Control Data Corporation Records Donated

CBI officially added to its collection the records of the Control Data Corporation (CDC) with the signing of an agreement between the University of Minnesota and Ceridian Corporation, one of the two companies created from Control Data in 1992. The collection is the second major acquisition by CBI to document the early U.S. computer industry. Unisys donated the records of the Burroughs Corporation in 1991. Both company collections represent an invaluable resource for understanding the growth and development of the computer industry. CBI is grateful to Ceridian Corporation for making this important collection available for historical research.

The Control Data Corporation was established in Minneapolis in 1957, formed by a group led by William C. Norris. Norris was a founding vice president of Engineering Research Associates who later headed the Univac Division of Sperry Rand. Among the engineering talent at the new company was Seymour Cray, who began work on a prototype computer that was to lead to the delivery of the transistorized 1604 computer. The 1604 was a success with large-scale scientific and engineering customers, and established the company as one of the archetypes of an entrepreneurial computer company.

Within a relatively short time CDC ranked among the top ten U.S. firms in revenues from data processing equipment. Its reputation grew as a provider of fast computers, quality plug-compatible peripherals, original equipment manufacturer products, an international network of data centers, and computer technical education through Control Data Institutes. The company also established a reputation for aggressively acquiring other business, including Cedar Engineering, the computer operations of Bendix, C-E-I-R, Daystrom, Rabinow Engineering, Holley Computer Products, and Commercial Credit, which was significantly larger than the parent computer company and markedly changed the character of CDC.

Most of the donated records originated from CDC’s “Historical Archives,” which was formed in 1980. The archives identified historically valuable records stored in CDC’s records storage facilities. It began to retrieve files for permanent retention and to document the company’s history through interviews of company executives. Material continued to be added to the archives until the operation was closed in 1991.

CBI maintained a close relationship with the CDC archives from its inception, culminating in a CBI research project conducted at CDC that generated data used in The High-Technology Company: A Historical Research and Archival Guide (1989). A group of historically valuable records stored outside of the corporate archives were examined and identified by the project staff. This process proved fortunate because it helped to identify records beyond those held by the corporate archives, particularly the records relating to the 1604 computer, the PLATO computer-based education system, and C-E-I-R. These records were also donated to CBI.

Shipments of the first 1604 computer to the U.S. Navy. On the loading dock of the original Control Data headquarters are (left to right) William C. Norris, Frank Mullaney, George Hanson, and a representative of North American Van Lines. January 1960 (P290).
Recent Publications


Daniel Ichbiah and Susan L. Knepper, The Making of Microsoft: How Bill Gates and His Team Created the World's

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Most Successful Software Company.


Articles of Interest


1994 Friends of CBI

The Charles Babbage Institute gratefully acknowledges the individuals and organizations listed below for their recent renewals or new membership in the 1994 Friends of CBI program. Information about the Friends Program can be found in the Fall Newsletter or by contacting CBI.

Colleague Members: Jeffrey Chu, Chester L. Lappen
Participating Associate Members: Forum für Informationstechnik GmbH, Joshua Lederberg, Erez Kaplan
Associate Members: Rebecca E. Skinner, Earl Swartzlander, Norman E. Wright

Production of this newsletter is supported by Analysts International.
Hemmis Chosen as 1994-95 Tomash Fellowship Recipient

The Charles Babbage Institute awarded the sixth Adelle and Erwin Tomash Fellowship in the History of Information Processing to Patricia A. Hemmis. Ms. Hemmis is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Design, Housing and Apparel at the University of Minnesota. She received a B.F.A. in Graphic Design from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 1976.

Ms. Hemmis’s research project investigates the symbols and metaphors associated with the first generation of computers in the United States. Her research will attempt to discover how the physical appearance and abilities of the machine, the way it was presented and discussed, the problems it solved, the problems it could not solve, its similarity to other artifacts as well as its uniqueness all contributed to collective notions about the computer. She is particularly interested in exploring the visual and spatial organization of artifacts and how the people who use artifacts are not just passive receivers of cultural messages but are active participants in the development of cultural symbols.

Hemmis will focus on the presentation of early machines to the public to illustrate the complex manner in which the machine and its presentation reflected social and cultural notions of science, technology, and the relationship between humans and machines. Her project will draw on her cross-disciplinary background; she will use a variety of research methods from cultural, intellectual and social history, history of technology, material and popular culture and art history.

Ms. Hemmis will spend much of her time during the 1994-95 academic year at CBI as she continues her extensive use of CBI’s collections.

New FAX Number for CBI

Thanks to the generosity of Francis A. Kulacki, Dean of the Institute of Technology at the University of Minnesota, the Charles Babbage Institute now has its own fax machine. CBI’s new fax number is 612 625-8054.

Control Data continued from page 1...

The entire collection at CBI consists of over 375 linear feet of correspondence, reports, minutes, internal publications, product literature, photographs, and other audio visual materials documenting the company from its formation until 1992, when it split into Ceridian Corporation and Control Data Systems, Inc. Some of the files found in the collection include William C. Norris’s speeches, Frank Muller’s correspondence, plans for the computer systems division (1960-1966), Research and Development project reports, executive history narratives, product manuals, news releases from 1958-1987, and sound and video recordings of interviews with Control Data representatives.

