



Guide to the Community Memory records

Creator: Community Memory Project

Dates: 1964-2000, bulk 1974-1991

Extent: 32.59 linear feet, 21 record cartons, 3 manuscript boxes, and 5 custom boxes of varying sizes

Collection number: X3090.2005

Catalog number: 102733953

Collection processed by: Bo Doub and Kim Hayden, June 2015

Finding aid prepared by: Bo Doub, Kim Hayden, and Sara Chabino Lott, 2015

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Abstract

The Community Memory records are made up of material from 1964 to 2000, with the bulk from 1974 to 1991, that document the development and implementation of the first computer-based public bulletin board, Community Memory (CM), which was created and operated by a cooperative nonprofit entity called the Community Memory Project, based in Berkeley, California. CM-specific material includes administrative records, promotional material, discussion board printouts, usage statistics, designs and specifications, manuals, and training records. Also included are materials collected, but not created, by CM, including reports and essays, computing manuals, books, conference and workshop material, and articles and newsletters. The majority of the non-CM material reflects the sociopolitical ethos of CM, focusing on social issues and technology.

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

Materials in boxes 6, 9, and 12 contain social security numbers. Researchers must use redacted photocopies of this restricted material for research. All other material is open for research.

Publication Rights

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Languages

The collection is entirely in English.

Preferred Citation

[Identification of Item], [Date], Community Memory records, Lot X3090.2005, Box [#], Folder [#], Catalog [#], Computer History Museum.

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift of Lee Felsenstein, 2003.

Repository

Computer History Museum
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Biographical/Historical Note

Community Memory (CM) was the first computer-based public bulletin board, operating from 1973 through 1992 with most terminals located in public spaces in Berkeley, California, such as libraries, senior centers, co-ops, and laundromats. Born out of the Free Speech and countercultural movements of the 1960s, CM's purpose was to provide a free community-based space that linked people together through the unmediated sharing of ideas and knowledge, collective planning, and classified ads via messages and discussion forums.

Working as a nonprofit called Resource One Inc., which was dedicated to making computers available to the counterculture, Lee Felsenstein, Efrem Lipkin, Ken Colstad, and other developers created CM using a donated mainframe computer. The terminals, which consisted of a computer display and keyboard that was originally housed in a cardboard box, then later in a wooden one, were networked and messages were indexed, making all content available and searchable on any CM machine at any location. While messages were free to read, adding a

message cost 25 cents. Posting could be anonymous or signed, and registration was not required.

The first terminals operated from 1973 to 1974 at Leopold's Records, a communal house, and Whole Earth Access Store in Berkeley; Vocations for Social Change in Oakland; and the San Francisco Public Library's Mission branch. Although it was popular, the group temporarily shut down the project because they could not easily replicate the equipment and languages being used, and the computer that acted as the central hub in the network was not sufficient to support expansion of the project.

The three men regrouped and in 1977 created a collectively run nonprofit entity called the Community Memory Project to support CM (this group was interchangeably referred to as the Community Memory Project and Community Memory). They developed their own software, a database called Sequitur, and a communications package called X.dot, and began placing terminals with the overhauled system throughout Berkeley. That pilot program ran from 1984 to 1988, after which they made adjustments based on research and evaluations, then released new terminals in 1989 in Berkeley and licensed their software for similar systems to be set up in places like San Francisco State University and Los Angeles' Electronic Cafe. Due to a shortage of funding and inconsistent marketing and outreach, Community Memory shutdown in 1992.

Scope and Content of the Collection

The Community Memory records contain material authored and collected by members of the Community Memory Project. The collection spans 1964 to 2000, with the bulk of the material being from 1974 to 1991. Parts of the collection that were created by employees and users of CM include administrative records, promotional material, discussion board printouts, usage statistics, designs and specifications, and manuals and training records. CM's administrative records document a wide variety of activities devoted to running the nonprofit, including material related to planning and research, finance, funding, legal issues, and personnel. There is also a small amount of unprocessed audiovisual material.

