Computer History: The First Computers

Introduction

This lesson explores the key electronic and programmable machines that laid the groundwork for modern computing. It focuses on the transition from mechanical calculators to the first truly programmable and electronic computers.

The First Electronic and Programmable Computers

● **Z1**: Considered the first programmable computer. It was created by Konrad Zuse in Germany between 1936 and 1938. It used punch tape for both input and output. ● **Atanasoff-Berry Computer (ABC)**: Developed between 1939 and 1942, this was the first electronic digital computing device. It was able to solve 29 equations simultaneously and was the first computer able to store information in its main memory.

- **ENIAC**: Completed in 1946, the **Electronic Numerical Integrator and Computer (ENIAC)** was the first electronic general-purpose computer. It was a massive machine, filling a 20x40-foot room and containing 18,000 vacuum tubes.
- **UNIVAC I**: Released in 1951, the first commercial computer, the UNIVersal Automatic Computer 1 was designed for business and government applications.
- **EDVAC**: The Electronic Discrete Variable Automatic Computer was the first stored program computer. Designed by Von Neumann in 1952, its key characteristic was having a memory to hold both a stored program and data.