

Why Make History Hands-On?

For some people, names like Whirlwind or UNIVAC evoke vivid memories. But for others, these vintage computers have no apparent connection to their lives. The computer interactives in PEOPLE AND COMPUTERS were designed to involve everyone personally in computer history.

Some of the interactives offer a firsthand experience about the application shown in the historic vignette. At "Punch Your Name," for example, visitors can enter their name on a punched card like those used by the 1930s Social Security Administration. Other hands-on exhibits such as "What Do You Think?" help people relate what they see to their own lives. "Comparing Computers"

introduces information about computers, letting visitors choose comparisons with size shown in school buses and weight shown in pigs! Also interactive video stations throughout the exhibition offer over 100 entertaining, informative film clips on the people, technology, and popular culture of each era.

In exit interviews, over half the Museum's visitors said that the interactive computer programs and videos were their favorite part of PEOPLE AND COMPUTERS. Together, the interactives and the artifacts offer the widest range of visitors the chance to relive computer history.

Tell Your Own Tale

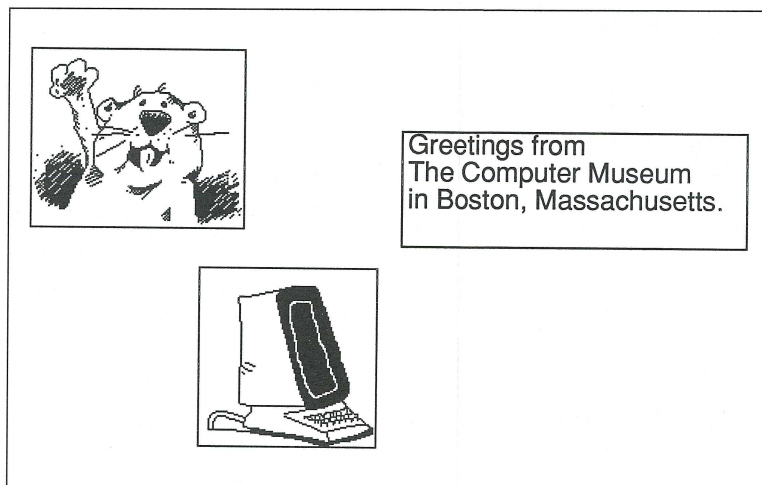
At the "Tell Your Own Tale" station, Museum visitor Chris Reiss told his own tale called "querly," and Goober McNulty wrote "the snoiders and the fractal."

querly

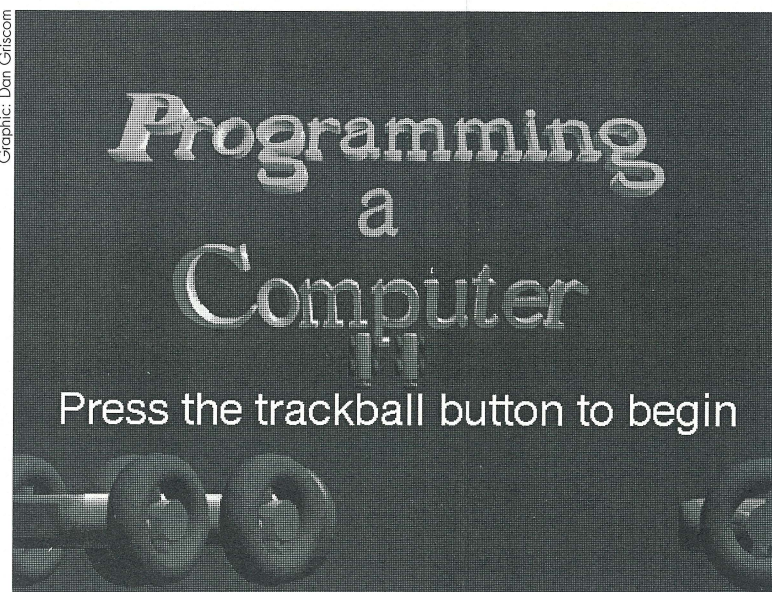
I read a quote on the wall that said unless computers can compare a sonnet and feel pain, they could never be considered human. That impressed me. But then I thought...I can't compose a sonata. I don't feel any pain. Next thing I knew, someone re-booted me and I became part of the displays in the museum.

the snoiders and the fractal

Once upon a time there were two snoiders named faafi and pfoogi who liked to mess around with computers. Unfortunately all they could do was snoid and peck and their cognitive functions remained rudimentary. Nevertheless, one day they found a fractal on their roof that had fallen off a passing rocket mailplane. They crawled inside and soon lost their way, getting deep into the Caves of Self-Similarity.



This postcard was created by a visitor at the "Publish Your Own Postcard" station where visitors can explore desktop publishing. See photo at right.



The High and Low Level Programming interactive gives those who have never programmed a computer the challenge of programming a car through a maze.



Photograph: Sue Palock

DO IT YOURSELF! INTERACTIVE COMPUTER STATIONS

PUNCH YOUR NAME

See what it was like to enter information onto a punchcard in the 1930s.

HIT THE TARGET

Use a computer to hit a target with an artillery shell. Many computers were built to do this in the late 1940s.

CORE MEMORY

Explore how information is stored in magnetic core memory.

HIGH AND LOW LEVEL PROGRAMMING

Learn how programming languages have become easier to write.

TELL YOUR OWN TALE

Discover the Museum's Top 10 Classic Computer Stories. Then add your own.

LIGHT UP THE STAGE

Explore lighting a theater stage, as "Sam," the LS-8 lighting controller, did for *A Chorus Line*.

HOW FAST ARE COMPUTERS?

Compare the speeds of various computers with your own as you add a series of numbers.

PUBLISH YOUR OWN POSTCARD!

Learn about desktop publishing by designing your own postcard and printing it out. Then take it with you!

SPREADSHEETS: A TOOL FOR A CHANGING WORLD

Learn how people use spreadsheets to organize information, change conditions and assumptions, and see the results.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Tell us about your relationship with personal computers and see how you compare with other visitors, as well as people in the US and world.

COMPARING COMPUTERS

See the differences in memory capacity, weight, size, and power among the computers on display from the giant Whirlwind of the 1940s to today's palmtop PC.



Photograph: Sue Palock

Cape Cod residents Diane Hutchings (left) and Doris Comtois enjoy history hands-on in PEOPLE AND COMPUTERS.