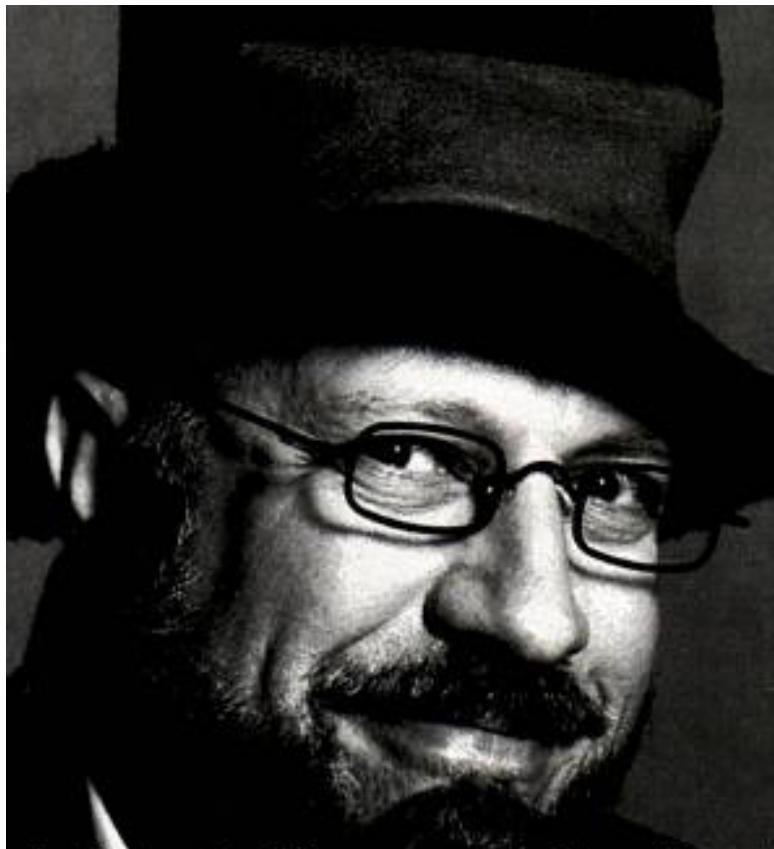


Michael S. Hart



March 8, 1947 - September 6, 2011



Memorial Service

September 12, 2011

Renner-Wikoff Chapel and Crematory
1900 Philo Road, Urbana
www.renner-wikoffchapel.com

11 am - 1 pm: Visitation

1:00 pm: Memorial service

Immediately following:

Burial at Westlawn Cemetery,

Followed by a reception at Eastland Suites, Urbana



Michael Hart and Bennett Hart with their mother Alice Woody

Life Remembered: Project Gutenberg founder Michael Hart 'did it his way'

Sat, 09/10/2011 - 8:00am | **Don Dodson**

<http://www.news-gazette.com/news/people/2011-09-10/life-remembered-project-gutenberg-founder-michael-hart-did-it-his-way.html>

URBANA — Friends and family of Michael Hart remember him not only as an early producer and proponent of e-books, but also as an inveterate garage-saler who embraced many interests and often proved good at them.

Mr. Hart, 64, of Urbana died Tuesday at his home. He was the founder of **Project Gutenberg**, a campaign to digitize the world's books. Today the project makes available more than 36,000 e-books in a multitude of languages.

A memorial service for Mr. Hart will be held at 1 p.m. Monday at Renner-Wikoff Chapel, Urbana. Burial will be in Woodlawn Cemetery, Urbana. Visitation will be from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Monday at the funeral home.

Mr. Hart's older brother, Bennett, said Michael was driven by the challenge of "how to get information to people on a broad scale" in languages and formats they could use.

"That was the light he was shooting at, so they could improve themselves," he said.

But Mr. Hart was often unorthodox in his approach.

Greg Newby, who collaborated with Mr. Hart on Project Gutenberg, described him as "definitely eccentric" and "resistant to compromise."

"If anyone epitomized Frank Sinatra, it was him. He did it his way," Bennett Hart said.

Mr. Hart was "a balance of extremes ... very reclusive but very effusive," Newby said. At Project Gutenberg, he had "a cast of thousands helping make his dream come true" as they typed in or scanned literary works.

Mr. Hart had a wide range of avocations through the years, including high-fidelity stereos, photography and stamps.

