

The First Fifteen Years of Computing in Aotearoa New Zealand

Brian E. Carpenter, *University of Auckland, New Zealand*

Sathiamoorthy Manoharan, *University of Auckland, New Zealand*

Janet Toland, *Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand*

Abstract—This article outlines the first fifteen years of modern computing in New Zealand ...

Modern computers arrived in Aotearoa New Zealand in 1960, little over a century after the first discernable information technology [1]. New Zealand was then a relatively isolated and small (2.5 million people) economy, so it is feasible to track the dissemination and socio-economic influence of computing for the following period; this study runs from 1960 to about 1975. Two events in the mid-1970s signaled the end of an economic and social era that began after World War II, and act as the end of our study: Britain joined the European Common Market in 1973, and New Zealand switched on a national Police Computer in 1976.

In 1960, New Zealand was a quite centrally managed economy. Indeed, its currency did not float until as late as 1985. The details are complex [2], but the result was that during the period of our study the Treasury was constantly concerned about the foreign exchange impact of computer imports, and this necessitated a system of import licensing. This was a constant background for trends in computing, especially since the Treasury initially favored computing service bureaus to ensure maximum usage of what they considered a scarce resource. Of course, many companies much preferred to have their own systems.

Several themes are used to organize this article:

- growth in numbers of computers and vendors
- growth in employees (and male dominance?) (and Pākehā/Māori?)
- types of usage, including service bureaus
- key areas where the technology was used
- local contributions to the technology
- start of computing services and teaching in universities, technical colleges (and maybe schools?)



FIGURE 1. ICL 1902A Delivery in 1969. Courtesy Fletcher Archives, NZ.

- professionalization (NZCS)
- commercial impact
- social impact

GROWTH IN NUMBERS AND EMPLOYMENT

The delivery of one of the successors of the first computer in New Zealand. It is an ICL 1902A being delivered to the premises of Motor Specialties on Anzac Avenue, Auckland in 1969. Almost certainly, this was installed in the same room as its predecessors, an ICT 1201 and an ICT 1301 (Figure 1).

TBD

CONCLUSION

TBD

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

TBD

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- [1] B. E. Carpenter and S. Manoharan, "Information Technology Pioneers of Aotearoa New Zealand," *IEEE Annals of the History of Computing*, vol. 47, no. 2, pp. 44–58, 2025.
- [2] Sullivan, Richard, "Exchange rate fluctuations: How has the regime mattered?" *Reserve Bank of New Zealand: Bulletin*, vol. 76, no. 2, pp. 26–34, 2013.

Brian E. Carpenter is an Honorary Professor in the School of Computer Science, University of Auckland, New Zealand. He is interested in Internet protocol design and in computing history. He received a Ph.D. from the University of Manchester, U.K. and is a past Chair of the Internet Engineering Task Force. Contact: brian@cs.auckland.ac.nz

Sathiamoorthy Manoharan is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Computer Science, University of Auckland, New Zealand. He is a senior member of IEEE. He is interested in computer systems, particularly with respect to performance and security. Contact: mano.manoharan@auckland.ac.nz.

Janet Toland is currently an Associate Professor in the School of Information Management, Te Herenga Waka, Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington, New Zealand. Her research work is in the history of information systems. She has a particular interest in social and ethical issues. She is currently the Historian for the Association of Information Systems. Contact her at Janet.Toland@vuw.ac.nz.