



WHY HAVE A VIE?

At the Computer History Museum we are fortunate in having a dedicated community of volunteers – experienced docents, new docents, restorers and many, many more. We “work” at different times on different days on different things.

Each of us has experiences, stories, questions and suggestions.

This vehicle will attempt to provide bridges for us to communicate, to learn, to share and to do our “jobs” better.

In particular we hope that the “Questions” column will be helpful. Perhaps, in some cases it will be somewhat like a blog, with many people weighing in on a topic – docents, curators, restorers and staff.

So, please send your questions, stories, suggestions and computer related jokes to share with our community. (That includes a better name for this vehicle, a better motto, and layout recommendations.)

Jim Strickland
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New Answers

Q: At the back of the Analog gallery there is a picture of a young woman sitting on a huge (I assume) analog computer. What is the story of this picture?



A: Regarding the large photo mural in *Analog*. Below is the text from the Call Bulletin with more information about it. There isn't a good place for a sign but the information will be in the on-line version of Revolution..

Hope this helps.

Alex Bochanek Curator

"Huge Electronic Brain, ten tons of it, which is destined to monitor the design, development, and testing of jet engines of the future, even before they are built, left San Francisco International Airport today (July 6) for Indianapolis and the Allison Division of General Motors. A product of the Berkeley Division of Beckman Instruments, Inc., the analog computer system was loaded on an American Airlines DC-6A Airfreighter, grouped in 29 metal cabinets, six feet high and spanning a width of nearly 60 feet. It is scheduled for arrival tomorrow before noon." Call Bulletin Library, 7/6/56

(The Call Bulletin is a now-defunct San Francisco newspaper.)

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Map Quest really needs to start their directions on # 5. I'm pretty sure I know how to get out of my neighborhood.

STORIES

Do you have a favorite story? Did you just learn something new that you want to share. Even if you think, "Everybody knows that ...", please let us hear from you.

- A few days ago, I was showing SAGE to two Russian visitors. After discussing it, I said, "There are many who say that it (Sage) would not have worked against a real attack."
He said, "Oh that's alright, our bombs would not have worked either."

Jim Strickland

- The sign on our STRETCH says, contributed by Brigham Young University. Somehow, I don't think of BYU as being a supercomputer site – a fine university, yes, but not one which would support a supercomputer.

So, I did a little research. It turns out that our STRETCH is number six of the nine which were installed. It was purchased by Mitre in 1961 and ran until 1970. (Mitre is non-profit organization which manages government computer projects.)

In 1971, BYU in Provo Utah, got it virtually free

when Mitre declared it surplus. Later, BYU also got the Los Alamos STRETCH (the first ever delivered) and used it for parts. BYU employees rebuilt and maintained the system through its ten year life at the university.

Jim Strickland

- At the acceptance test of STRETCH at Los Alamos, a problem was very difficult to find. It turned out to be a piece of solder in the oil coolant for the core memory. Since the oil was in motion it carried the solder around and shorted a different core every time. The problem was cured by the (only time ever) process of giving the computer an oil change.

Jim Strickland

- In a recent Nova on PBS, the IBM 701 was credited as the first computer to enter into the artificial intelligence race. It was "taught" to play checkers and to learn from its mistakes by Arthur L. Samuel (1901 – 1990) who was a pioneer in the field of computer gaming and artificial intelligence. Samuel worked for IBM at the time and later taught at Stanford for many years.

Jim Strickland

Upcoming Events

- ◆ Feb 23, Wednesday – Fortieth anniversary of SPICE (Simulation Program with Integrated Circuit Emphasis), circuit simulator. SPICE was born as a class project at UC Berkeley and first released in 1971. You will get to witness a roundtable discussion of those responsible for the creation and world-wide propagation of this invaluable and universally used software program. Topics will include the origins, evolution, and future of SPICE, and its seminal role as early open-source software.
 - ◆ 6 PM Reception (Free)
 - ◆ 7 PM Program (Free)
- ◆ March 6, Sunday - Top Secret Rosies: The Female Computers of World War II
 - ◆ 4 p.m. Film Begins (Free)
 - ◆ 6 p.m. Revolution Tour
- ◆ March 9, Wednesday -Author Jane McGonigal in Conversation with NPR's Laura Sydell. Reality is Broken: Why Games Make Us Better and How They Can Change the World
 - ◆ 6 p.m. Member Reception (Museum Members Only)
 - ◆ 7 p.m. Program
- ◆ April 6, Wednesday - In The Plex: How Google Thinks, Works, and Shapes Our Lives. Author Steven Levy in Conversation with NPR's Laura Sydell
 - ◆ 6 p.m. Member Reception (Museum Members Only)
 - ◆ 7 PM Program (Free)

There is great need for a sarcasm font.