"Everybody here in town who has yard sales has seen him on his bike," Bennett Hart said.

Michael Hart used to go to Merry-Ann's Diner, have breakfast and plot out the best route for hitting

25 yard sales that day, his brother said.

Bennett Hart said his brother was an individualist, but not always anti-establishment. He was an Eagle Scout and served in the U.S. Army.

"He had a drive to go out and try things and do things. He didn't give up along the way. He would always do it to completion," Bennett Hart said.

Michael Hart's parents did cryptology work in Washington during World War II. His father, Hymen, later became a professor of English literature at the University of Illinois, specializing in Shakespeare, and his mother, Alice, became a professor of mathematics.

Michael Hart was born in Tacoma, Wash., and moved to Urbana with his family at age 11. He attended Thornburn Elementary, Urbana Junior High and Urbana High. Both he and his brother delivered The News-Gazette.

After graduating from high school in 1965, he studied chemical engineering at the UI, but didn't like it, his brother said.

Michael Hart then worked a short time at the Chicago Mercantile Exchange before being drafted into the Army and serving in Korea during the Vietnam era.

Later he traveled the West Coast, playing guitar in coffeehouses. He then decided to return to the UI, where he completed a bachelor's degree in interdisciplinary studies in 2 1/2 years, maintaining straight A's and graduating in 1973. He later did graduate work at Dartmouth College.

Although Mr. Hart thought of Tacoma as "his home away from home," he visited Hawaii several times in the last 15 or so years and was getting ready to relocate there, his brother said.

Bennett Hart said his brother had been getting tired in recent years, had problems with kidney stones and appeared to have had blockages.

But "in a world of complainers, he wasn't one," said Christina Heal, who considered him a dear friend.

Another friend, Victoria Moore, called Mr. Hart "very much an adventure."

Mr. Hart "always had to go off the beaten path," Heal said. Once, when they were on a trip to Washington, D.C., he had her pull off the road and flick the car lights, in order to see the fireflies respond, she said.

Bennett Hart said besides pushing Project Gutenberg, his brother pursued changes in copyright laws.

“He wasn’t afraid to be the Don Quixote. He had to go out and tilt until the cows came home,” Bennett Hart said. “He had the three things needed for that: the knowledge, the passion and the drive.”

Michael Hart, a Pioneer of E-Books, Dies at 64

By [WILLIAM GRIMES](#)

Published: September 8, 2011

Michael Hart, who was widely credited with creating the first e-book when he typed the Declaration of Independence into a computer on July 4, 1971, and in so doing laid the foundations for [Project Gutenberg](#), the oldest and largest digital library, was found dead on Tuesday at his home in Urbana, Ill. He was 64.



At left, Michael Hart, the founder of Project Gutenberg, with Gregory Newby, the organization's chief executive.

His death was confirmed by Gregory B. Newby, the chief executive and director of Project Gutenberg, who said that the cause had not yet been determined.

Mr. Hart found his life’s mission when the University of Illinois, where he was a student, gave him a user’s account on a Xerox [Sigma V mainframe computer](#) at the school’s Materials Research Lab.

Estimating that the computer time in his possession was worth \$100 million, Mr. Hart began thinking of a project that might justify that figure. Data processing, the principal application of computers at the time, did not capture his imagination. Information sharing did.

After attending a July 4 fireworks display, he stopped in at a grocery store and received, with his purchase, a copy of the Declaration of Independence printed on parchment. He typed the text, intending to send it as an e-mail to the users of Arpanet, the government-sponsored precursor to today’s Internet, but was dissuaded by a colleague who warned that the message would crash the system. Instead, he posted a notice that the text could be downloaded, and Project Gutenberg was born.

Its goal, formulated by Mr. Hart, was “to encourage the creation and distribution of e-books” and, by making books available to computer users at no cost, “to help break down the bars of ignorance and illiteracy.”

Over the next decade, working alone, Mr. Hart typed the Bill of Rights, the Constitution, the King James Bible and “Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland” into the project database, the first tentative

steps in a revolution that would usher in what he liked to call the fifth information age, a world of e-books, hand-held electronic devices like the Nook and Kindle, and unprecedented individual access to texts on a vast array of Internet archives.

