

MEDIA Release

IT girls prove chic beats geek

SIXTEEN of the IT industry's hottest young female professionals have embarked on a mission to change the image of their industry in the minds of teenage girls.

The team of 20-somethings, who look more *Sex and the City* than *Star Trek*, have opened their lives in a new book *Tech Girls are Chic, not Geek* to be distributed to high-schools nationally.

The book is co-edited by Griffith University researcher Jenine Beekhuyzen, who juggles her PhD study into online music piracy with her small business as a jewellery designer, and Rebecca Dorries, a project manager at an international airline.

"The image is terrible – every IT person in the media is a coke-bottle-glasses-wearing geek hiding in a lab doing endless programming," Jenine said.

"It just doesn't reflect the reality of our lives so we decided to get out there and tell our stories. Most of us are 'girly' girls – we love shopping, music and hanging out."

Jenine said technology had evolved much faster than the profile of IT jobs.

"The careers we are doing now didn't exist when we were at high school, and it will be the same for today's students."

"There's a prevailing image of repetitive desk-based, solitary work, but it's actually all about communicating. Much of our time is spent finding out what clients' businesses do, and finding creative solutions."

She said on top of the rapidly-expanding internet commerce and entertainment industry, IT was the backbone of everything from film, television and music to the hospitality, recruitment, airline and travel industry.

"The book itself couldn't exist without technology in publishing - our participants live in different states, and haven't even all met!"

The group spent three years canvassing IT corporations, universities, industry associations and government departments fundraising to enable the book to be distributed without cost to female high-school students.

"We didn't want it to be a lecture – it profiles our careers, but includes fun stuff, such as short fiction. The format is more glossy magazine or 'girls night in' - the sort of book careers teachers can distribute and it will actually be read!"

The book will be launched the book on International Womens' Day, March 8 at Griffith University.

For more information check out www.techgirlsarechic.org