In anticipation of this special event, I visited the Poet’s Corner, a large online database of poets and poetry. I found it enlightening to realize that the four persons who put this collection together and continue to maintain and expand it are a software engineer, a computer programmer, a former physics major, and an electronics technician who works for Motorola.

They are not unusual:

Michelangelo was both a poet and an engineer, among his many talents, and he wrote a tongue-in-cheek poem about how painting the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel destroyed his posture.

Robert Bridges, poet laureate of Great Britain during the first half of the 20th century, was a practicing physician. He is one of several published poets who were also physicians.

Robert Louis Stevenson, who wrote A Child’s Garden of Verses in addition to his many novels, trained to be an engineer.

Benjamin Banneker, a mathematician who designed the street grid for the District of Columbia, wrote poems that were mathematical puzzles, and even though he put no numbers in the poem itself, he would pose a problem that had a numerical answer.

Lewis Carroll, who wrote those amusing poems in Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass was also a mathematician.

Sir Walter Raleigh, whom we know as a scientist and explorer of the New World, was also a romantic poet who wrote of love.

Alexander Wilson, the Scottish-born American ornithologist who published the nine-volume American Ornithology around 1800, wrote poems about the birds he studied.

Frank Stanford, a contemporary American poet, studied civil engineering at the University of Arkansas and supported himself by working as a surveyor while he wrote poetry. Other poets, including our own Thomas Lux, have elegized him and paid tribute to his creative power.

So it makes perfect sense that Georgia Tech should have not just one, but two endowed chairs in poetry.

The Welsh poet Dylan Thomas once said, “A good poem is a contribution to reality. The world is never the same once a good poem has been added to it. A good poem helps to change the shape of the universe, helps to extend everyone’s knowledge of himself and the world around him.”

At Georgia Tech, we not only recognize the truth of those words for poetry, but we also would claim the same for science and technology. Just like poetry and other arts, science and technology involve a lot of imagination and creativity, and help to change the shape of the universe. And at Georgia Tech, we believe that the arts and technology enrich each other. The arts humanize technology, and technology enlivens the arts.