

Meet a Member

My name is Gina Fowler, and I have been an active IAAP member since 2005.



I joined IAAP as I wanted to belong to an association of great, like-minded individuals, who shared their wisdom and great knowledge willingly.

I entered the work force while still in high-school. My father was the Office Manager of McGavins back then, and I worked summers and weekends either in the bakery, sticking my thumbs (accidentally) in the hamburger and hotdogs buns, or in the Office stamping invoices with the client information for drivers to take on their routes (yes, they delivered bread to your house back then!!) Once I graduated from High School, I worked in the front office with calculators the size of typewriters, and computers who's hard-drives were two feet across (no, we were not metric back then!) It took days to back-up data. I used to dial-up our Langley Office and place the phone hand-set in a cradle to transmit the data. There wasn't e-mail used then so I had to use a telex machine to send information to our head Office. At one point we moved from a manual typewriter to the selectric, which had interchangeable font-balls and a mini memory.



While working at McGavins, my "office" experience came in handy at high school. I was often called upon by the Principal to help with the gestetner machine to make enough copies of exams for the students – this was before photocopiers were the norm. Oh how times have changed!

After many years with McGavins, I met my husband and we got married overseas in Holland. When we returned, I went to work for the University of Alberta (U of A) . For almost ten years, I worked in the Fees Division of the Comptroller's Office dealing with students and their loans as well as calculating their tuition fees. Adjustments and payments were entered on the computer, using a monochrome orange screen. Then we upgraded to a monochrome green screen! Multitasking (more than one software open) was still very new. There was some e-mail (Eudora and Pegasus) but it wasn't widely used. Some software used then was, Quattro Pro, WordPerfect, Corel, PageMaker, and Lotus 1,2,3 to name a few. We saved our files to 5-½ inch discs called 'floppys'.



Holland



While working at the U of A, my husband attended night school. He applied and was accepted into the MBA program at the University of Western Ontario (UWO). With our two small sons (aged 2 and 3), we moved to London, Ontario. Laptops weighed 25 lbs and were the size of a small suitcase (I still have it!!). We used DOS and Windows 3.1 and discs were 3 ½ inches. While my husband worked toward his MBA degree, I worked for UWO as a temporary, or floater employee, being sent from one faculty to another. I worked in the faculties of Medicine, Science, and Agriculture and the Department of University Relations and Information (DURI), as well as the Western News, a campus newspaper. I also worked in the UWO research Hospital in the multi-organ transplant unit. Computers, photocopiers and adding machines were becoming faster, smaller and readily available, and e-mail was becoming more common.



When a hiring freeze was placed on the UWO campus, I found a position with Price Waterhouse in the tax division. They used Lotus notes and WordPerfect and later moved to WORD. Five years later, when Price Waterhouse and Coopers & Lybrand merged in 1999, my family and I moved back to Edmonton and I worked for the new organization PriceWaterhouseCoopers (PwC). We shared our printers with approx 10 other staff members. My interest in technology and software made me a valued employee and while working with taxes, I also worked on proposals and PowerPoint presentations. The color copier was a much used resource.

After nearly ten years with PwC, I went on a 'fishing' expedition as to what other career opportunities were out there. I sent my resume to the Auditor General of Alberta, Fred Dunn, and former Partner with PriceWaterhouseCoopers. I was hired and eventually became his Assistant. After a few years I was promoted to Supervisor. Recently, I've been moved into the data integrity section of Corporate Services. I started at OAG eight years ago, and those years have gone by very quickly.

When I started working for OAG, I was like a kid in a candy store. They had the latest software and hardware; large flat-screen color monitor, I had my very own printer, access to three color printers and a fast computer. E-mailing using Outlook is now the norm. Discs and CDs were quickly replaced with USB keys, with much larger capacity, and a fraction of the size compared to the two-foot size discs used when I



entered the workforce. Photocopiers not only print in color, but they print photos, e-mail and convert documents into .pdf files. We use video-conference technology with our Calgary Office and other clients that have the capabilities. Where I once transferred files via telephone, we now transfer files via e-mail or secure sites. I can't even find a typewriter anymore! Although we still have phones on our desks many folks now have blackberries that are multi-functional (i.e. phone, internet, e-mail) and technology is getting faster, quicker, smarter and in some cases smaller (nano-pod).

If I had to share something with someone coming into the workforce it would be education and networking. Always keep up with the latest technology. Keep in touch with friends and co-workers. Along the way, don't forget to pursue some of your own interests. Between raising our two sons, my husband and I enjoyed restoring his 1976 Dodge 4x4 truck and my 1975 Mercedes. I enjoy photography and have had several photos chosen to hang in the Harcourt and Kaasa Galleries over the past few years.

I've found IAAP offers everything I'm looking for in a professional organization. They have education at their monthly meetings and one can pursue a Certified Professional Secretary or Certified Administrative Professional (CPS, CAP) designation. Just as important, there's networking with great, like-minded individuals, who share their wisdom and great knowledge willingly.