The promotional parts of the collection are mostly composed of overviews summarizing CM's mission and functions and articles and clippings featuring CM. Also included in the collection are printouts of messages and dialogue written at CM terminals by users, along with directories and indices that were made to collate posts about certain topics together. Related to these discussion board printouts are the usage statistics that were also printed by CM members documenting how people used the terminals and what kind of searches and messages they wrote to browse and interact with other users. Material that reveals how the terminals were set up and operated are contained in the "designs and specifications" series and records relating to the training of CM users, volunteers, and employees are contained in the "manuals and training records."

The parts of this collection that were collected, but not created, by the CM community are made up of reports and essays, computing manuals, books, conference and workshop material, and articles and newsletters. The majority of the non-CM essays, books, and articles reflect the sociopolitical ethos of CM in that they focus on social issues in computing, including works on gender, economics, power, and community and how those topics intersect with technology. The computing manuals of this collection are primarily related to Plexus systems, Unix, and the C programming language.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged into 11 series:

- Series 1, Administrative records, 1974-2000, bulk 1977-1991
- Series 2, Promotional material, outreach, and press, 1974-1991
- Series 3, Discussion board printouts, 1974-1991
- Series 4, Usage information and statistics, 1985-1991
- Series 5, Designs and specifications, 1977-1991
- Series 6, Manuals and training records, 1981-1992
- Series 7, Non-CM reports and essays, 1964-1991
- Series 8, Non-CM manuals, 1974-1990
- Series 9, Non-CM books, 1967-1991
- Series 10, Non-CM conference and workshop material, 1976-1991
- Series 11, Non-CM articles and newsletters, 1971-1993
- Series 12, Unprocessed AV material, circa 1990-1996

Indexing Terms

Berkeley (Calif.)
Bulletin boards
Community Memory Project
Computer networks
Cooperatives (business enterprises)
Felsenstein, Lee
Intellectual freedom
Nonprofit organization
Resource One

Separated Material

Physical objects were separated from the main collection, including two Community Memory public input terminals, and a time capsule in a large plastic water-cooler bottle, as well as software, posters, and signs. To view catalog records for separated material search the CHM catalog at <http://www.computerhistory.org/collections/search/>.

Related Collections at CHM

Lee Felsenstein Collection, Lot X6014.2011.

Related Collections at Other Repositories

Lee Felsenstein papers, ca. 1975-1995, Stanford University,
<http://searchworks.stanford.edu/view/5716481>.

Wilcox Collection of Contemporary Political Movements, Community Memory ephemeral materials, 1981-, University of Kansas,
<http://spencer.lib.ku.edu/collections/kansas-collection/wilcox>.

Collection Contents

Series 1, Administrative records, 1974-2000, bulk 1977-1991

This series contains documents related to the administrative side of CM as a business. Material dates from 1974 to 2000, with the bulk from 1977 to 1991. Included are documents related to business planning and development, company finances, fundraising and grants, legal issues, and employment. This series is arranged in 5 subseries:

Subseries 1.1, Planning and research, 1974-2000, bulk 1974-1991

Subseries 1.2, Finance, 1977-1990

Subseries 1.3, Funding, 1974-1991

Subseries 1.4, Legal, 1977-1992

Subseries 1.5, Personnel, 1984-1991

Subseries 1.1, Planning and research, 1974-2000, bulk 1974-1991

This subseries contains material related to the research and planning that went into the creation and development of CM as both a business and a product, from 1974 to 2000, with the bulk of material from 1974 to 1991. The largest part of this subseries consists of Berkeley and San Francisco Bay Area resources that offered services that could be included in the CM listings, or provided information useful to the development of a nonprofit business, including material from the City of Berkeley. Another large part of this collection includes information about other organizations and projects that CM staff presumably used as research tools while fine-tuning its terminals and business model, including promotional material, correspondence, company overviews, and clippings. There is also material related to the development of CM's business model and terminal site selection, including notes, proposals, bylaws, meeting minutes, business and evaluation planning documents, correspondence, and evaluations and maintenance logs of terminal sites. This subseries is arranged alphabetically by folder title.

