

Joint Collecting Agreement

We have signed a collaborative agreement with the Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of American History, which promises to enhance the computing collections of both institutions.

"This is the first such formal joint collecting agreement the Smithsonian has made with a museum of the stature of The Computer Museum," said Dr. Arthur Molella, chairman of the Department of the History of Science and Technology, of the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History and a member of The Computer Museum's Board of Directors. He further explained, "The field is so large and there is so much to do that it's necessary for us to make agreements in important collecting fields with the leading specialized museums."

The joint arrangement with the Division of Computers, Information, and Society of the National Museum of American History is broad in scope, affecting historical research, preservation and exhibitry. We will cooperate in creating a common catalog and database of our collections. This is being carried out by a group composed of David Allison and Jon Eklund from the National Museum of American History and Gwen Bell and Lynn Hall from The Computer Museum.

The common goal in our collecting agreement is to make sure that all the important artifacts are preserved. Considering that computers are now entering their fifth generation and that the classes range from supercomputers to personal computers, the amount of material worth saving is growing. Cooperative collecting is essential for preservation.

The Scientific Instrument Commission of the Union Internationale d'Histoire et de Philosophie des Sciences is also cooperating in the effort to develop a complete listing of computer artifacts held around the world. While the collection of The Computer Museum

is international, many national and specialized museums preserve many significant machines from their regions. For example, The Science Museum, Kensington, has much of the known Babbage equipment and The Deutsches Museum, Munich, has a collection of the machines built by Konrad Zuse. The Computer Museum is proud to have the NEAC 2201, one of the first transistorized computers in Japan built by NEC, components of EDSAC, Maurice Wilkes' Cambridge University computer that is the first fully operational stored program machine, and other non-U.S. computers. One of the goals of The Computer Museum is to show that computer innovations are not unique to one country, to one company, or to any one institution.

Saving the history does not just mean collecting artifacts. For each artifact, a technical file is also needed. Such material includes manuals, notebooks, photographs, and other accounts of the development and use of the machine.

This report lists new acquisitions to the collections of the Museum. The listing illustrates the diversity of the collection. We have chosen to feature some ephemera on the cover, because this material is often thrown out or thought to have little value. On the contrary, ephemera are important because they can quickly evoke the spirit of an era. Don't throw out your memorabilia. Send it to us. Do it all at once, or one at a time. Several times a year, we receive a small envelope from Phil Dorn — it always has a surprise spec card from an early computer or some other piece of ephemera. When Lynn Hall, the registrar and I open it, we generally smile the rest of the day. You too can make our days happy.

Gwen Bell
Founding President