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A Comment from the Editor

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Literature on the history of computer hardware has grown precipitously over the past two decades. Research has detailed many different technical and contextual issues of mainframe computers, and to a lesser extent mini-computers and microcomputers. Conversely, software, the technology that defines the potential operations and applications of this hardware, has been ignored. The recent flood of journalistic accounts of leading software companies and their founders offer at best limited knowledge of how people developed, marketed, and used software in the past. More substantive studies of software have been rare and have often focused on but a single area—programming languages. In the last few years however, successful scholarly conferences on software history have been held and a small number of significant research projects in this area have been published.

Iterations: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Software History is being published by the Charles Babbage Institute to provide an outlet for scholarship and lend momentum to this emerging field of inquiry. From the technical, business, and institutional to the social, cultural, and intellectual history of software, *Iterations* seeks to add to both the breadth and depth of this subdiscipline. This electronic journal will also aim to provide a lively forum for researchers, readers, and other interested individuals to share knowledge and perspectives. The launch of *Iterations* is partially sponsored by the National Science Foundation (NSF 9979981), as a component of CBI's "Building a Future for Software History" project. By disseminating scholarship and providing mechanisms for ongoing dialogue, *Iterations* complements CBI's two other software history project components: developing an online historical dictionary of software technologies and techniques; and conducting, transcribing, and making available oral history interviews with pioneers in software development and the software industry. These latter two initiatives aim to offer starting points, fill in some of the many gaps in the documentary record, and expand interest in conducting scholarly research in software history.

The content of *Iterations* at its launch (September 2002) provides some sense of the range of important and understudied areas of software history the journal hopes to address. IBM Global Services Executive James W. Cortada's article on computer and software applications in the petroleum industry provides a compelling model of understanding how software helps shape possibilities and practices in an industry over time. His insightful historiographical discussion offers perspective on the current state of the history of software and the sources and techniques historians can use to better understand software's past within many different trades.

Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum Curator Paul Ceruzzi offers an intriguing technical, political, business, and legal analysis of perhaps the most defining contemporary issue in the software field: the Department of Justice's antitrust case against Microsoft. He details how Microsoft simultaneously faces charges of anti-competitive practices for bundling Internet application software to their operating systems and a competitive threat from Linux and supporters of open source.

University of Nevada-Las Vegas Professor Julian Kilker's article on the history of email gives a rich analysis of social and cultural factors influencing the development and use of this networking application. More specifically, he demonstrates how technical interoperation and social collaboration influenced the evolution of the technology and resulted in flexible standards for email.

While the quality of information varies widely, an increasing amount of primary source material, reflections, and other documentation on the history of software is now available on the Internet. *Iterations'* review department concentrates on these electronic resources, rather than the limited print publications that are often reviewed elsewhere. CBI's Juliet Burba and Philip Frana provide an informed survey of the voluminous types and content of Web material on software history. They categorize these materials and offer insights into their potential use by historians and other scholars.

Burba and Frana's review article is followed by shorter analyses of individual software history Web resources. "Memories of John Tukey;" "Multics and Multicians;" and the "Allen Newell and Herbert Simon Collections" are reviewed, respectively, by Atsushi Akera (RPI), Thomas Haigh (Colby College), and Corinna Schlombs (University of Bielfeld).

John G. Zabolitzky, General Manager of ICOS Vision Systems, and CBI Archivist Elisabeth Kaplan get things started in the commentary section with their individual perspectives on the significant issue of software preservation. *Iterations* welcomes commentary on this issue, reactions to articles or other content of the journal, or views on any topic related to the history of software (all published at the discretion of the editorial staff). Comments can be sent to

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yostx003@tc.umn.edu (longer comments should be sent as a MS Word attachment). Please use this same address for submission of articles for consideration (see “Call for Papers” on the CBI Web site at: www.cbi.umn.edu/iterations/cfp.html).

Iterations will publish continuously and will inform “subscribers” of new scholarly articles as they are published. *Iterations* is free of charge and individuals can be added to (or removed from) the email list for notification of future articles by sending an email message to cbi@tc.umn.edu.

Finally, I would like to thank all the members of the editorial board (see list in “About *Iterations*”), CBI Director Arthur Norberg, and CBI Software History Project Manager Philip Frana. Dr. Norberg provided important advice throughout the planning of this journal and Dr. Frana helped in nearly every aspect of its development and launch—without their many contributions it would not have been possible. Graduate research assistants from the University of Minnesota Program in the History of Science and Technology, Juliet Burba, Karin Matchett, and Elizabeth van Meer, were also very helpful. Ms. Van Meer worked with Dr. Frana and myself in designing the journal. CBI Assistant Archivist Carrie Seib also deserves special thanks for her technical assistance.

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