Subseries 1.2, Finance, 1977-1990

This subseries contains material related to CM's business finances and accounting from 1977 to 1990. The majority consists of records of annual income, expenses, and taxes, including budgets, balance sheets, ledgers, journals, income statements, loans, invoices, receipts, tax forms, and handwritten notes. The rest of this subseries consists of payroll records, workers' compensation documents, financial account statements, returned checks, and check registers. This subseries is arranged alphabetically by folder title.

Subseries 1.3, Funding, 1974-1991

This subseries is made up of material related to the funding of CM from 1974 to 1991. A large portion consists of correspondence between CM and organizations and people it requested funding and donations from, plus receipts for donations and lists of donors. There is also a large amount of material related to a Telecommunications Education Trust (TET) grant CM received, including the grant proposal, press releases, and correspondence. One of the smaller groups of material in this subseries consists of material related to CM's fundraising strategy planning, including handwritten notes, correspondence, and planning reports. More generally, there is material related to potential sources of funding, such as promotional material, notes and articles about grant-funding organizations, and resources for nonprofits interested in fundraising, like reports, articles, and brochures. This subseries is arranged alphabetically by folder title.

Subseries 1.4, Legal, 1977-1992

This subseries consists of records related to CM's legal matters from 1977 to 1992. Documents related to licensing agreements, contracts, trademarks, and royalties make up a large portion of material. There is also a number of material related to CM's application for tax-exempt nonprofit status, including IRS forms, correspondence, and articles of incorporation. One folder contains material related to a settlement between Symantec and CM. Also included are business licenses, building leases, and

nondisclosure agreements, plus insurance and state audit records. This subseries is arranged alphabetically by folder title.

Subseries 1.5, Personnel, 1984-1991

This subseries contains material related to employees and prospective employees of CM from 1984 to 1991. Records include resumes and handwritten notes about job applicants, job descriptions, staff personnel files, a company personnel policy, and documents related to the University of California, Berkeley, work study program and the students who worked at CM. This subseries is arranged chronologically.

Series 2, Promotional material, outreach, and press, 1974-1991

This series contains overviews of the Community Memory Project, articles and clippings featuring CM, photographs, promotional material, newsletters published by CM and Resource One, and internal correspondence relating to CM outreach and events. The largest part of this series is composed of articles, clippings, and other writings that feature CM. A portion of the overviews and promotional material created by CM relates to "The Young People's Yellow Pages"—a catalogue written by CM volunteers focusing on youth-oriented places and activities in Berkeley. The Community Memory Alameda County War Memorial project is also commonly featured in this series. One other highlight of this series is a small amount of photographs picturing people—including Lee Felsenstein—using the CM terminal at Leopold's Records. This series is arranged alphabetically by folder title.

Series 3, Discussion board printouts, 1974-1991

This series is primarily made up of printouts of online posts from various Community Memory terminals. The earliest bulletin posts are from the first CM terminal at Leopold's Records in Berkeley—mostly written in 1974. CM posts in this series span to the early 1990s, with some of the later content printed as screen captures, which reveal aspects of the CM interface at that time. Also included in this series are indices and directories that isolate CM content by the keywords employed by users, such as the printout of a directory of posts relating to music and musicians that was left at the terminal at Leopold's Records on a weekly basis for people to browse. This series also contains keyword indices that list and order terms used in discussion board posts along with their frequency of use. Common topics discussed on CM include music, politics, housing, offered services, women's groups, and technology. Lastly, public discussions focusing on specific topics, often labeled "conferences," are documented in this series. Most of the conferences are coordinated through the Electronic Information Exchange System (EIES), an early online conferencing bulletin board system, though at least one is mediated by Resource One. This series is arranged chronologically.

