this needs quite a bit of "tuning" — the sentences don't all "make sense", but the plot is there!

A Ten Year Perspective

Gwen Bell, Founding President

Ten years ago, plans were started for The Computer Museum. Over this decade, the Museum and the industry have both changed witnessing the true revolution of bringing computing to the people.

Ten years ago, time-shared minis and batch-processed mainframes were standard. The Apple 2, Commodore Pet, and TRS-80 (introduced in 1977) were a year old and considered to be "hobbyist" computers. Dan Bricklin was dreaming up the first spread sheet and Mitch Kapor had not yet programmed Tiny Troll. Bob Metcalfe had invented ethernet but it was still only in the "lab." The Museum wrote and edited its first labels on dedicated word processors and felt we were very advanced. In early 1979, we wrestled with ideas for an interactive computer museum, but just couldn't make it happen -- especially within our host DEC environment.

The first version of the Museum, release 1.0, opened on September 23, 1979, with a lecture by Maurice Wilkes on his development of the EDSAC, the first stored-program computer.

Release 1.5, a non-profit educational museum with a board of directors, took another three years. By then it was the June 1982, VisiCalc on the Apple 2 changed it from a toy to a business product; DEC, Intel and Xerox had announced a joint Ethernet standard for local area networks; and the PC race was on.

In 1983, with the micro taking off as a business and educational machine, the potential for The Computer Museum changed. Simultaneously, the Museum had the opportunity to move to Boston. Release 2.0 at our present site opened in 1984. While it carried forward its displays of historic artifacts, the Museum also based new exhibits on the IBM PC, the DEC Pro with Dectalk, the new LISA from Apple (the Mac's mother), and Compaq clones. The DEC VAX was

connected to the office and a variety of terminals by an Ethernet from Interlan.

The last four years have been infill with more interactive exhibits and the addition of one new gallery. Dan Bricklin and Mitch Kapor have both left the mature "spread sheet" industry that they pioneered. Again, they are pioneering new easier to use software sytems. Looking forward, the Museum needs to keep up with this increasingly fast moving and diverse computer industry. The Museum is ready to move into Release 2.5.

But personally, I'm interested in Release 3. With a new phase in my own life, commuting regularly between Silicon Valley and Boston, I'm spending more time listening and watching to what is happening in the industry. The Museum needs to participate in the great changes in the future, continuing to celebrate an exciting past and sharing with more and more our artifacts and knowledge about creating exhibits about the most exciting innovation of the era, the computer.

Rev 1
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Where is the Computer Museum in its growth and developement? What has it accomplished so far in its short life? What are its goals for the future?

The Museum's origins were as a collection of early computers. Many were in danger of becoming extinct species. Often, only a few of a given type of computer were manufactured, especially if it was a pioneering model, and every machine was being scrapped when it was retired from service with no attempt being at preservation. This effort, over a number of years, has led to a collection that has no rival in the world. With the exception of a few very early machines which were built by the Federal Government, and are preserved by the Smithsonian, the Museum has examples of of a majority of the key milestones in computing from the Whirlwind and Univac I through the very first personal computers to the most modern microprocessors. (expand).

However, the Museum is not only a collecting institution but an exhibiting institution as well. In this latter role it endeavors to educate and inspire its visitors about computers and computing.

The historical collection is fascinating to people who have worked in the field and have heard of some of the famous early machines which they can see at the Museum. However, it is often difficult for their wives and children who visit the museum with them, to relate to these artifacts. To them, there is often still a mystery about computers in general which needs to be dispelled before they

can understand the significance of some of the advances in computing technology represented by the machines in the historical exhibits. They may even have used computers in their work or in school but often still have fundamental questions about what they are, how they work, and what they can do. These are questions that the Museum needs to help answer if it is going to serve a broader audience.

The most recent exhibit at the Museum, Smart Machines, starts to serve this audience. It contains early examples of robots and artificial intelligence programs which help to trace the evolution of the field. However, it also has many examples of what computers can do today in approaching the accomplishments of humans. These latter exhibits do not require a background in the field of computing to appreciate. There is a robot finding its way through a maze, a computer composing music and a computer giving you directions about the best way to get to your favorite restaurant in Boston to mention just a few.

We, at the Museum, believe that we need more exhibits that speak to this broader audience of adults who are curious about computers and young people, in addition to people in the field computing who still represent our largest body of support. A number of future exhibits are being planned along these lines. One will attempt to convey some idea of how a computer works by showing what the major anatomical parts of a PC are and what they do.

