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Azqa's Journey To Summer Internship At CERN, Switzerland

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Written by Umer Sohail | October 26, 2015 | 0

WRITTEN BY AZQA NADEEM

Many people are not aware of it but CERN is not only a sanctuary for Physicists but also the birth place of the World Wide Web, which makes it an equally prestigious place for Computer scientists as well.

My journey started over a year ago when I applied for both **Summer@EPFL internship program hosted at École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL) and CERN Summer student program, both in Switzerland.** I was selected for both the programs, but due to some personal reasons I chose EPFL; hoping to someday work at CERN too. I spent two incredible months in Switzerland, where I learnt so much that it couldn't be described in words.

A year later, I had the opportunity to apply for both these internships again and luckily, I got selected for both of them out of a pool of *1600 students* from all around the globe per program! Although my experience at EPFL was nothing less than a mesmerizing dream, I decided to go ahead with CERN Openlab internship so that I could bag a new set of experiences.

"This year, CERN Openlab selected 40 students out of 1600 from all over the world. For the past 2 years, no Pakistani has been selected for this program but this year, two Pakistanis made it. The applications close by the end of February each year. "
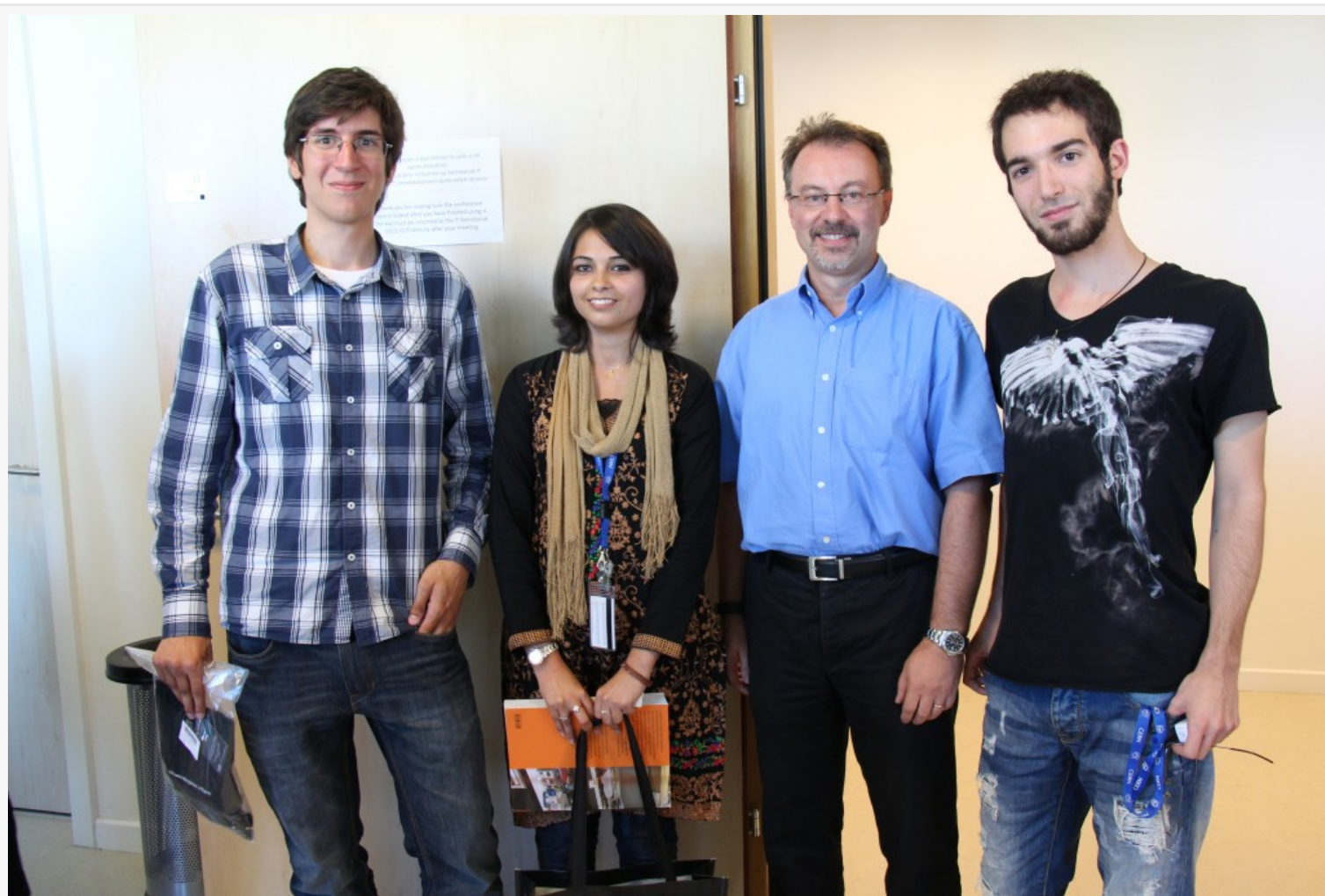