FACTS AND FACTOIDS

Factoid (Oxford English Dictionary) "something which becomes accepted as fact, although it may not be true." If you submit an item, please differentiate the facts from the factoids. And if you can verify something, thus changing it from a factoid to a fact, please let us know.

Our LGP-30 has a label/badge on it that says, "Control Data." Why is that?

Submitted by Jim Strickland.

Fact: LGP-30 was a desktop computer built by Librascope division of General Precision Inc. of Glendale, California. It was sold from 1956 to 1962. Cost was approximately \$50,000. It was designed by Stan Frankel, a Manhattan Project veteran and one of the first programmers of ENIAC.

Fact: In 1963, William Norris, President of Control Data Corporation, began acquiring computer related companies. In 1965, CDC acquired the Librascope division of General Precision.

Factoid: In making those acquisitions, Norris was attempting to compete "across the board" with IBM.

Factoid: According to Martin Olsiewski writing on Ed Thelen's web site -- "... In 1966, ... Control Data Corp. had purchased many of the 'beasts' [LGP-30's] from Librascope and was refurbishing the machines for resale for approximately \$10K."

So apparently ours was one of the refurbished machines, acquired when CDC bought Librascope.

If you want to add to this story, or share another, please do so and please separate fact from factoid.

I was going to submit this as a question but decided to research it first. The preceding is the result.

Jim Strickland

Perhaps the first "killer ap" was Visi-Calc, the spread sheet program that sold many Apple II computers. But another killer ap was desktop publishing on the Mac.

The following is from Apple CEO Steve Jobs's 2005 commencement address at Stanford.

I naively chose a college that was almost as expensive as Stanford, and all of my working-class parents' savings were being spent on my college tuition. After six months, I couldn't see the value in it. I had no idea what I wanted to do with my life and no idea how college was going to help me figure it out. And here I was spending all of the money my parents had saved their entire life. So I decided to drop out and trust that it would all work out OK. It was pretty scary at the time, but looking back it was one of the best decisions I ever made. The minute I dropped out I could stop taking the required classes that didn't interest me, and begin dropping in on the ones that looked interesting.

It wasn't all romantic. I didn't have a dorm room, so I slept on the floor in friends' rooms, I returned coke bottles for the 50 deposits to buy food with, and I would walk the seven miles across town every Sunday night to get one good meal a week at the Hare Krishna temple. I loved it. And much of what I stumbled into by following my curiosity and intuition turned out to be priceless later on. Let me give you one example:

Reed College at that time offered perhaps the best calligraphy instruction in the country. Throughout the campus every poster, every label on every drawer, was beautifully hand calligraphed. Because I had dropped out and didn't have to take the normal classes, I decided to take a calligraphy class to learn how to do this. I learned about serif and san serif typefaces, about varying the amount of space between different letter combinations, about what makes great typography great. It was beautiful, historical, artistically subtle in a way that science can't capture, and I found it fascinating.

None of this had even a hope of any practical application in my life. But 10 years later, when we were designing the first Macintosh computer, it all came back to me. And we designed it all into the Mac. It was the first computer with beautiful typography. If I had never dropped in on that single course in college, the Mac would have never had multiple typefaces or proportionally spaced fonts. And since Windows just copied the Mac, it's likely that no personal computer would have them. If I had never dropped out, I would have never dropped in on this calligraphy class, and personal computers might not have the wonderful typography that they do.

The preceding was reprinted from the Wall Street Journal, February 6, 2010.

Ken Olsen, Founder of Digital Equipment Corporation, Dies at Age 84

Ken Olsen passed away February 6, in Indiana, with his family around him. Ken had been in ill health for the last few months and was in hospice care. He was 84.

DEC, a leading vendor of computer systems, software and peripherals from the 1960s to the 1990s, was launched by Olsen in 1957 with Harlan Anderson.

DEC is still considered an icon in technology circles today as the company attracted top engineers and helped usher in a technology revolution that changed the way people interacted with computers. In 1986, Fortune magazine named Olsen "America's most successful entrepreneur," and by the late 1980s, DEC had more than 120,000 employees worldwide. Sales peaked at \$14 billion in 1992.

In 1998, the company, was sold to Compaq Computer Corp which, in turn, was acquired by Hewlett Packard in 2002.

PERSONAL NEWS

Birthday coming up? Anniversary? We'd like you to share your good news and even some of the not so good news in your life.

Please contribute to the
Computer History Museum
Volunteer Information Exchange.

Share your stories, your interesting facts (and factoids) and your knowledge. Send them to Jim Strickland

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