Series 4, Usage information and statistics, 1985-1991

This series contains usage statistics and feedback about the CM system. Statistics covered in the usage reports include, for a given time period: the amount of minutes each terminal is in use, number of sessions, operations performed, searches performed, Unix usage, messages added, messages read, responses, and charts showing changes in use over time. Also included in this series are suggestions and feedback messages written by users on CM terminals and feedback questionnaire forms filled out by users, which CM staff would use for improving the system. Lastly, this series contains a table from 1987 listing index words used in CM searches, the total number of searches performed, and the average number of searches per day. The index words most commonly searched for (with the total number of times searched in parenthesis) are: adam (379), sex (316), love (205), jokes (147), housing (138), car (134), eku (133), art (117), computer (114), gay (96), fantasy (90), joke (88), and apartment (83). This series is arranged chronologically.

Series 5, Designs and specifications, 1977-1991

This series consists of design drawings, notes, program listings, correspondence, and specifications regarding the design and maintenance of CM equipment and software. The largest part of this series relates to software design and programming. Also included are drawings and notes specifically about the setup of CM terminals in different locations. Other records in this series relate to designing and implementing different iterations of the CM interface and setting up the telephone system at CM. This series is arranged chronologically.

Series 6, Manuals and training records, 1981-1992

This series contains CM manuals, correspondence, technical papers, and presentation material used in reference and training for CM users, volunteers, and employees. The bulk of this series is comprised of manuals and technical papers relating to X.Dot: an object based implementation of X.25, the protocol suite for packet switched wide area network (WAN) communication. The Community Memory Project had a role in X.Dot's creation and held intellectual property rights over X.Dot. Much of this material also relates to Provos Data Simulator. Material relating to CM user and volunteer training include user's manuals and workshop proceedings covering the more basic functions and procedures of CM terminals and software. Maintenance and administration procedures for employees of CM are documented in log books and manuals relating to the operation of CM machines and programs as well as instructions and papers on how to use UNIX. This series is arranged alphabetically by folder title.

Series 7, Non-CM reports and essays, 1964-1991

This series contains essays, technical papers and reports, periodicals, and correspondence primarily regarding computing and society. Most of the writings in this series explore intersections between social factors--such as community, power, politics, gender, nuclear weapons, and economics--and issues in computing. These works include both published papers and unpublished theses and drafts. A significant portion of these papers were authored by Michael Rossman, a well-known activist and participant of Berkeley's free speech movements in the 1960s. Other topics covered in these reports and essays include cable television and computer conferencing. This series is arranged alphabetically by folder title.

Series 8, Non-CM manuals, 1974-1990

This series contains manuals for computer programs, languages, and systems from 1974 to 1990. The majority of manuals are for various Plexus systems and Unix System V. A smaller number of manuals are related to the C programming language, computer applications, and other computers and operating systems. Also included are two manuals related to grassroots and collective projects. This series is arranged alphabetically by folder title.

Series 9, Non-CM books, 1967-1991

This series contains books collected by CM on a wide variety of topics. The majority of the books in this series relate to topics of computing and society, such as the social impact of cybernetics, mass communications and U.S. imperialism, and information technology's effects on rural development. Other topics include cable television, women and computing, communalism and working collectively, guides to Berkeley, and instructional books on computers, business and nonprofit administration, and legal guides. This series is arranged alphabetically by folder title.

Series 10, Non-CM conference and workshop material, 1976-1991

This series contains material from conferences, symposia, workshops, and classes from 1976 to 1991. The bulk of this series is made up of conference proceedings, including individual and bound collections of papers. The remaining material consists of programs, brochures, a class syllabus, and handwritten notes. This subseries is arranged alphabetically by folder title.

