

Generations of STEM: Margaret Hamilton

Software Engineer

Inspired by a professor at her college to study math, Margaret moved to Boston with the intent of graduate studies at Brandeis in abstract mathematics. However, while working at MIT, she started working in meteorology using software to predict weather. Margaret moved on to the MIT Lincoln Lab, writing software to identify enemy

aircraft. Following that project, she moved over to what later became Charles Stark Draper Laboratory and led the team writing software for the Apollo missions. While doing this work, she coined the term software engineering, to elevate her team's work equal to that of the engineers on the rest of the Apollo project. (The photo above includes the stack of navigation software that she and her team developed for the Apollo mission.)

Hamilton's focus on Apollo was software that allowed the computer to recognize errors and prioritize tasks. It was this function that helped carry Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin to the Moon in 1969. Margaret later formed her own company and was also awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2016 by President Obama.



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