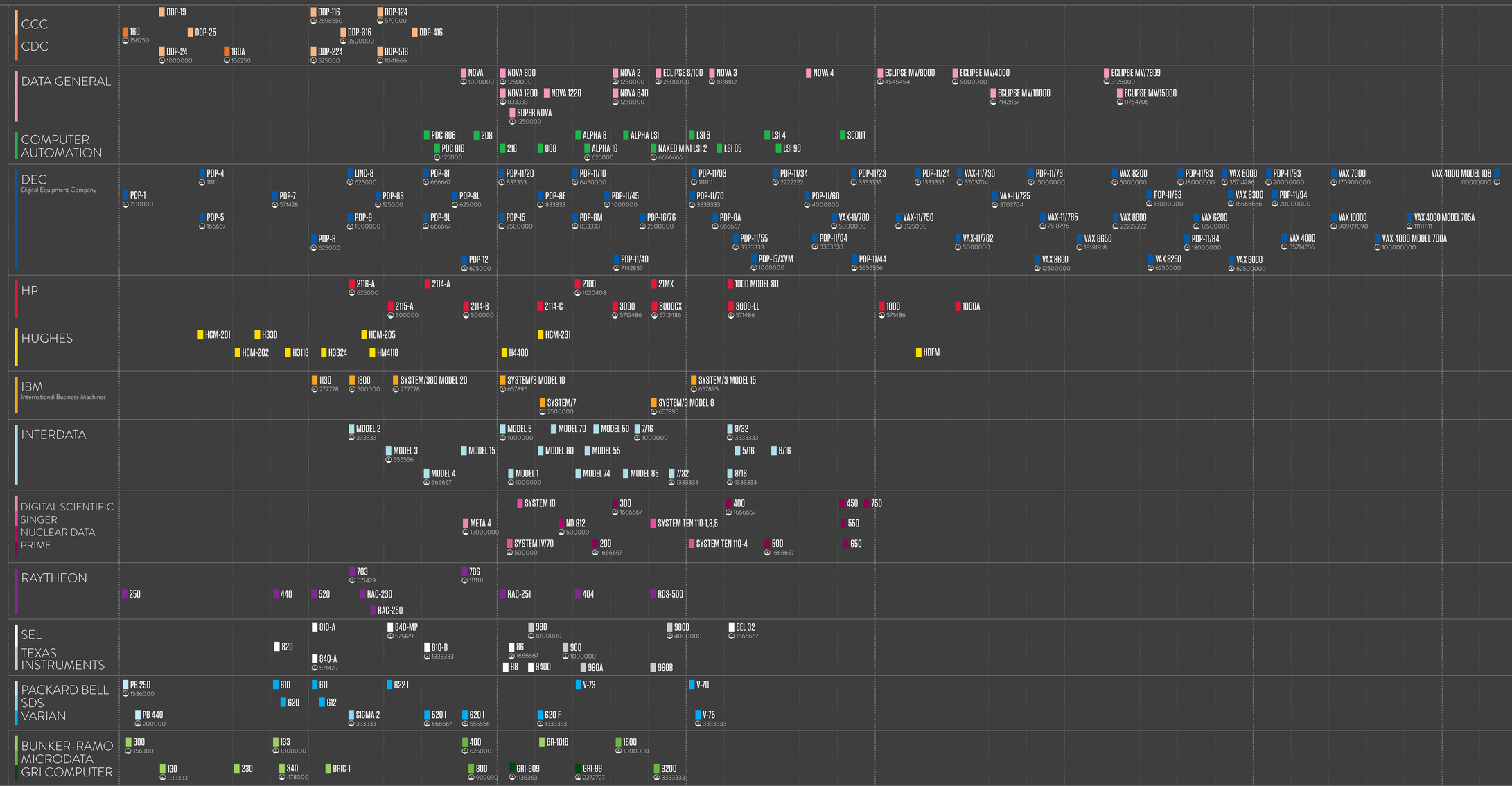
HISTORY OF MINICOMPUTERS

The first computers considered to be minicomputers, the DEC PDP-1 and the CDC 160A, were introduced in 1960, but the actual term was not applied to computers until 1970: In the era of the miniskirt and the Mini Cooper automobile, the PDP-8/e became the first machine to be labeled a minicomputer. The term has been applied in retrospect to a computer that fits the following general guidelines: It is intended for a single user or small group of users, it is physically small (at least compared to a mainframe system), and sells for a fraction of the price of a mainframe (often at least an order of magnitude less). Minicomputers were a separate cabinet that communicated with the user through a teleprinter or video terminal; later, the terms "workstation" and "personal computer" would apply to machines with integrated video interface and a directly-connected keyboard.

As market demands for computing power grew, minicomputers soon seemed less "mini", with some weighing hundreds of pounds and drawing considerable power. New categories such as "supermini" appeared in the trade press to describe these machines that often served a large number of people in an office or academic department. By comparison, mainframe computers supported a hundred users or more, through both timesharing and batch-processing services.

The first microprocessor-based systems were often still referred to as minicomputers, and products from companies such as DEC tried to maintain the aesthetic of their long-successful product lines. The success of products like the Altair 8800 and Apple II quickly defined a new and distinct class of computers, and by the end of the 1980s minicomputers of whatever construction were passing into history.



KEY

- COMPUTER AUTOMATION
- CCC CDC
- DATA GENERAL
- DEC
- HP
- HUGHES
- IBM
- INTERDATA
- DIGITAL SCIENTIFIC SINGER FOUR PHASE NUCLEAR DATA PRIME
- RAYTHEON
- SEL TEXAS INSTRUMENTS
- PACKARD BELL SDS VARIAN
- BUNKER-RAMO MICRODATA GRI COMPUTER

LCM CAN BE SEEN IN LIVING COMPUTER MUSEUM COLLETION

PROCESSOR SPEED MEASURED IN INSTRUCTIONS PER SECOND

SLOW MEDIUM FAST SUPERSONIC