

# Guide to the Photo Data Systems Incorporated records



**Dates:** 1960 – 1969

**Extent:** 0.25 linear feet in 3 folders

**Collection number:** X3598.2006

**Accession number:** 102635205

**Processed by:** Sherwin Sabado, 2006

**Abstract**

The Photo Data Systems Incorporated records are comprised of administrative papers and records, design drawings and promotional materials regarding the Slide-a-Mat machine invented in the 1960's. It was an early system demonstrating the concept of shopping from the comfort of an armchair and push button shopping.

**Administrative Information****Access Restrictions**

The collection is open for research.

**Publication Rights**

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**Preferred Citation**

[Identification of Item], Date, Photo Data Systems Incorporated records, Lot X3598.2006, Box [#], Folder [#], Computer History Museum

**Provenance**

Slide-a-Mat documentation was donated by Shawn Carolan-Abell and Viki Carolan-Gonzales to the Computer History Museum in 2006.

**Repository**

Computer History Museum  
1401 N. Shoreline Blvd.  
Mountain View, CA 94043  
USA  
650-810-1010  
[www.computerhistory.org](http://www.computerhistory.org)

**Historical Note**

Around 1965, Ann and William Carolan invented the Slide-a-Mat machine and formed Photo Data Systems Incorporated. The machine's cabinet was 3 feet by 4 feet by 4 feet, and contained two 12 inch screens, which displayed pictures and detailed information on products ranging from appliances, furniture, houses, and vacation packages. In front of the machine, buttons allowed customers to navigate through different products or product features such as color and size. To place orders, the Slide-a-Mat included a telephone with an optical sense card reader and a set of cards. When ready, the customer slid a vendor-specific plastic card into the telephone which automatically dialed the vendor. The Slide-a-Mat machine introduced the terms "push button shopping" and "shopping from armchairs" long before online commerce. The company had hoped to place machines in public places such as airports and shopping centers.

The Slide-a-Mat was patented in the 1960s, but bankruptcy after facing difficult market conditions led the company to go under.

## Scope and Content Note

The Photo Data Systems Incorporated records are composed of administrative records, design drawings and promotional materials from the 1960s. The records are divided into three folders and total 0.5 linear feet, in one box. All folders are arranged alphabetically by title.

The first folder is *Administrative Papers*, circa 1965. The folder contains Photo Data Systems Incorporated's organizational structure, goals and exhibit agreements. It also contains a letter from MAR Enterprise.

The second folder is *Design Drawings*, circa 1965. The folder contains two copies of the Model C-1 schematic drawing.

The third folder is *Promotional Materials*, circa 1965. The folder contains two idea catalogs from different showrooms, Photo-Data Selectors promotional material, Slide-a-mat business stationary and 4 copies of Slide-a-Mat brochures.

## Indexing Terms

Carolan, Ann J.  
Carolan, William  
Photo Data Systems Incorporated  
Shopping  
Slide-a-Mat machine

## Separated Items

Physical objects including the original prototype machine and many publicity photographs, may be found in the CHM collections database at: <http://www.computerhistory.org/search/>.

## Folder List

Folder #	Title	Date
102660220	Administrative materials	1965 ca.
102660222	Schematic model c-1	1965-07-30
102660221	Promotional Materials	1965 ca.