

Aurora Tucker

From: Dag Spicer
Sent: Monday, September 20, 2021 11:12 AM
To: Dave Babcock; Eric Pruitt
Cc: Aurora Tucker
Subject: Re: An interesting & different project

Hi guys,

Thanks for the kind email. How interesting!

At this time, we don't really have the bandwidth to take this on, though it's great to know you are around Eric as a resource if we ever needed to do this.

We'll keep this (and your name, Eric) in mind going forward – I could see perhaps doing ones and twos, like prior to a loan, for example, to test if an object has faded upon return. But that's pretty high-tech stuff: I don't know of any Museums that do that. CHM has the blessing of super sophisticated technical people (like you!) willing to help and explore new dimensions of stewardship. I love it! The use of colorimetry in restorations seem a possibility. Remember, Dave, we had to make a new panel for our 1620?

Thanks again for this great idea... we can't pursue it as a serious large-scale project, but it's still a lovely suggestion and much appreciated!

Dag
BTW, what does a decent colorimeter cost these days?

Dag Spicer
Senior Curator
Computer History Museum

From: Dave Babcock <dave@babcock-family.org>
Date: Monday, September 13, 2021 at 7:34 PM
To: Dag Spicer <dspicer@computerhistory.org>
Cc: Eric Pruitt <eric.pruitt@gmail.com>
Subject: An interesting & different project

Hello Dag,

I hope that you had an enjoyable and restful vacation. It was great to see you at VCF, I just wish that we had had more time to talk. It's sad that the museum had to push back its public opening due to the COVID surge. Hopefully, it won't be too long.

I'm writing you to introduce a fellow that I met at VCF - Eric Pruitt.

Eric came by our booth around closing time on Sunday. He asked if the IBM 1620 front panel was the original color or had been painted. When I told him that it was the original color, he asked if he could measure the color. I said that would be fine if he'd send me the results. He proceeded to use a colorimeter and measured the colors of the front

panels and buttons. The button measurements were less successful due to their curvature. To measure properly, the colorimeter must be pressed flat against an object. True to his promise, he sent me the Pantone color values of the 1620 the next day.

- Blue panels:
 - Pantone P 117-14 C
 - Pantone P 116-16 U
- Gray panels:
 - Pantone 19-3906 TCX
 - Pantone 19-0405 TPG
- White panel surrounding the buttons: Pantone 14-0105 TPG
- Blue buttons: 289C
- Orange buttons: 2443C
- Green button: 336C
- Emergency button:
 - 188C
 - Pantone 19-1650 TCX

Having the exact color values of the 1620 front panel is going to be very helpful for some future simulation work that I'm planning. It got me thinking that this might be an interesting project that could benefit CHM - documenting the color of historic computers. I haven't ever heard of anyone doing that. Besides collecting and preserving that information, it could be useful to others doing simulations or restorations [i.e. ordering touch-up paint]. Of course, there's the issue of faded / dirty / yellowed panels, so the data may not be that useful in general. Do we know the actual color values of "IBM Blue"?

I asked Eric if he had contacted CHM about this and offered to make the introduction if he hadn't. Here was his response:

I have thought about the CHM's collection, but I didn't want to cold-call / approach them as some random guy asking for access to their collection of rare and valuable machines. I would very much appreciate an introduction; thanks. I live close to the museum, so if they happen to occasionally pull items out of storage, I could probably drop by from time to time. That said, if the museum did get on board with this, it might make more sense for them to buy their own colorimeters. Having the data available anywhere regardless of who's the steward would make me happy.

I bought a VT100-series terminal that I believe to be the factory color or very close to it. I wanted to try painting one of the yellowed cases I had, and then it kind of dawned on me that collecting and sharing this kind of data could be useful to the community at large for restoration and reproduction of vintage hardware.

I bought the colorimeter well into the Pandemic. The only hardware I've had access to recently is my own, so my collection of samples is small. On top of that, I know most of my white and gray plastics are quite yellowed, so I don't think they're worth sampling. However, I think it would help make a case for the project, so I'll work on tidying and presenting the data I do have over the next week or two.

At this point, I'll leave it to you and Eric to discuss if this would be of interest / use to the museum and work out the details. I'd like to know to know if anything comes of this.

Thanks,
Dave