

## **Annual Report – The Software History Center**

### **Accomplishments for 2003 and Plans for 2004**

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The Software History Center (SHC) had another successful year in 2003. Thanks to a substantial grant from the Charles Babbage Foundation we were able to initiate some key projects which helped to advance our goal of preserving and communicating the history of the computer software and services industry. In addition, we used the contributions we received to enable us to complete work on projects which we had started in 2002.

The Software History Center continues to focus on the following areas:

1. Retention and preservation of relevant historic materials from people, companies and institutions that contributed to the formation and growth of the computer software and services industry
2. Obtaining oral histories and publishable articles and anecdotes from industry pioneers
3. Communicating the information acquired through publications and websites specifically aimed at supporting researchers, historians, curators and archivists while also making the information available to a broad audience
4. Sponsoring professional research and analysis projects regarding key events, participants and influences in the evolution of the software and services industry.

The balance of this report will cover SHC's accomplishments and plans in each of these program areas.

#### **Retention and Preservation**

In 2002 and 2003 SHC was instrumental in arranging for ITAA to save and donate its remaining files from the 1960s and 1970s to the Charles Babbage Institute and also arranged for CBI to obtain the files of Milt Wessel and Larry Welke. We have encouraged CBI to continue this process aggressively. We will continue to make further efforts to ensure that the papers of the industry pioneers are identified and donated to appropriate archives.

Retaining and donating historic materials is only the first step in a difficult and expensive process of indexing, organizing, physically preserving and, at some time in the future, scanning and storing these materials in digital format. We are planning an extensive retention program for 2004 with Doug Jerger leading the effort by contacting another 5-10 software and services pioneers and having them work with selected archives in organizing and donating their papers.

Meanwhile, we urge all of you who are reading this report: **Do Not** throw away your old files; contact SHC for preliminary assistance in helping you learn what you should do to make sure that your materials are preserved for future use.

### **Oral Histories and Publications**

The first quarter of 2002 saw the publication of a special issue of the IEEE Annals of the History of Computing (24:1) devoted to the early development of the software and services industry. Since then SHC has continued to work actively with the IEEE Annals to ensure that there is a steady flow of articles by and about software and services people and events available for publication. In early 2004, the IEEE Annals will publish a feature article by Thomas Haigh, a young industry historian, about the early years of ADAPSO including biographies of Frank Lautenberg and Bernie Goldstein, two of the presidents of ADAPSO during the 1960s. This article was written using the ADAPSO files contributed to the CBI Archives and the oral histories which SHC conducted during 2002. Tom will publish a follow up article later in 2004 covering ADAPSO in the 1970s with biographies of Rick Crandall, Larry Schoenberg and Larry Welke. Oscar Schachter is coordinating the work with the IEEE Annals. He is looking for additional articles to be published in 2004 and 2005.

In conjunction with the ADAPSO Reunion meeting in May 2002, SHC organized an oral history interview program with seven computer historians interviewing 15 software and services pioneers. 13 of these edited interviews have been submitted to CBI and are now available on their website ([www.cbi.umn.edu/oh](http://www.cbi.umn.edu/oh)). The original tapes and unedited transcriptions will be deposited in CBI's archives. The remaining 2 interviews should be available by the end of March 2004. Reading these interviews is an educational and enlightening experience; they provide insight into the problems that these industry entrepreneurs faced and how they creatively resolved these difficulties to construct substantial businesses delivering valuable products and services.

As part of its plans for 2004, SHC is organizing 15 more oral histories of software and services pioneers using some of the same and some additional historians to plan and conduct the interviews. Elizabeth Virgo is the coordinator for this project, which is scheduled to be carried out during the year.

### **Information Communication and Access**

The big SHC event for 2002 was the ADAPSO Reunion that was held in May in Washington, DC at the Monarch Hotel. The feedback from the pioneers and historians who participated was very positive and the materials that were recorded during the workshops provided the basis for a book on the evolution of the industry which Luanne Johnson has edited. SHC has had the **ADAPSO Reunion Transcript** published by Larry Welke's iBusiness Press. The book includes many photographs from the ADAPSO Reunion and an index to the material covered in the workshops and plenary sessions. If you wish to have a copy send an email to: [welke@info-partners.com](mailto:welke@info-partners.com).

