



Guide to the Gordon Bell Collection of Digital Equipment Corporation documents; 1960-2017

Creator: Gordon Bell

Dates: 1960-2017; bulk 1963-1998

Extent: 658 megabytes

Collection number: X8295.2018

Catalog number: 102804238

Collection processed by: Gordon Bell, 2017

Abstract

The Gordon Bell Digital Equipment Corporation (DEC) papers contain a selection of digitized personal and professional materials from Bell's time as a DEC engineer. These materials reference early PDP-1,4, 5 and 6 computers (1960 to 1966) and discuss the creation of the PDP-11. There are also documents from Bell's time as a DEC consultant while at Carnegie-Mellon University (1965 to 1972), and memos, papers, presentations etc., as Vice President of Research and Development at DEC (1972 to 1983).

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

All papers are open for research and available online when not precluded by copyright restrictions.

Publication Rights

The Computer History Museum (CHM) can only claim physical ownership of the collection. Copyright restrictions may apply and users are responsible for satisfying any claims of the copyright holder. Requests for copying and permission to publish, quote, or reproduce any portion of the Computer History Museum's collection must be obtained jointly from both the copyright holder (if applicable) and the Computer History Museum as owner of the material.

Languages

English

Preferred Citation

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Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift of Gordon Bell, 2018

Processing Information

Material was scanned from Bell's personal collection and arranged into "virtual banker's boxes." Each box represents one pdf and one entry in CHM online catalog. This guide follows the arrangement established by Bell.

Repository

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www.computerhistory.org

Historical Note

The collection provides a limited view of Gordon Bell's work at DEC. Bell joined DEC as a "module customer and research staff engineer" in 1960. He was their second computer engineer and received badge number 80. The material in this collection originated from Bell's 23 years working for or involved with DEC. Bell started as an engineer, then rose to engineering manager, and eventually became Vice President of Research and Development from 1960 to 1983. During this critical period, DEC became the world's second largest computer company. Bell was also a DEC consultant while at Carnegie-Mellon University from 1965 to 1972, and this collection also includes materials from that period of Bell's career.

Scope and Content of the Collection

The Gordon Bell Collection of DEC documents includes a wide range of content either born digital or scanned, then encoded into PDF. The Collection's inventory provides a detailed description of each individual PDF. Materials include:

- Books and pamphlets, published presentations, magazine and newspaper clippings about DEC's organization, processes, products, and history
- Presentations (typed and hand drawn) as acetate overhead projection slides and 35mm slides

- Papers that are handwritten, printed (line printer and dot matrix printer), typewritten and photocopied
- Correspondence-- incoming letters and Bell's outgoing letters created on various DECwriters, plus letters of congratulation and recommendation
- Interoffice memos and managerial notes

Arrangement

The collection is arranged into 2 series:

Series 1: DEC; 1960-2017

Series 2: Computer and Information Science and Engineering (CISE); 1986-2017

Indexing Terms

Bell, C. Gordon; 1934-

PDP Computers

Digital Equipment Corporation (DEC)

VAX Computer

Computer Pioneers

Olsen, Kenneth; 1926-2011

Computer Museum (Boston, Mass.)

Directorate for Computer and Information Science and Engineering (CISE)

Related Collection at the Computer History Museum

Digital Equipment Corporation records, acquisition X2675.2004.

<https://www.computerhistory.org/collections/catalog/102733963>

Collection of Digital Equipment Corporation PDP-1 Computer Materials, acquisition X3602.2006.

<https://www.computerhistory.org/collections/catalog/102660913>

Gordon Bell oral history, acquisition X3202.2006.

<https://www.computerhistory.org/collections/catalog/102702036>

Gordon Bell interview, catalog #102746646, acquisition X5671.2010.

<https://www.computerhistory.org/collections/catalog/102746646>

Harlan Anderson PDP Documents, acquisition X3575.2006.

Related Collection at other Repositories

Kenneth H. Olsen Collection, on permanent loan from Gordon College. Baker Library. Harvard Business School. <https://id.lib.harvard.edu/ead/bak00767/catalog>.

