

SDS 940 Timesharing Computer Control Panel (1966)



Rick Crandall & SDS 940 panel at ADAPSO Reunion, March 2002

This panel of lights and switches is the central control hub for the historic Scientific Data Systems 940 made in July of 1966. The SDS 940 was the first computer designed specifically for on-line computing. It was also the first host computer ever to be connected to the “Internet” in October 1969 at the Stanford Research Institute.

The 940’s basic operating system (i.e. the equivalent of Unix or Windows NT today) was created in 1966 as a collaboration of U.C. Berkeley researchers and Comshare (Ann Arbor), SDS (Santa Monica) and Tymshare (Cupertino). Comshare continued the development into Commander I, its first commercial timesharing offering.

Here’s a quote from “Where Wizards Stay up Late, The Origins of the Internet”¹.

“A month after the first IMP² was installed at UCLA, IMP Number Two arrived at SRI right on schedule on October 1, 1969....The SRI guys loved their host computer, an SDS 940 ... a revolutionary

time-sharing system first put together by a team at Berkeley ... With both IMP's now in place, the moment to test the actual two-node ARPA³ network had finally arrived."

The test worked and the Internet was born. The 940 at SRI was serial #3 made by SDS. This one at Comshare was Serial #2. The ARPA network aimed at governmental and academic uses while Comshare and Tymshare opted for commercialized uses of the technology. Now in the late 1990's the two approaches have converged; the Internet is becoming the infrastructure for all interactive computing.

- 1. By Katie Hafner and Matthew Lyon, Simon & Schuster, 1996; pp 149 – 152**
- 2. *Interface Message Processor, the computerized network switch for the Internet, originally created by Bolt, Berenak & Newman***
- 3. *Advanced Research Projects Agency the government agency who funded the early work on the Net.***