

History of Computers

The ENIAC

(Electronic Numerical Integrator and Calculator) (1946) was built at the University of Pennsylvania by John W. Mauchly and J. Presper Eckert. Recognized as the first operational electronic computer, it could perform 5,000 additions per second, weighed 30 tons, and required 1,500 square feet of floor space.

UNIVAC I

(Universal Automatic Computer) (1951)The world's first commercial computer (a total of 15 were sold) gained public recognition when it was used by CBS to predict Eisenhower's 1952 presidential election. The original UNIVAC was officially retired on October 3, 1963, after 73,000 hours of operation, and is now on display at the Smithsonian Institution.

Altair

8800 (1975)The January 1975 issue of Popular Electronics featured the Altair 8800 on its cover: the first personal computer and a machine that the hobbyist could build from a kit. 2000 adventurous readers sent in their orders (sight unseen) for a kit that cost \$439. The Altair had no keyboard or monitor and no available software and was programmed by switches on the front panel.

Apple Macintosh

(1984)The Macintosh was far from an instant success, but once Apple got the bugs out and added an internal hard disk, laser printer, and expanded memory, the machine took off. Its ease of use and graphical interface offered an entirely different perspective on computing.