



Guide to the Edmund C. Berkeley Papers

Creator: Edmund C. Berkeley

Dates: 1947-1966, bulk 1951-1953

Extent: 1.65 linear feet, 2 manuscript boxes, 1 small flat box

Collection number: B1514.01

Catalog number: 102671925

Collection processed by: Sara Chabino Lott 2007, Sydney Gulbranson 2015

Finding aid prepared by: Sara Chabino Lott and Sydney Gulbranson

Abstract

The Edmund C. Berkeley papers consist of records related to Simon the mechanical brain. There is also a small amount of material related to robots, including Squee: the Robot Squirrel. Types of materials in the collection include technical notes, specifications, correspondence, wiring diagrams, drawings, receipts, parts lists, clippings, catalogs, and a small number of photographs. The collection covers the years 1947 to 1966.

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

The collection is open for research.

Publication Rights

The Computer History Museum (CHM) can only claim physical ownership of the collection. Copyright restrictions may apply and users are responsible for satisfying any claims of the copyright holder. Requests for copying and permission to publish, quote, or reproduce any portion of the Computer History Museum's collection must be obtained jointly from both the copyright holder (if applicable) and the Computer History Museum as owner of the material.

Languages

The collection is entirely in English.

Preferred Citation

[Identification of Item], [Date], Edmund C. Berkeley papers, Lot B1514.01, Box [#], Folder [#], Catalog [#], Computer History Museum.

Immediate Source of Acquisition

The Edmund C. Berkeley papers were donated to the Computer History Museum by Gordon Bell sometime between 1979 and 1999.

Repository

Computer History Museum
1401 N. Shoreline Blvd.
Mountain View, CA 94043
USA
650-810-1010
www.computerhistory.org

Biographical/Historical Note

Edmund Callis Berkeley was an American computer scientist and social activist. Berkeley was born on March 20, 1909. Berkeley earned a BA in mathematics and logic from Harvard University in 1930 and went to work for Mutual Life Insurance of New York as an actuarial clerk. In 1934 he joined Prudential Insurance of America, where he eventually became chief research consultant. In 1941 Berkeley passed his last professional actuarial examinations. Berkeley joined the Navy in 1942 and worked at Dahlgren Laboratory as a mathematician. There, he was assigned to the Harvard Computation Laboratory, where he worked on the sequential calculator project (MARK II).

Berkeley returned to Prudential after leaving the Navy in 1946. In 1947 he helped found the Eastern Association for Computing Machinery and served as its first secretary. In 1948 the association was renamed the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM).

Berkeley left Prudential in 1948 and established Edmund C. Berkeley & Associates, actuarial consultants. In 1954 Berkeley & Associates incorporated as Berkeley Enterprises, Inc.

In 1947 Berkeley presented the idea for a very simple model mechanical brain to the Association for Symbolic Logic in New York. That idea was the focus of the third chapter of Berkeley's book *Giant Brains, or Machines That Think* (1949). The purpose of the chapter was to introduce a general audience to the fundamentals of computing circuits used in very large mechanical brains. Berkeley named his teaching model Simon in honor of the Mother Goose character Simple Simon. Simon as an actual machine was begun in 1949, and finished in April, 1950. Simon was constructed by the combined efforts of three men: William A. Porter, a skilled mechanic, and two Columbia University electrical engineering graduate students, Robert A. Jensen and Andrew Vall.

Berkeley supplemented his income by consulting on the applications, marketing, and uses of automatic machinery for handling information and computing. He published a quarterly computer magazine, which eventually expanded into the monthly journal *Computers and Automation*. Additionally, he became involved in public education in Massachusetts, and set up correspondence courses in general knowledge, mathematics, computers, and logic systems. He continued to write books on computers, logic, and learning and reviewed books for the Library of Science series. Berkeley marketed his own books, robots, and teaching machines through self-published mail order catalogs. Berkeley sometimes wrote and published under the pseudonym Neil D. MacDonald.