Collection Contents

Series 1, Digital Equipment Corporation related materials, 1960-2016; bulk 1963-1998

Subseries 1.1, Digital Equipment Corporation history via book(let)s, 1972-2003

This 900 page subseries contains 12 books and pamphlets covering the history of the Digital Equipment Corporation. Works include Kenneth Olsen, "Digital Equipment Corporation: the First Twenty-Five Years"; Jamie Pearson, ed., "Digital at Work"; a draft of Edgar Schein's "DEC is Dead, Long Live DEC"; and a draft of Gordon Bell's appendix to Schein's book, analyzing DEC's decline. The series may be accessed at <https://www.computerhistory.org/collections/catalog/102740407>.

Subseries 1.2, DEC critiques, Delisi, Kampas, Goodwin, Bell, 1998-2013

A collection of critiques and analyses of the decline of the Digital Equipment Corporation. Includes work by Paul Kampas, Peter DeLisi, Paul Ross, David Goodwin, Roger Johnson, and Gordon Bell. The subseries may be accessed at <https://www.computerhistory.org/collections/catalog/102740408>.

Subseries 1.3, Ken Olsen, DEC CEO, 1976-2011

Documents related to the life of Kenneth Olsen (1926-2011), co-founder of the Digital Equipment Corporation. Includes obituaries, a copy of the transcript of the Smithsonian Museum of American History's oral history with Olsen, memos, and photographs. The subseries may be accessed at <https://www.computerhistory.org/collections/catalog/102740409>.

Subseries 1.4, DEC engineering handbooks, processes, 1974-2001

Handbooks, manuals, and other documents describing engineering at DEC numbering 1300 pages. Also includes guidance documents covering business plans and corporate review processes. Includes the Engineering Orientation Manual (1978, 80, 82), the Business Plan Review Process, the Corporate Phase Review, and the Standard for Business Plans. The subseries may be accessed at <https://www.computerhistory.org/collections/catalog/102740410>.

Subseries 1.5, Computer engineering: a DEC view of hardware systems design, 1978

This series contains a digitized book with the same title as the subseries above by Gordon Bell, J. Craig Mudge, and John E. McNamara. chronicles the products beginning with the transistor circuits that were built at MIT's Lincoln Lab for the TX-0 computer and continues through the VAX (1979). The subseries may be accessed at <https://www.computerhistory.org/collections/catalog/102740411>.

Subseries 1.6, DEC PDP 1, 4, 5, 8, 11/20, RT-11 computers, 1960-2003

1,500 pages of manuals for the PDP-1, 4, 5, 8, 11/20, and RT-11. This subseries may be accessed at <https://www.computerhistory.org/collections/catalog/102740412>.

Subseries 1.7, DEC PDP-6, 1963-1967; 2016

2,250 pages of brochures, manuals, logic diagrams, price lists, and photos relating to the PDP-6. This subseries may be accessed at

<https://www.computerhistory.org/collections/catalog/102740413>.

Subseries 1.8, PDP-6 timesharing system 1.4 listing, ca. 1965

Software program listing for the PDP-6 Timesharing System 1.4 This subseries may be accessed at <https://www.computerhistory.org/collections/catalog/102740414>.

Subseries 1.9, DEC early computers and packaging, ca. 1978

Photos and sketches of how early DEC computers were packaged from Bell talk. This subseries may be accessed at 5

<https://www.computerhistory.org/collections/catalog/102740415>.

Subseries 1.10, Bell VAX strategy, user documents, projects, photos, Venus, 1978-2006; bulk 1974-1987

2,000 pages of documentation on DEC VAX strategy. Includes plans and proposals, sales documents, technical documentation, and photographs. This subseries may be accessed at <https://www.computerhistory.org/collections/catalog/102740416>.

