

Guide to the Edmund C. Berkeley Papers

Inclusive Dates: 1947-1966, **Bulk Dates,** 1951-1953

Extent: .417 linear feet in 1 box

Collection number: B1514.01

Accession number: 102671925

Processed by: Sara Chabino Lott 2007

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. Types of material in the collection includes technical notes, specifications, correspondence, wiring diagrams, drawings, receipts, parts lists, clippings, catalogs, and two 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. Users are responsible for satisfying any claims of the copyright holder. Permission to copy or publish any portion of the Computer History Museum's collection must be given by the Computer History Museum.

Preferred Citation

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

Provenance

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
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www.computerhistory.org



Biographical Note

Edmund Callis Berkeley was an American computer scientist and social activist. Berkeley was born on February 22, 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 Note

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. Also included 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 "Simon mechanical brain."

Indexing Terms

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

Separated Material

Physical objects and most photographs were separated from the collection. These include a Simon 1 electric brain and seven images of Simon. To view catalog records for the physical objects and still images go to the CHM website at <http://archive.computerhistory.org/search>.

Related Collections at Other Repositories

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

Folder List**Simon mechanical brain*****Box 1***

102671914	Old construction plans	1947-1951
102671913	Circuits and instructions	1949-1951
102671910	Problems, coding, and tapes	1949-1951
102671919	Fact sheets, press releases, and lecture abstracts	1950
102671921	Publicity clippings	1950
102671912	Wiring diagrams	1950
102671916	Construction plans, 2nd edition, working copy	1950-1951
102671915	Construction plans, 2nd edition, revised, working copy	1950-1952
102671920	Robots Squee, Rudy, and Franken	1952-1953
102671918	Construction plans, 3rd edition, working copy	1955
102671923	Kits and publications for sale	1960-1961
102671911	Construction plans, 3rd edition, final version	August 1955
102671917	Construction plans, 2nd edition, final version	March 1952
102671922	Radio-Electronics	Oct. 1950

Box Misc. oversize 2

102671924	Simon V	1966
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