

Digital leaders blame schools for lack of female role models in tech

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The role that schools play in nurturing creative talent was at the centre of an audience-led digital debate in Birmingham this week.

Leading figures in [media](#) and technology from across the globe gathered at Birmingham City University's annual Rethink Media conference on Wednesday 18 March to address the future of the digital landscape and the challenges facing the sector.

"Schools need to fix the fact that technology is not being made aspirational for females", urged Talk Talk's Head of Digital, Rahul Chakkara. "Half of the talent is being lost at school level."

A recent survey conducted by the manufacturers of Cadbury, Oreo and Kenco found that a third of 14-18 year-olds are being pushed into non-STEM subjects. Only one in five A-level physics students are female, a proportion that hasn't improved in 20 years.

Rethink Media host and Gadget Show presenter Jason Bradbury emphasised that for the digital landscape to move forwards, there needs to be an appreciation that arts and technology go hand in hand. "Schools need to be concentrating on STEAM, with the A being for arts, rather than just focusing on STEM, so that we can address the issues facing the creative and tech industries too", said Bradbury.

"If you think we've seen massive technology advances in the last 10 years, the next 10 will be like 1000 years", he added.

Bradbury and Chakkara joined former Google director Frank Golding and BBC's Director of Future Media Ralph Rivera who both led keynote discussions on the technological advances we may see in the near future and the BBC's current priorities.

Speaking on BBC Three's move to online, Rivera said: "We're going to be the first broadcaster in the world to shut down a successful TV channel and go online only. It'll allow us to engage with the audience in a way that we haven't before. Engaging with people is not about the [technology](#) or the strategy, it's about culture."

Other speakers at this year's event included vlogging sensations Lily Pebbles and Anna Gardner, who both draw in over 1 million video views to their YouTube channels each month.

The event formed part of Birmingham Digital Week, a week-long series of events running until 20 March which highlight Birmingham's burgeoning digital sector.

Provided by Birmingham City University

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