

Seven Reasons to Shave Your Head and Three Reasons Not to: The Bald Truth

Many of these monthly missives have addressed the different ways ACM is working to change the image of computing professionals. This month, in the spirit of April Fool's Day, we root out the ACM President's effort to change that image one person at a time—starting at the top.

In 2003, after years of watching my skin triumph over my hair for dominance of my scalp, I surrendered by removing all surviving strands. In extensive discussions, I found that we of the shiny head fraternity have many experiences in common. Based on this collected wisdom, I offer a fair and unbiased analysis of the positives and negatives of baldness from a man's perspective. While I believe many of these points also apply to women, we won't be sure until we see Sinéad O'Connor's "Forum" letter.

Let's look at the negative first, with **Three Reasons Not to Shave Your Head:**

1. You have a full head of naturally colored hair.

Male-pattern baldness and age-related graying limit this reason, so enjoy it while you can.

2. There is more to sunburn in summer and more to chill in winter.

Hair is Mother Nature's furry little hat, so removing it implies wearing a real hat or adding sunscreen. The good news is that it just takes seconds to add sunscreen to a hairless scalp.

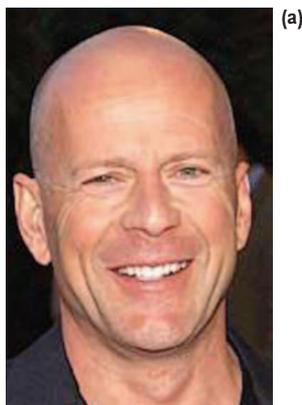
3. Initially, you may bump your head.

Since you don't have eyes in the back of your head, your hair's sense of touch is your head's early warning system. Until you stop relying on it, your head may take a few lumps. Note that in a collision-rich environ-



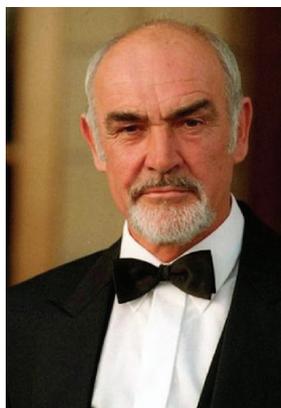
Figure 1. ACM's President (a) before (b) after.

President's Letter



(a)

Figure 2 The bald and the brave. (a) Bruce Willis, (b) Sean Connery, and (c) Indy meets his match (temporarily) in a scene from *Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark*.



(b)

ment, a hat can play that warning role.

On the positive side, here are **Seven Reasons to Shave Your Head**:

1. Women think you're younger.

The amount and color of hair is a primary indicator of a man's age, and the bald cut is popular with young men. Thus, you both remove the major age clue and adopt a cool, young haircut. The average estimate from female friends is that I shaved 10 years off my apparent age (see Figure 1).

2. Men think you look tougher.

A story makes this point. A fellow player at my weekly soccer match who didn't recognize me complained aloud "what idiot invited the hard ass." That remark made my day.

Bald actors are often cast in macho roles, like Bruce Willis and Sean Connery. Movie tough guys are often bald. (Remember the bald German mechanic who out-boxed Indiana Jones until the propeller stopped the match?) Such virile film images shape society's view of

baldies (see Figure 2).

3. You never need to comb your hair. Ever.

It doesn't matter if you drive a convertible, wear a motorcycle helmet, walk in the rain, or even pull a sweater over your head; there are no more bad hair days.

4. It's the only good-looking, do-it-yourself haircut.

You save the hassle and cost of going to the barber and buying men's hair products. Moreover, most alternatives are less manly: hair dye, comb-overs, implants, wigs, baldness cures, and so on.

5. Shaving technology has improved.

State-of-the-art shaving tools have rapidly advanced in the last several years. Triple-, quadruple- and even quintuple-bladed razors give a close shave while making it unlikely to nick your scalp, and it appears impossible to cut yourself with a cordless electric shaver. This was important to me because I don't want to go to work with little bits of toilet paper stuck to my head.

6. Showers are quicker, so is grooming.

It might surprise you to discover how much shower time is spent on hair: washing, conditioning, drying, and combing. Without hair, showers take just a minute or two. Hence, the bald cut saves time in your daily routine. Moreover, you don't need to shave your head every day, since the hair on your head grows more slowly than the hair on your face. Oddly enough, some experts think the hair on your head grows more slowly in some seasons than in others [1, 2].

7. Finally, no worries about hair loss.

For the first time in a man's life, you look forward to getting balder, as it saves time! **C**

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2. Randall, V.A. and Ebling F.J. Seasonal changes in human hair growth. *Br. J. Dermatol.* 124, 2 (Feb. 1991), 146-151.

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