Series 11, Non-CM articles and newsletters, 1971-1993

This series contains clippings, articles, newsletters, and periodicals from 1971 to 1993 on subjects related to the technology and ethos of CM, but not about the company or project itself. The majority of material is related to telecommunications, networking, and computer technology, with a smaller portion focused on Berkeley, nonprofits, politics, co-ops, and grassroots activism. This subseries is arranged alphabetically by folder title.

Series 12, Unprocessed AV material, circa 1990-1996

This series contains unprocessed audiovisual material from circa 1990 to circa 1996. Included are photographs, negatives, contact sheets, slides, cassette tapes, and VHS tapes. The cassette tapes include radio broadcast recordings and one VHS tape is labeled "Computers in Laundromats." This series is unarranged.

	<u>Catalog Number</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>
Folder List			
Administrative records: Planning and research			
Box 1	102734467	Berkeley resources	1981-1991
Box 1	102734459	Business planning and development	ca. 1983-1991
Box 2	102734458	Correspondence	1983-1992
Box 2	102734456	Evaluations and evaluation planning	1984-1990
Box 2; 3; 4	102734481	Information about other organizations, projects, and products	ca. 1974-1991
Box 3	102734457	Meeting minutes	1977-1991
Box 3	102734473	Notes on people interested in CM	ca. 1989-1990
Box 3; 5	102734476	San Francisco Bay Area resources	ca. 1978-2000
Box 5	102734455	Terminal sites	1983-1991
Box 5	102734460	Video display terminal hazard information	1980-1990
Administrative records: Finance			
Box 5; 6	102734420	Annual budget, income, and expenses	1977-1993
Box 7; 8	102734422	Check registers and returned checks	1977-1989
Box 6	102734412	Financial account statements	1977-1990
Box 6	102734423	Payroll [RESTRICTED]	1981-1988
Box 6; 9	102734417	Tax records [RESTRICTED]	1977-1990
Box 9	102734424	Undated records	undated
Box 9	102734413	Workers' compensation	1982-1989
Administrative records: Funding			
Box 9	102734430	Donation receipts	1974-1980
Box 9; 10	102734432	Funding requests and related correspondence	1979-1991

	<u>Catalog Number</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>
Box 9; 10	102734431	Fundraising strategy planning	1978-1991
Box 10	102734433	Information about potential donors and grant-funding organizations	1987-1991
Box 10	102734437	Nonprofit fundraising and management resources	1975-1991
Box 10; 11	102734429	Telecommunications Education Trust (TET) grant	1989-1991

Administrative records: Legal

Box 11	102734445	Business licenses	1983-1984
Box 11	102734452	Correspondence with legal counsel	1978-1984
Box 11	102734440	Insurance	1984-1992
Box 11	102734444	Lease and property records	1985-1991
Box 11	102734451	Legal resources	1977-1989
Box 11	102734446	Licensing agreements and contracts	1981-1991
Box 11	102734439	Nondisclosure agreements	1980-1983
Box 11; 12	102734443	Nonprofit status	1977-1991
Box 12	102734447	Royalties	1981-1984
Box 12	102734450	State audits	1985-1986
Box 12	102734442	Symantec settlement	1984-1988
Box 12	102734441	Trademarks	1982-1988

Administrative records: Personnel

Box 12	102734427	Applicant and job information	ca. 1984-1989
Box 12	102734426	Personnel files and policy [RESTRICTED]	1987-1991
Box 12	102734425	University of California, Berkeley, work study program [RESTRICTED]	1988-1991

