Podcast Name: *ACM ByteCast*
Episode: Radia Perlman

The *ACM ByteCast* podcast is a series from the Association for Computing Machinery, which is the world's largest education and scientific computing society. The podcast features conversations with researchers, practitioners, and innovators at the intersection of computing research and practice about their experiences, lessons learned, and visions for the future of computing. In this episode, host Jessia Bell interviews Radia Perlman. Radia is a computer scientist and researcher in the field of networking, and she wrote the algorithm that powers STP, or Spanning Tree Protocol. She currently works for Dell Technologies designing network and security technology.

For the first part of the conversation, Jessica and Radia talk about Radia's background. Radia was an unlikely addition to the world of computer science, as she has historically talked about "hating computers." She talks about her strengths in science, math, and logic, as well as her unhappiness over the fact that she was the best student in her classes during her formative years. Moving forward, Radia recounts her first steps into programming, her happenstance introduction to networking in graduate school, and the early days of her career in the computing field. She explains how she developed a particular interest in network resilience, in which she sees something that might surprise many observers of her work: a great deal of simplicity.

Jessica is also curious about the shape Radia's work has taken over time. Radia reveals the irony in the fact that she is most famous for the spanning tree algorithm, which was a hack that she thought was a bad idea. She shares her history with ethernet, her long-weekend accomplishment, and the value of simplicity over complexity. In response to Jessica's question of what Radia thinks is missing from computer science curricula or from the industry overall, Radia turns her attention to critical thinking. A healthy culture of critical thinking in the industry requires safety to ask questions, and the industry will be helped by the creativity and innovation offered by those who are intellectually curious. Jessica and Radia conclude their conversation with a consideration of mentorship and a look to the future of the field of computing.

Links:
Learn more about [Radia Perlman](.).
Learn more about the Association for Computing Machinery's Practitioners' Board at [acm.org](.).
Learn more about the ACM ByteCast at [acm.org/bytecast](.).