In the latter stages of the ENIAC project, the team’s scientists and engineers gave increasing time, consideration, discussion, and planning to the design attributes of ENIAC’s successor, the EDVAC. John von Neumann, who became involved late in the ENIAC project, wrote the “First Draft of a Report on the EDVAC,” a document distributed in late June 1945. Among other things, the report defined the stored-program concept, a critical element to the design structure—known thereafter as the Von Neumann Architecture—that quickly became dominant in digital computing. Scholars and writers have debated the proper attribution of credit for the insights of the report—in particular, which ideas originated with von Neumann and to what degree he was influenced by J. Presper Eckert, John Mauchly, and other members of the ENIAC team.

Similarly, growing controversy has emerged over the level and proper attribution of credit for the team members involved in the project that became the first realization of the stored-program concept, the Manchester Small-Scale Experimental Machine (SSEM) project at Victoria College, University of Manchester. SSEM, better known as the Manchester Baby, first successfully demonstrated the stored-program concept in mid-June 1948, just days shy of the third anniversary of the distribution of von Neumann’s report.

Over the past several decades, scholars such as Simon Lavington have highlighted the important contributions of engineers F.C. Williams and Tom Kilburn to the Baby project. The Williams Tube (a uniquely designed cathode-ray tube), less commonly but perhaps more appropriately referred to as the Williams-Kilburn Tube, was the achievement of these engineers. Apportioning proper credit for the Manchester Baby computer, which was constructed to operationally test these tubes, is less clear.

In this issue’s important, two-part cover article, B. Jack Copeland engagingly revisits the Manchester Baby project, highlighting the important roles of mathematicians Max Newman, I.J. Good, and Alan Turning. In doing so, he challenges the interpretations of Lavington and others. While acknowledging Williams and Kilburn’s path-breaking tube technology, Copeland relates how Turing tutored Kilburn in computer architecture, how Good’s instruction set provided the basis for the Baby’s instruction set, and how Newman profoundly influenced Williams and Kilburn’s overall design decisions with the Baby.

From Arthur Norberg and Judy O’Neill’s Transforming Computer Technology and Atsushi Akera’s Calculating the Natural World to Janet Abbate’s Inventing the Internet and the National Research Council volume Funding a Revolution, much quality work has been written on major computer projects financed by the US government. Far less has been written about the use of computing in government. James Cortada’s informative and impressive survey The Digital Hand, volume 3, and Paul Edwards’ The Closed World contribute meaningful discussion to the topic. Meanwhile, Jon Agar’s analysis on the interrelationship and dialogue between British bureaucracy and the mechanization of information processing over two centuries demonstrates the great value of deep analysis of government computing. For the US, many areas of government computing still remain entirely unexplored.

In this issue, John Laprise provides an important and highly original contribution to the history of government computing with his article on the adoption of computers within the National Security Council during the Nixon Administration. National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger was the force behind this computerization effort within the White House at the end of the 1960s, a path he found essential given the flood of information to organize and analyze for the nation’s security.

Finally, Frank Veraart insightfully demonstrates the many and deep cultural meanings of early computer game development and use among Dutch computer hobbyists. He then looks at how many of these meanings and constructions of users diminished over time as games became mere entertainment.

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