EMERITUS PROFESSOR PETER C POOLE   FTSE FACS FBCS
BSc BEd (Hons) (Qld) PhD (Syd)

Emeritus Professor Peter Poole is one of the leading pioneers in Australia in the field of computing. Educated at the Mackay State High School where he was the Dux in 1948, he entered UQ in 1949 on a government scholarship to become a high school teacher of Science and Mathematics. He graduated with a BSc and a Dip. Ed as well as completing BEd (Hons). He returned to academia in 1957, in the School of Physics at the University of Sydney where Professor Harry Messel offered him an opportunity to undertake postgraduate studies in Physics. Here, he encountered the electronic digital computer, SILLIAC, one of the first such machines installed in an Australian university. In 1958, after successfully completing the MSc Qualifying, Poole was appointed as a Teaching Fellow and enrolled in an MSc. He joined the Cosmic Ray Air Shower Group led by Professor CBA McCusker who later became his PhD supervisor. During the period 1958-63, he made extensive use of SILLIAC, developing programs and databases.

In 1964, he was awarded a PhD for his studies on "Variations in the Arrival Rates of Extensive Air Showers" and was appointed a Lecturer in the Basser Department of Computing in the School of Physics. In 1965, Dr Poole left Australia to take up a position of Senior Scientific Officer with the Culham Fusion Laboratory of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA) where he established a new research group in Computer Systems (CSRG) with a mission to explore how computers could best be used to assist the physicists and engineers to build a nuclear fusion reactor. In 1966, Dr Poole embarked on a project to design and develop the Culham Online Terminal Access Network (COTAN) that allowed laboratory staff to access the central computer from remote locations thus improving the productivity of the researchers. COTAN Vs 1 was released for use by Culham staff in 1967 and the system was later installed and used at a number of universities and research laboratories in the United Kingdom.

It was 1969 when Dr Poole was promoted to Principal Scientific Officer with the UKAEA and his research collaboration with Professor W M Waite of the Department of Electrical Engineering University of Colorado saw the development of systems software that was both portable and adaptable. By 1971, Dr Poole was promoted to Senior Principal Scientific Officer and his research group CSRG had increased in size and had become internationally renowned.

In 1972, Dr Poole moved to the USA as Associate Professor in the Department of Computer Science at the University of Colorado involving himself in the development and presentation of Advanced Courses in "Software Engineering" and "Compiler Construction". In 1975, he returned to Australia to take up the Foundation Chair of Computer Science at the University of Melbourne (UoM). He was appointed Head of the department until 1990 when he was appointed Assistant Vice-Chancellor (Information Technology). Under his leadership during this time, the department became the largest in the Faculty of Engineering and offered a modern computer science curriculum at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels. A notable achievement by Professor Poole and Robert Elz, one of the departmental programmers in the early 80s was the establishment of a data link to the USA that enabled Australian researchers to exchange email with the users of overseas networks; a forerunner of the modern Internet.

Other positions held at the UoM included Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Science and Head of the School of Information Technology and Electrical Engineering (MU), until the end of 1992 when he retired from UoM. The title of Professor Emeritus was awarded to him in recognition of his contributions to the university over a 17 year period. In 1993 Professor Poole took up the position of Dean of the School of Information Technology at Bond University, where he strengthened the relationship between the university and the local community by organising and presenting free half-day seminars about the Internet. In 1997 he chaired a working group set up by the Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering (ATSE) to develop a strategic plan for Information Technology research in Australia and retired from Bond at the end of that year.

Awards and fellowships include Fellow of the British Computer Society for services to computing in the UK (1970); Fellow of the Australian Computer Society for services to computing in Australia (1984); Fellow of ATSE for services to the IT industry by strengthening its links with universities (1990); IFIP Silver Core for services to the International Federation of Information Processing (1995); Premier's Award for Individual Contribution to Information Technology in Queensland (1999) and Centenary Medal for Services to the Australian Community in Information Technology (2002).

In a career spanning over fifty years and three continents, he has given outstanding service to his country, not only in academia and industry but also to the community at large. He is highly respected internationally for his contributions to the discipline. In 2010, he was inducted into the Pearcey Hall of Fame.