The SHC website includes information on the beginnings of the industry and a timeline of company creation and events along with anecdotes and the names and brief bios of many of the industry pioneers. The SHC website references other websites that have pertinent information about the history of the software and services industry rather than trying to replicate this material. In 2004, Ed LaHay will further expand and enhance the SHC website with additional content and easier access. Please visit us the SHC website ([www.softwarehistory.org](http://www.softwarehistory.org)).

One other project for SHC in 2003 was to organize, in conjunction with the Charles Babbage Foundation, a consortium of 15 organizations that are interested in retaining, preserving, archiving, displaying and researching information about the history of information technology. An initial meeting was held in Palo Alto on May 16, 2003 at which each organization described its current and planned activities and what projects it believes should be performed in the future. From these discussions, a framework for future activities has been structured to try to ensure that all significant areas are being addressed and that non-productive overlap of work can be avoided. In 2004, SHC plans to continue this outreach effort by setting up Pioneer Councils with selected regional members of CRITA, the Council of Regional Information Technology Associations. This should significantly broaden the base of people actively involved in collecting and preserving the history of the industry. Oscar Schachter, Doug Jerger and Larry Welke will be involved in getting this project started.

### **Research and Professional Publications**

An exciting new initiative in 2003 for SHC was to provide guidance and funding for a major research and professional publication project on the founding and growth of the computer software and services industry. The role of ADAPSO in helping to create the framework for the industry was the topic selected. To conduct this project, Thomas Haigh, whom we mentioned earlier in this Annual Report, was appointed as the first SHC Research Scholar. The research work was carried out during the summer of 2003. He is currently preparing a paper on the results of his study and analysis which he expects to publish after peer review in a major professional historical journal. This particular project took full advantage of the files that ITAA, Milt Wessel and Marty Goetz donated to the CBI Archives as well as using the transcribed materials from the ADAPSO workshops and the 2002 oral histories. We hope that this is the first of an annual SHC Research Scholar program. We plan to initiate a second project in 2004 if an appropriate level of funding can be obtained and a well qualified historian is interested in a suitable topic.

### **A Look at 2004**

Since 2004 is the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of VisiCalc on the Apple computer, SHC has used this event as a stimulus to organize a Conference on **PC Software: The First Decade** to be held May 6-7, 2004 in Boston. This meeting will be modeled on our successful ADAPSO Reunion meeting with participation from a number of the early PC software company

pioneers in spreadsheets, word processing, database systems, business graphics and other business applications. The conference will include oral histories and workshops with some of the industry leaders from the 1975-1985 time period. The conference will be cosponsored by: Charles Babbage Institute, Charles Babbage Foundation, IEEE Annals, Computer History Museum, Mass Software Council and SIIA.

Another significant activity starting in 2004 will be the Charles Babbage Foundation's Information Technology Corporate Histories Project which has been funded by the Sloan Foundation. This project will be led by Luanne Johnson and will involve extensive participation by the Computer History Museum and by SHC. SHC assisted in preparing the grant proposal and expects to help in selecting the IT software industry sectors to be studied and the companies in those sectors whose history will be collected. This is a two-year project aimed at determining how to most effectively use the Internet to collect valuable historic information about companies. This is one of the largest efforts to collect IT history on a company basis. Many of you will be contacted to ask for your participation.

### **And Thanks to our Friends**

Thanks again to the Charles Babbage Foundation for its most generous grant which has enabled SHC to initiate its new work in 2003 and will underwrite some of the 2004 projects. We also wish to thank those of you who made contributions during 2003. With your continuing help, we will be able to carry out our planned program in 2004.

If you have any suggestions or questions, please email me at: [burtgrad@aol.com](mailto:burtgrad@aol.com) or call me at 203-222-8821.