



BACK TO THE FUTURE

Bauer Professor Teaches Technology with a Nod to the Past

By Amanda Sebesta & Jessica Navarro

Budapest native Emese Felvegi didn't need to speak a word of English in her childhood home. Her family spoke Hungarian.

But that didn't stop the curious youngster from learning the language — repeat viewings of *Star Wars* and a passion for The Beatles, along with her more formal education, expanded her vocabulary and her worldview.

Now a clinical assistant professor in Bauer College's Department of Decision & Information Sciences, Felvegi applies the same thirst for knowledge (and affinity for pop culture from her childhood) as she teaches her students. Her undergraduate MIS 3300 class introduces students to computers and management information systems.

Most students come to class with an awareness of the importance of technology to their personal lives, Felvegi said, but not necessarily for business or social good.

"I'm trying to help students pay attention to the world around them and the technology they can leverage for their benefit," she said.

She does that by assigning projects that teach students the practical uses of desktop and cloud-based applications. Felvegi also brings in frequent guest speakers from local businesses and Bauer student organizations, helping students put the tools they study into context.

In the last year, she has taken several student groups to The Printing Museum in Houston's Montrose neighborhood, giving them a historical perspective on information systems. There, students can print on a replica Gutenberg press and a 19th-century Columbian iron handpress and try out a linotype machine.

"Students leave more mindful of what's in their pockets, what potential lies in using all these devices," Felvegi said. "The experience can give them a greater sense of progress in the digital age as well."



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When she isn't teaching, Felvegi continues to learn herself. She partners with Kathy Matthew, a friend and mentor from the University of Houston-Clear Lake, where Felvegi earned three degrees in educational leadership, instructional technology and reading. They collaborate on research that explores the digital divide and how technology impacts a person's social future and opportunities. Felvegi also mentors student research outside the classroom on student engagement, civility and ethics in the digital age.

Before coming to Houston, Felvegi earned a master's degree at the largest university in Hungary (Eötvös Loránd University counts multiple Nobel Prize winners among its alumni). She was then immediately "thrown in the deep end to either sink or swim — I had to adapt to new tools and technologies very quickly."

She served as project manager and assessment specialist on the national implementation of large-scale international comparative assessment projects for the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement.

There, Felvegi developed online training platforms and assessment frameworks, and published national research reports for policymakers and the general public.

"My job allowed me to attend workshops and conferences in New Zealand, Australia, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Sweden, where I was able to network with accomplished scholars and practitioners in my field," she said.

She set out to run her own consulting business in Budapest and worked with femtosecond lasers and environmental conservationists, continuing to work with government agencies as she started her career.

"I learned a lot about myself but I also found a gap of all these things I could still learn," she said.

On Another Note

WHO INSPIRES YOU?

Here, Clinical Assistant Professor Emese Felvegi shares the women who inspire her and her thoughts on where the tech industry stands in bridging the gender gap.

"The Internet has reshaped how we connect as people and how we engage with businesses. While gender remains a divisive issue online as well, new technologies can level the playing field. We have Megan Smith serving as the U.S. chief technology officer. Facebook, Yahoo!, IBM, HP, YouTube and Facebook all have female CEOs or COOs, in an era where STEM fields need role models for younger generations."

Ada Lovelace
Author and
Mathematician

Grace Hopper
Computer
Scientist

Dr. Mae Jemison
Astronaut
and Futurist

Dr. Brené Brown
UH Research
Professor of
Social Work and
Public Speaker

Felicia Day
CCO,
Geek & Sundry