Azqa – CMS

Group Photo

The first few weeks were tough as I had trouble adjusting to the new environment, but soon after that I pulled my sleeves up and reminded myself that I had come to CERN for a reason. I regrouped myself towards the realization that I had to face the challenges – no matter how hard – fight the odds and achieve something big out of this experience!

Starting next day, everything seemed like a new opportunity to me. My roomies turned out to be the best people I've ever met and all the other interns were incredible people, some belonging to countries I've never even heard of. We planned epic trips to Chamonix, Zermatt, Interlaken, Gruyeres and Lausanne; had crazy adventures with people who have now become my best friends; cooked, shopped and danced… In short, made a lot of beautiful memories with people from all over the world!

Lightning talk winners with CERN Openlab head, Alberto Di Meglio

I took part in my life's first ever hackathon – CERN Summer student Webfest and my team won the "Best Design" award. My lightning talk won the "Best Lightning Talk 2015" award among all the 40 CERN Openlab interns. I was working with the security team with some top-notch researchers at CERN. My project required me to research on some state-of-the-art problems, for which you cannot even find help on the internet (Imagine that!). It not only challenged me to critically analyze the information I already possessed, but also gave me a new passion for research. We attended many IT talks that somehow always managed to become a fusion of Physics and Computer science, every time in a different perspective. Other than the trips we organized ourselves, CERN Openlab team also took us to places where we otherwise couldn't go. The best of all trips was the visit to Zurich, where we visited Google, Opensystems and ETH (a very prestigious university in all of Europe).

Chilling at Gruyere

We also visited the different experiments at CERN, like the AMS which is a module on the International Space Station looking for dark matter, CERN Control Center which is the heart of CERN, SM18 which is a testing facility for detector magnets, and the Antimatter Factory. On our last week, CMS – one of the four major experiments at the LHC – got shutdown because of some technical reasons. Hence we were lucky enough and got the chance to go down the tunnels and see the detector in flesh and bones.

Needless to say, the nine weeks that I spent at CERN transformed me into a better version of me – both personally and professionally. One very important lesson that I have learnt is that if you surround yourself with smart people, it truly does have a very positive impact on you. Therefore, I would recommend this once-in-a-lifetime-opportunity to everyone reading this blog. You will not regret it for even a second!

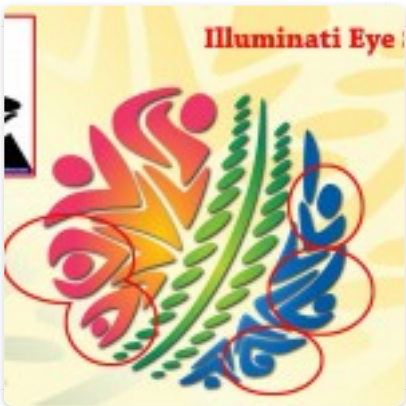SKY HIGH at Thevoid

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