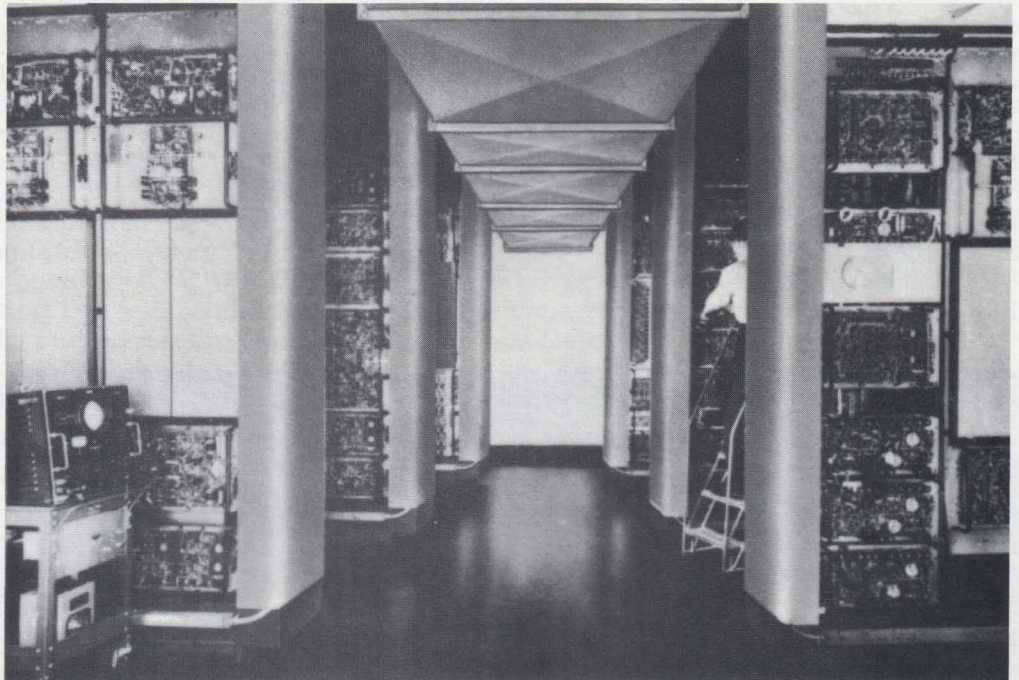


Whirlwind Entrance

The visitor enters into the Whirlwind computer—the first real-time stored program computer, so large that it took up a whole building. In a segment from a 1951 "See It Now" program, Edward R. Murrow interviews "the Whirlwind electronic computer". After he has Admiral Bolster give the "whirlwind its workout," Murrow says, "Well, I didn't understand the answer, and I didn't even understand the question." This seems really quaint to today's visitor because the whole program that the Admiral wants run on the

building full of Whirlwind, is running on a Compaq that was programmed by a summer student.

This first exhibit illustrates the revolution, the unbelievable power of the first computers in the early fifties, and their incredible evolution in thirty-five years. The Whirlwind occupied a building, consumed 150 kilowatts and cost as much as \$20 million. The equivalent personal computer sits on a desk, plugs into a wall socket, and costs two thousand dollars.



Entrance into the Museum puts the visitor in Whirlwind's arithmetic units, which occupied a whole room in the Barta Building at MIT. The 16 bit word length, extending 32 feet, was partially determined by the width of the room.

