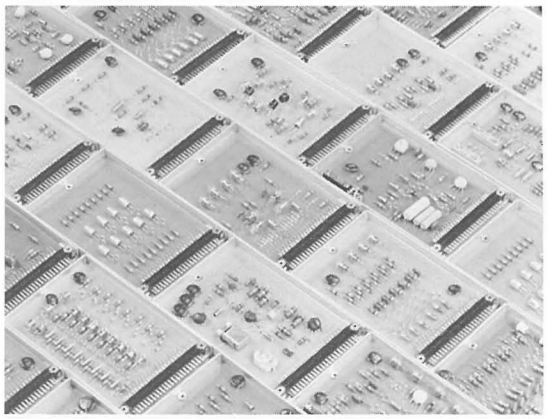
The Exhibits and Archives department rarely refuses donations offered to expand the collection. With computing technology changing so rapidly, determining the future significance of a piece is difficult. To turn away a potential acquisition because it seems less important hinders the future growth of the collection. The collection now numbers about 450 pieces, representing the largest holding of computer artifacts anywhere.

As the Museum has evolved, it has established a close relationship with its members and friends—engineers, computer scientists and history buffs —who are responsible for many donations. Often they refer the department to an available artifact, or make a donation from their own collections. When an object is offered to the collection, they act as curators, illuminating the importance of the acquisition, and sometimes preparing text for an exhibit. While not actually employed by the Museum, they act in its behalf as the experts in computing technology.

The collections policy outlines the process of acquiring artifacts. A deaccessioning clause clarifies to donors that the piece they donate today may not always be part of the permanent collection for reasons of space, a lessening of historical value, or duplication. The deaccessioning policy contributes to our habitual "squirrelling" of artifacts; the donor has agreed that the piece may be taken off the catalog listing and traded with another Museum for another piece, or its parts, if it is a duplicate, could be sold to other collectors through the Museum store. Very little is ever scrapped.



These Digital Equipment Corporation modules circa 1962 are examples of some of the components the Museum accepts for exhibition, reference or sale in the Museum store. The photograph is part of the archival collection.

After determining the significance of an acquisition, the artifact is pursued. Most acquisitions require a little detective work and some phone calls to ensure shipment, while a few others are more elusive. In June of 1981, Greg Mellen from Univac in St. Paul called to say he had located a part of the 1956 NTDS (Naval Tactical Data System) in an office in St. Paul. Seymour Cray was the director of development for the NTDS project, the first automated command and control system within the Navy. Initial letters were mailed and calls made to guarantee the CP-642's release to the Museum. It was not until June of 1982 that the paperwork arrived in a large package from the Navy. In order to clear the CP-642, the Navy needed several letters of intent and background from the Museum, all of which had to be notarized, establishing ourselves as a reputable agency for the preservation of computing history. Another six months later, after several follow-up calls, the Navy wrote that they needed a statement from the state of Massachusetts that the Museum was, indeed, tax exempt. In January, 1983, the Navy informed us that the CP-642 was in an office in St. Paul, presumably not due to be shipped until April, 1983, almost two full years after the process started.

When an acquisition arrives at the Museum, it is checked for damage and suitability for immediate display (this usually involves climbing through 40 foot trucks, removing quilted covers and making some on-the-spot decisions). When the nine tons of Illiac IV arrived completely disassembled on the shipping dock—with no Illiac IV experts available in Marlboro—most of the machine, with the exception of the skeleton and several processing units, was sent to storage. Through a contact at NASA Ames, we located Jay Patton at Burroughs, who had originally installed the computer at NASA. Jay spent two days at the Museum, retrieving what had been mistakenly shipped away, and piecing Illiac back together.

A sequential identification number is assigned, with the last two digits representing the year of the donation. Each artifact is catalogued by manufacturer, serial number, physical description, date and place in computing history, donor name and address, special characteristics, and a brief explanation of the artifact. It is cross referenced to its archival documentation if any exists. An acknowledgement letter, collections policy and receipt for tax purposes are sent to the donor for his records.

The Museum's archives and library began with active solicitation of documentation of collected machines. The understanding was that original manuals would be worthwhile research materials in years to come. This has evolved to the point where relevant photographs, theses, books, films and videotapes are also collected. In collecting archival material, the leads of the Museum's friends and donors are investigated. Contacts for archival material include libraries who wish to donate surplus material from their shelves, and individuals going through personal document collections. On the night of Maurice Wilkes' "Pray, Mr. Babbage" premiere, Mary Hardell donated volume one, number one of the ACM *Journal* and Bill Luebbert donated a full set of the videotapes from the Los Alamos computer conference. A new acquisition, such as Illiac IV, precipitates outside interest and donations. People who worked on the machine or at the University of Illinois are going through file drawers and attics to collect supplementary materials for us.

This summer's *Report* lists the whole collection by appropriate categories. Only one-third of the permanent collection is exhibited, with all material that is in storage documented and available for research purposes. As the collection and exhibitions grow, the ratio will probably remain the same. Some parts of the collection are better developed than others, but by looking at what has been collected, it is easier to determine what should be pursued. The collection's growth reflects a new understanding of the importance of preserving computer history, and the many milestones within the computer industry. Active involvement from members, friends and experts in certain areas of computing technology is an invaluable resource in this development.

Jamie Parker
Exhibits and Archives Coordinator