Subseries 1.11, Ethernet files, Blue Book, announcement NYC, 1973-2003; bulk 1979-1982

Documents related to the development of the Ethernet at DEC. Includes internal documents, the Digital/Intel/Xerox specification from 1980, and materials from the Ethernet Press Seminar in 1982. This subseries may be accessed at

<https://www.computerhistory.org/collections/catalog/102740417>.

Subseries 1.12, Bell presentation slides, 1972-2006

Presentation materials from lectures and presentations by Gordon Bell about DEC, computers, and computer history. This subseries may be accessed at

<https://www.computerhistory.org/collections/catalog/102740418>.

Subseries 1.13, Bell on computing topics, talks, abstracts, etc, 1971-1983

Talks, abstracts, papers, research proposals, and notes on a wide variety of computing topics. Many documents discuss the emerging global computer industry, including Gordon Bell's diary, notes, and reflections following his first visit to Japan in 1978, and a paper by Bell advising Brazil on the development of a computer industry. This subseries may be accessed at <https://www.computerhistory.org/collections/catalog/102740419>.

Subseries 1.14, DEC engineering budgets, strategy, 1973-1983

Budget documents and long range plans, known as "Red Books," produced for the DEC engineering department. In addition to outlining projects and commitments within the department, these documents also contain information on strategy and market position.

This subseries may be accessed at

<https://www.computerhistory.org/collections/catalog/102740420>.

Subseries 1.15, DEC Engineering Organization, Office of Development (OOD), 1974-1983

Memos and other internal documents related to DEC's Office of Development, which was created in 1974, two years following Gordon Bell's return to DEC to head research and development. This subseries may be accessed at

<https://www.computerhistory.org/collections/catalog/102740421>.

Subseries 1.16, Gordon Bell word processor correspondence files, 1976-1984

Over 8,000 pages of correspondence and memos exported from the DEC Word Processor System (WPS) covering a wide variety of topics. Includes correspondence relating to DEC, the development of the Microelectronics and Computer Technology Corporation (MCC), government committees, and the Digital Computer Museum. This subseries may be accessed at

<https://www.computerhistory.org/collections/catalog/102740422>.

Subseries 1.17, Gordon Bell correspondence, memos, emails, 1966-1984

Over 900 pages of memos on a wide range of topics, including Trilogy, PDP-X, and Product Heuristics. Also includes memos from when Bell was a consultant to DEC while teaching at Carnegie Mellon University from 1966-1972. This subseries may be accessed at

<https://www.computerhistory.org/collections/catalog/102740423>.

Subseries 1.18, DEC Computer Museum opening, 1971-1979

Memos and emails on the formation of the DEC Computer Museum, which opened in Marlborough, MA in 1979. This subseries may be accessed at

<https://www.computerhistory.org/collections/catalog/102740424>.

Series 2, Directorate for Computer and Information Science and Engineering (CISE) at the National Science Foundation materials, 1986-2017, bulk 1986-1992

Subseries 2.1, Charter, budgets, goals, organization, 1986-1992; 2017

A virtual bankers box, arranged by Bell into a bookmarked PDF, contains records related to the development of, and rationale behind CISE at the National Science Foundation.

Also included are Bell's answers to questions from historian William Aspray regarding CISE, July 2017. This subseries may be accessed at

<https://www.computerhistory.org/collections/catalog/102740243>.

Subseries 2.2, NREN FCCSET reports, papers, and interviews, 1987-2017

A virtual bankers box, arranged by Bell into a bookmarked PDF, relates to the NSF's role in creating the National Research and Education Network (NREN). Also included is Bell's later correspondence regarding the history of CISE, NREN, and networking at the NSF. Correspondents include Andreu Vea Baro, Douglas Gale, Leonard Kleinrock, William Aspray, and others. This subseries may be accessed at <https://www.computerhistory.org/collections/catalog/102740244>.

Subseries 2.3, Center for ASC division, 1986-1990

A virtual bankers box, arranged by Bell into a bookmarked PDF, contains documents relating to supercomputing and the Advanced Scientific Computer Program at the NSF. This subseries may be accessed at <https://www.computerhistory.org/collections/catalog/102740245>.