The collection is particularly rich in audio-visual materials. The main photographic file contains over 1,650 prints depicting the company’s visual history of products, individuals, facilities, and events, all of which are indexed. CBI has converted the card catalog to a computerized database and hopes to produce a CD-ROM of photographs if resources can be located. Many more prints, negatives, and slides that were donated with the collection require further organizing and processing. Also present are news media and oral history interviews of Control Data executives, all recorded on audio cassette tape (presenting a preservation dilemma because cassette tape is not archival). Films and video tapes are represented as well, including everything from Control Data Institute commercials to a seven-minute 16mm film made in 1960 on the proper pronunciation of “data” in Control Data.

While the collection at CBI represents the best source of documentation about CDC, it is not yet as complete as it could be. Most of the records collected by the

Fabrication, assembly and test of disk drive heads and modules at the components division of Magnetic Peripherals, Inc., ca. 1980.

Control Data continued on page 6...
Control Data Corporation Chronology

1957 Company incorporated (July 8) with headquarters at 501 Park, Minneapolis; acquired Cedar Engineering.
1958 Received first order for 1604 computer; "Little Character," 1/10-scale prototype of 1604, is operational; Sperry Rand sues CDC.
1959 Delivered air traffic control display.
1960 Delivered 1604 and 1606 computers; acquired Control Corp.; established first CDC data center (Minneapolis).
1961 Delivered 160A and 924; established new computing center in San Francisco; awarded $5 million contract for fire control computer for Polaris Submarines; net sales = $19,783,743.
1962 Delivered Polaris computer, 600 tape transport, and 166 line printer; opened European office in Lucerne, Switzerland; moved to new headquarters building in Bloomington, MN; Sperry Rand lawsuit settled out of court.
1963 Delivered 3600 computer, 603 tape drive, 405 card reader; acquired Beck's, Inc., Computer Division of Bendix Corporation, Control Systems Division of Daystrom, Digigraphic Systems of Ink.
1965 Delivered 3100, 6600; acquired A trade show display of Control Data Canada, Ltd. Probably in Toronto, ca. 1979.

Data Display, Datatrol, Computech, Glenn W. Preston Associates; ceases production of 160-A and 1604A; established Control Data Institutes; net sales (annual report) = $16,473,162.
1966 Delivered 1700, 3800, 6400; awarded $22.7 million contract from U.S. Post Office for Postal Source Data System.
1968 Delivered 449-2 Special Minutaire Computer, 200 Remote User Terminal, SCOPE operating system; acquired Commercial Credit Corporation; filed antitrust lawsuit against IBM; established Cybernet communication network.
1970 Delivered 3170, 6200, 6700 computers; unbundled hardware, software, and service prices; offered KRONOS 1.0 operating system; announced Star 100.
1971 Delivered 921 Optical Character Reading machine, Cyber 70.
1972 Delivered Cyber 72, 73, 74; acquired Syntonic Technology; established Computer Peripherals, Inc. with NCR; established Committee for Social Responsibility.
1973 Acquired data services operation from ITT, System Resources, retaining interest in Ticketron; Service Bureau Corporation (as part of the IBM settlement); Peripheral Products offered low-
cost disk drives; signed 10-year cooperation agreement with Soviet Union; Seymour Cray left to form Cray Research; net sales/revenue (annual report) = $948,191,000.
1974 Delivered Star 100 (to Lawrence Livermore). System 17 microcomputer; acquired Credit Francaise, First Holding, Ltd., Davidsohn Computer Services; retired old CDC logo; introduced 33302

William C. Norris at the console of the 3600 computer, 1964 (P1229).
NEH Grants

The National Endowment for the Humanities announces the availability of grants under the program of Humanities, Science and Technology for the support of research that brings to bear the knowledge, methods, and perspectives of the humanities in the subjects of science, technology, or medicine. Historical studies and studies of current topics are eligible. However, studies of current science, technology, or medicine must deal with fundamental issues in the humanities. Individuals and institutions are eligible to apply. Applicants may request support for full or part-time salaries, travel, and other costs of conducting research for periods of from one to three years. This category of support is for projects that, because of their intellectual scope and consequent size, duration, or complexity, cannot be accomplished through individual one-year fellowships.


Interface Conference

Interface '94, the Nineteenth Annual Humanities and Technology Conference, will be held in Atlanta, Georgia on October 27-28, 1994. Interface has in the past brought together professionals from such diverse fields as engineering, technology, computer science, history, literature, and physics to discuss issues that cut across traditional disciplinary boundaries. For further information, contact: Dr. Julie Newell, Social and International Studies, Southern College of Technology, 1100 South Marietta Parkway, Marietta, GA 30060-2896. Telephone: 404 528-7481.

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Please let us know your new mailing address. This will ensure your receiving the CBI Newsletter on a timely basis and also save us postage costs. Thank you.
Control Data continued from page 3...
corporate archives focused on the
activities of executives and major
announcements of the company, and as
such are less detailed about production,
manufacturing, and product research.
Also, Control Data held the extant
records of many of its corporate acquisi-
tions, many of which were important
forces in the computer industry. CBI
continues to work with representatives of
Ceridian to locate other historically
valuable records, and CBI has ap-
proached Control Data Systems about
material that they may hold. Former
employees may also become an impor-
tant source of records. Two years ago Jay
Kershaw donated a large group of
records relating to two Control Data
projects, Technote and WorldTech.
Another individual has agreed to donate
records relating to PLATO dating from
its purchase from the University of
Illinois.
As more material is acquired, CBI
plans to organize and catalog the
collection to make it more accessible for
research. Most of the material is
available without restriction, and a
number of researchers from Ceridian,
Control Data Systems, and academic
institutions have used the collection at
CBI. Individuals interested in further
information about the CDC records
should contact the CBI archivist.

The PLATO computer-based education terminal, 1976.