if that’s your thing), or more interest, education and progress.

**If you change your mind**

Lots of people start out doing something and end up doing something else. OK, generally, what we call “the professions” don’t. Your typical Doctor or Lawyer tends not to become a bee-farmer (apart from it being a part time hobby). But in many other careers, people often change their mind, their preferences, their outlook on life, and want to do something or try something else. Turns out, if this happens to be you, then a background in computers could potentially be very useful to you. This is partly because of the variety / pervasiveness points I made above : computers are everywhere - so you can often use that as an “in” to a new field. But also because some of the abilities that you often have, or perhaps obtain when working with computers can be applied elsewhere: an ability to break problems in to smaller problems, figuring out the logical order in which to do things, diagnosing why something isn’t working, proposing an elegant solution to a multi-faceted challenge - these are all skills that work in many fields, from overseas aid to film-making.

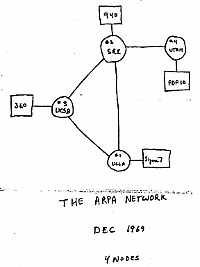
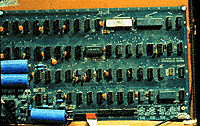
**Constant change, constant learning**

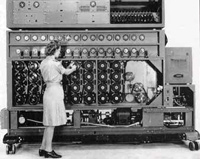
The computer industry is young. As a result, it is still subject to massive changes in technology and in the “power base” of the important players around the world. This makes it endlessly stimulating and constantly changing. Many of the key names that dominate our perception of “computers” today didn’t exist 15 years ago (Google, twitter, Facebook);many that were the giants of their day have disappeared entirely (Digital, Compaq, Borland) and others that were around then have adapted and changed (Microsoft, Apple).

**Fun**

It just is. Fun. For many of the reasons mentioned above. Constant change, cool technology, Pandora’s box of personality types working in the business, lurking opportunity to perhaps change the world if you get it right, and so on, and so on. It’s like Orson Welles said about making films:

This is the biggest electric train set a boy ever had





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