Another exhibit will give some perspective as to the wide range of tasks which are within the capability of todays personal computers by letting the user explore a range of applications in a friendly none threatening enviroment.

Other exhibits plan to explore the invisible computers with which we interact every day. Sometimes we don't even know they are computers, such as those in our automobile, our telephone, our dishwasher, or our camera. Others sit in giant data processing centers, often thousands of miles away, and process our airline reservation request, or verify our credit card balance, or route our telephone call from Boston to California.

It is serving well this broader audience which represents the challenge of the Museum in the future. We need exhibits which will provide a historical perspective about the evolution of computer technology while at the same time, educating and enlightening the adults who have become curious to know more about computers, and exciting young people about the wonders of computers and what they can do and where they came from and where they are going.

Providing a tantalizing combination of history, what computers can do and how they do it, along with just plain hands-on interactive fun is our goal. We welcome the help of everyone associated with the Museum, in whatever form they can give it. If we can achieve our goal we have an opportunity to realize the tremendous potential of the

Computer Museum. It can, with the right support, become one of the worlds great museums.

THE MUSEUM'S FOUR YEAR AGENDA

Gardner Hendrie, Chairman of the Board

In June, I became the third Chairman of the Board of The Computer Museum. This is a new and challenging position for me and in deciding my agenda for the next four years, I have taken a look at the Museum's past, in order to build on this in determining a new dynamic.

The work done in the term of Ken Olsen, the Museum's first Chairman, established a unique collection of computers that has no rival in the world. Since then, the Museum has been able to build on this reputation and continues to expand and use the collection.

Bill Poduska, the second chairman, had a term that started with the opening of the Museum in downtown Boston. Since no computer museum existed, the new product was born. And like many new products, it had some very good ideas and some that weren't so good. At the end of Bill's term, the Smart Machines Gallery opened. This exhibition is on the road to getting everything right.

Smart Machines is a three-levelled exhibit. It has great depth based on a real collection of robots and other artifacts; it has hands-on interactive programs that are educational and easy to use; and it has entertainment with its "robot theatre" and "robot playpen". The computer knowledgeable, the novice, and the five-year old can enjoy and appreciate the visit.

My goal, during my term, is to transform the Museum into a series of exhibits that will reach all the public. First, the new exhibitions will be planned to invite participation from everyone. The Museum is located at the edge of South Boston, Chinatown, and the North End, three needy, inner city neighborhoods. There are many young people that can greatly benefit from a friendly computer museum nearby. We can use our neighbors to learn to reach out to those who are among the computer have nots and bring them into this new era. To this end, a new dynamic Education Director and focus has been added to complement the Curator who develops the exhibitions.

Second, the new exhibitions will speak to the curious, but yet computer inhibited youngster and adult. This is often a mother, uncle, wife, nephew, or daughter of a "prime mover" -- one of those computer people -- that have to see the Museum. I want to hear comments like that of the man who came up to one of our interpreters and said, "Will you please tell my wife she can't stay any longer. I wanted to come and now I can't get her away." The varied informal experiences in a Museum can present non-threatening new ideas to those who are still unsure about the power and potential of computers. To help here, we have enlisted the support of a year's work from Richard , the designer of The National Museum of Film, Television, and Photography in Great Britain, that has won many awards for their dramatic designs premised on visitor interaction.

Third, the people in computing will continue to find in-depth explanations and the real artifacts that make their visit unforgettable. With Joe Cashen, the Executive Director in place for more than a year, Gwen Bell, the Founding President, can refocus effort on collecting to continue to keep us in the forefront.

You might ask, can all these things be accomplished at once? The answer is yes. The Museum has done it in Smart Machines and many other specialized Museums and Aquariums have also done this. The problem is that it is expensive. Smart Machines was the most expensive gallery ever done by the Museum but it paid off. The ideas for the new exhibitions will be rich in artifacts that must be well interpreted, interactive stations that must be programmed, and theatrical devices that must be superbly designed.

When my term reaches its close in four years, my goal is to have a transformed Museum. The plans are in place to do this. Implementation will be underway with a new Director of Development and Exhibit Development Coordinator. Many of you will be asked to support these activities in the way best suited to your own abilities. Please join me, so that we can realize this goal.