Today, Project Gutenberg lists more than 30,000 books in 60 languages, with the emphasis on titles of interest to the general reader in three categories: “light literature,” “heavy literature” and reference works. In a [2006 e-mail](#) to the technology writer Glyn Moody, he predicted that there would be a billion e-books in 2021, Project Gutenberg’s 50th anniversary, and that, thanks to advances in memory chips, “you will be able to carry all billion e-books in one hand.”

Nearly all the books are in the public domain, although a relatively small number of copyrighted books are reproduced with the permission of the copyright owner. The library includes two books by Mr. Hart: “A Brief History of the Internet” and “Poems and Tales from Romania.”

“It’s a paradigm shift,” he told Searcher magazine in 2002. “It’s the power of one person, alone in their basement, being able to type in their favorite books and give it to millions or billions of people. It just wasn’t even remotely possible before; not even the Gideons can say they have given away a billion Bibles in the past year.”

Michael Stern Hart was born on March 8, 1947, in Tacoma, Wash. His father was an accountant; his mother, a cryptanalyst during World War II, was the business manager for a high-end women’s store. The couple retrained to become university teachers and in 1958 found posts at the University of Illinois, in Urbana, where his father taught Shakespeare and his mother taught mathematics.

Michael began attending lectures at the university before entering high school and, following a course of individual study on human-machine interfaces, earned a bachelor of science degree in 1973.

Work on Project Gutenberg proceeded slowly at first. Adding perhaps a book a month, Mr. Hart had created only 313 e-books by 1997. “I was just waiting for the world to realize I’d knocked it over,” he told Searcher. “You’ve heard of ‘cow-tipping’? The cow had been tipped over, but it took it 17 years for it to wake up and say, ‘Moo.’ ”

The pace picked up when he and Mark Zinzow, a programmer at the University of Illinois, recruited volunteers through the school’s PC User Group and set up mirror sites to provide multiple sources for the project.

Michael Stern Hart dies at 64; e-book pioneer

Michael Stern Hart started Project Gutenberg to make books available via computer, long before the spread of the Internet.

By Elaine Woo, Los Angeles Times

September 9, 2011



Michael Stern Hart's Project Gutenberg originally concentrated on historical documents but later focused on works of literature. (Photo credit: Benjamin Stone)

Michael Stern Hart, a burly rebel whose vision of a literate society led him to pioneer the electronic book decades before the spread of the Internet, has died. He was 64.

The founder of the online library [Project Gutenberg](#), Hart had been in poor health and was found Tuesday at his [Urbana](#), Ill., home, said Project Gutenberg Chief Executive Gregory B. Newby. An autopsy is underway to determine the cause of death.

Hart was a freshman at the [University of Illinois](#) in 1971 when he was granted free access to the campus' enormous mainframe computer. He was uncertain how to use the valuable computer time until inspiration struck in the form of a reproduction of the Declaration of Independence that had been stuffed in his grocery bag as part of a Fourth of July promotion.

He keyed the historic text into the computer system, which linked 100 users at elite institutions such as Harvard, [UCLA](#) and the Department of Defense. It was downloaded by six members of this pre-Internet network, which was encouragement enough for Hart to continue.

He transmitted the Bill of Rights, the Constitution, the Bible and the works of Shakespeare. Forty years later, Project Gutenberg, named after the inventor of the Gutenberg printing press, is one of the oldest online collections of literature, offering more than 33,000 free books in 60 languages. The vast majority are public domain, and all are digitized by volunteers scattered around the globe.

Hart was “an ardent technologist and futurist,” said Newby, a University of Alaska computer scientist. Long before the invention of personal computers and electronic readers, “he predicted that information contained in books and other media would surround us and be freely available.”

Others compared him to publishing pioneers such as Barney Rosset, who championed intellectual freedom through Grove Press, which published controversial authors such as [D.H. Lawrence](#) and [Henry Miller](#). “What Barney Rosset, legendary founder of Grove Press, was to the printed book, Michael Hart was for the digital book: animated by an unremitting vision, idiosyncratic but immensely capable,” independent publisher Richard E. Nash said by email Thursday.

A self-described “cyber-hippie,” Hart was born in Tacoma, Wash., on March 8, 1947. His father was a Shakespeare scholar and his mother a mathematician.

Before going to college, he was a street musician in San Francisco and served a stint in [the Army](#). He studied briefly at Dartmouth College before entering the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 1971. An obstreperous student who enjoyed challenging his professors, he graduated in two years with the highest grades.