Berkeley was active in the peace movement and in 1958 became involved with the Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy (SANE). Berkeley had worked against the threat of nuclear war ever since he had been part of a "hazards project" at Prudential. The "hazards project" was charged with identifying the greatest modern hazards. Berkeley came to the conclusion that nuclear war was the greatest hazard facing mankind. When Prudential abandoned the project and forbade Berkeley from working on it, even on his own time, he quit.

Edmund Berkeley died on March 7, 1988 at the age of 79.

Scope and Content of the Collection

The Edmund C. Berkeley papers primarily consist of records related to Simon the mechanical, or electric, brain. Included are numerous working copies of construction plans for Simon, and two final versions that were for sale to the public. There is also a folder of material related to Simon V, designed by John P. Marchant. The collection contains numerous articles and press releases about Simon, as well as a technical report by Andrew Vall. It also includes drafts of articles that appeared in *Radio-Electronics* magazine, materials related to an exhibition of robots sponsored by the Associated Merchandising Corporation, and a member roster of the Association for Computing Machinery from 1950. There is a small amount of material related to the robots Squee: the Robot Squirrel, Rudy, and Franken. Correspondents of note include Robert A. Jensen, and Robert Sutherland. The collection covers the years 1947 to 1966, with the bulk of the material being from 1951 to 1953. The collection has one series "Robots," which is arranged chronologically.

Indexing Terms

Berkeley, Edmund Callis
Electronic data processing
Robotics
Simon mechanical brain (local heading)

Separated Material

Physical objects were separated from the collection. These include a Simon 1 relay logic machine. To view catalog records for the physical objects go to the CHM website at <http://www.computerhistory.org/collections/search/>.

Related Collections at Other Repositories

Edmund C. Berkeley Papers, 1923-1988 (CBI 50), Charles Babbage Institute, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis.

	<u>Catalog Number</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>
<u>Folder List</u>			
Robots			
Box 1	102671914	Old construction plans	1947-1951
Box 1	102671913	Circuits and instructions	1949-1951
Box 1	102671910	Problems, coding, and tapes	1949-1951
Box 1	102726109	Small robot machine articles	1949-1951
Box 1	102726120	Miscellaneous Simon materials	1949-1952
Box 1	102671922	Radio-Electronics	1950-10
Box 1	102726113	Exhibit of robot machines	1950
Box 1	102671919	Fact sheets, press releases, and lecture abstracts	1950
Box 1	102671921	Publicity clippings	1950
Box 1	102726122	Simon clippings and exhibition proposal	1950
Box 1	102671912	Wiring diagrams	1950
Box 3	102726118	Scientific American magazine	1950-11
Box 1	102671916	Construction plans, 2nd edition, working copy	1950-1951
Box 2	102726119	Correspondence and financials related to Simon	1950-1951
Box 1	102726114	Inquiries about Simon	1950-1951
Box 2	102726116	Radio-Electronics articles series outlines	1950-1951
Box 1	102714256	Simon and Squee publicity	1950-1951
Box 1	102726111	Simon articles and notes	1950-1951
Box 2	102726121	Simon exhibit correspondence	1950-1951
Box 2	102671915	Construction plans, 2nd edition, revised, working copy	1950-1952
Box 2	102726112	Simon presentation charts and articles	1950-1952

	<u>Catalog Number</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>
Box 2	102726117	Correspondence and notes about drafts of Radio-Electronics articles	1951
Box 2	102726115	Radio-Electronics articles	1951
Box 2	102671917	Construction plans, 2nd edition, final version	1952-03
Box 2	102714255	Robot squirrel hunts his own food	1952-07
Box 2	102671920	Robots Squee, Rudy, and Franken	1952-1953
Box 2	102726110	Press releases, reports, and robot plans	1953-1956
Box 2	102671918	Construction plans, 3rd edition, working copy	1955
Box 2	102671911	Construction plans, 3rd edition, final version	1955-08
Box 2	102671923	Kits and publications for sale	1960-1961
Misc Oversize 2	102671924	Simon V	1966