

# Take a few nanoseconds to explore the roots of computing

In the rush to carry on the work of the information age, it is wise for computer professionals to regularly look back at the beginnings of the computer revolution.

While viewing the history of computers may seem a luxury in the face of an ever-changing environment, it is surprising how rich this history is in terms of wheels already invented and common problems already solved.

It is also ironic that many computer professionals—who have dedicated themselves to processing information at a rapid speed to save time for end users—avoid sitting back and pondering the historic value of their work.

The American Federation of Information Processing Societies, Inc., has a publication that can provide a valuable window to yesterday.

## Computing's "roots"

The *Annals of the History of Computing* is a documentation of the "roots" of this relatively new profession.

This unique publication appears four times a year, with contributors exploring the evolution of the computer and the people who have assisted in its development and acceptance within business and society.

There are numerous advantages to being a regular reader of the *Annals of the History of Computing*.

For example, time spent perusing the *Annals* provides a valuable insight into the information management profession and its future directions. In addition, reading about the primitive technologies designed by the pioneers in the field can be an amusing experience in light of what is known today.

However, and more important, if computer professionals cast away the advantage of hindsight and put themselves into those early environments of discovery, these professionals then build an affinity with their predecessors—

and they develop more creative approaches to the problems of processing information.

## Contemporary solutions

In short, what numerous readers of the *Annals of the History of Computing* are finding out is that there are solutions to contemporary problems to be found in the historic review of the field and its early leaders.

"Just as we look to the historian of government for a better understanding of government, and to the historian of art for a better understanding of art, so we are entitled to look to the historian of technology for a better understanding of technology." That view belongs to management consultant Peter Drucker, in an article which appears in the October 1982 *Annals*.

For those people who see history as the happenings of men and women thousands of years ago, the history of computers may seem to be rushing things a bit.

Since the field emerged only about 35 years ago, any attempt at creating a historic perspective might appear premature. Yet, the historic analysis of the profession's work, as published in the *Annals*, among other magazines and books, is one vehicle which will aid in the maturing of the profession as well as its visibility with the public.

It is time to reflect on the potent history of the computer and its ability to process information.

By subscribing to the *Annals of the History of Computing*, you can relive an exciting era of modern history.

—Richard F. Gehrt

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Submissions may be made in any of the following categories:

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