	<u>Catalog Number</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>
Promotional material, outreach, and press			
Box 12	102703231	Community Memory demonstration booth, outside	ca. 1975
Box 12	102734415	Community Memory events	1989-1991
Box 12	102703229	Community Memory terminal at Leopold's Records, Berkeley, California	ca. 1975
Box 12	102734421	Newsletters	1974-1991
Box 12	102734418	Outreach	1990-1991
Box 12	102734414	Overviews and promotional material	1982-1991
Box 12	102734416	Personal narratives	1979
Box 12; 13	102734419	Press featuring Community Memory	1976-1991
Discussion board printouts			
Box 13	102703230	Community Memory indices and directories	1974
Box 14	102703232	Community nose	1974
Box 14	102734436	Directories on music and musicians	1974
Box 14	102734434	Interzone interplay	1974
Box 14	102734435	Keyword indices from Leopold's Records terminal	1974
Box 15	102734428	Discussion board printouts from Leopold's Records terminal	1974-1975
Box 13	102734448	Online conferences	1979-1989
Box 13; 16; 1	102734438	Discussion board printouts from various terminals	1984-1991
Usage information and statistics			
Box 17; 18	102734453	Usage statistics	1985-1991
Box 18	102734454	Community Memory index word searches	1987
Box 18	102734449	Suggestions and feedback	1991

	<u>Catalog Number</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>
Designs and specifications			
Box 18	102734464	Telephone system	1977-1980
Box 18	102734465	Software design and programming	1982-1987
Box 18	102734461	Design specifications	1987-04-08
Box 18	102734462	Interface design	1988-1991
Box 18	102734463	Terminal design and setup	1989
Manuals and training records			
Box 18	102734471	Community Memory user's manuals	1987-1992
Box 18	102734468	Community Memory workshops	ca. 1985
Box 18	102734470	Maintenance and administration procedures	1981-1985
Box 18	102734469	Volunteer and user training	1984-1991
Box 19	102734472	X.Dot	1981-1991
Non-CM reports and essays			
Box 19	102734478	Journal of community communications	1980
Box 19	102734482	Reports and essays on cable television	1973-1978; 1991
Box 19	102734475	Reports and essays on computer conferencing and teleconferencing	1977-1978
Box 19; 20	102734480	Reports and essays on computing and society	1971-1989
Box 20	102734507	Reports and essays on nuclear energy and weapons	1980
Box 20	102734483	Technical reports and papers	1964-1988
Box 20	102734479	WORLDTECH Reports	1975-1976
Box 20	102734477	Writings by Michael Rossman	1972-1977

	<u>Catalog Number</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>
Non-CM manuals			
Box 20; 21	102734488	Applications	1983-1987
Box 22	102734492	C programming language	1978-1985
Box 21	102734487	Computers and operating systems	ca. 1985-1986
Box 21	102734486	Grassroots projects	ca. 1977
Box 21	102734485	Networking	1974-1990
Box 23	102734484	Plexus	1979-1984
Box 21; 22	102734489	Unix	1980-1987
Non-CM books			
Box 24	102734491	Berkeley inside/out : a guide to restaurants, entertainment, people and politics	1989
Box 24	102734494	Books on cable television	1974-1989
Box 24	102734495	Books on community, communalism, and working collectively	1974-1976; 1990
Box 24	102734496	Books on computing and society	1967-1989
Box 25	102734497	Books on grants and funding	1988-1991
Box 25	102734493	Books on law	1979-1988
Box 25	102734498	Books on women and computing	1981-1986
Box 25	102734500	Computers for kids	1980-1982
Box 25	102734499	Instructional books on computers and business administration	1976-1990
Box 25	102734490	Soft-tech	1978
Non-CM conference and workshop materials			
Box 26	102734505	Conference proceedings and papers	1978-1990
Box 26	102734504	Notes, brochures, syllabi, and programs	1976-1991

	<u>Catalog Number</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>
Non-CM articles and newsletters			
Box 27	102734474	Clippings and articles related to technology, telecommunications, and nonprofits	1971-1991
Box 27	102734502	Clippings and periodicals related to Berkeley	1973; 1989-1991
Box 27	102734501	Clippings, articles, and newsletters related to activism, co-ops, and politics	1977-1991
Box 27	102734503	Newsletters and periodicals	1973-1993
Unprocessed AV material			
Box AV 1	102651551	Community Memory Project audio and video recordings	ca. 1996
Box AV 2	102726263	Community Memory Project photographs, audio and video recordings	1990-1991