To support himself and Project Gutenberg, he held a variety of odd jobs, including installing and repairing hi-fi stereos. His enthusiasm for the future of electronic publishing won him a non-paying appointment at Illinois Benedictine College, which provided him standing to solicit donations for his literacy project.

He rarely collected a salary from Project Gutenberg, according to Newby, who described Hart in an online tribute as “frugal to a fault.”

“He used home remedies rather than seeing doctors. He fixed his own house and car. He built many computers, stereos and other gear, often from discarded components,” Newby wrote.

He also was a skillful garage sale scavenger, whose house, according to a friend, was “a cross between a trash heap and a museum.”

Briefly married, he is survived by his mother, Alice, and a brother, Bennett.

Project Gutenberg grew slowly during its first 18 years. By August 1989 it had completed its 10th e-book, the King James translation of the Bible. A few years later, he typed in Lewis Carroll’s “Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland,” which brought an epiphany. He was talking to a friend on the telephone when her 11-year-old invited some friends over to read “Alice” on their computer. When they all tried to squeeze in front of the monitor on one chair, it broke into pieces and they crashed to the floor. But they wanted to keep reading.

When Hart heard about the incident, “the light went on in my head.” He began concentrating on converting literary texts to e-books, convinced that the future of literature was electronic. From that day forward, “any time anyone owed me a favor,” he recalled in a 1996 article in the Fort Worth Star-Telegram, “it was, ‘Here, type in some Hamlet.’”

The online collection grew exponentially over the next two decades, fulfilling an expansive range of reading tastes. The most-read book is “The Kama Sutra of Vatsyayana” with more than 25,000 downloads, followed by “The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes,” with more than 18,000 downloads. Project Gutenberg also releases collections on free CDs and DVDs.

In 1998, Wired magazine named Hart to its “Wired 25,” a list of people around the world who were “actively, even hyperactively, inventing tomorrow.”

Hart had his critics. He was often disparaged by academics, who complained of typographical and other errors in Project Gutenberg books. He was not beloved in the traditional publishing world, which he often attacked for profiting on the works of long-dead writers. He disapproved of U.S. copyright laws, which keep popular works out of the public domain for decades after an author has died.

Hart dismissed his critics' attacks.

“I’m not doing this to make the academic community happy,” he told [the Chicago Tribune](#) in 1999. He aimed to serve the masses. “I am a revolutionary in this neo-industrial revolution. That’s why they have trouble with me. How can anyone be troubled by free information?”

elaine.woo@latimes.com

Michael,

Please help me write the words of this letter, just like you've helped me write my poetry. I've said your name so many times that it's become a part of me. I grew up with you, and somehow thought you'll always be there. Even in silence, I knew you were only one email away. But you have secretly made your "graceful exit".

What I am now I owe to you. You, the "rainforest creature" as you called yourself, you the rebel, you the teacher, you the visionary, you the giver. There is so much to you that a superficial world could never encompass it all. This world made you tired and a bit disappointed at times. You loved it still and worked hard to make it better. Michael, there are very few people like you.

You asked me years ago to be the one to hold you when you go to God. I ask for your forgiveness for not honoring that wish. It would have been too painful. Today I am here with you through my words. Your body goes into the ground, but I know your spirit sees and hears everything. You see all the people and places that you loved. Michael, we love you back. Me, my country Romania, the city of Bucharest, Lake Dimbovitsa where you placed your Wonderlanders story, the streets you walked on. I know you loved your family and friends dearly. You talked to me about Tacoma and its beauties, about your happy childhood years. Remember when you picked the "right" Dad from the two men who came to your house after the war? And all your favorite books... Calvin and Hobbes have always managed to put a broad smile on your face. Calvin, the atomic kid, just like you were. No wonder when your Mom used to wake you with "Up and at 'em!", you thought she was saying "Up and atom!" Remember when you worried sick about my ear infection and almost forced me to go to the doctor? I wish you took as much care of yourself as you did of others.

I want to thank you for never leaving me. Even in death, you will be more alive than ever. Generations and generations will benefit from your work, and will learn of your name.

Michael Stern Hart, rest in peace! You are safe now, away from the pettiness that keeps us all busy. I know you sought the peace of Hawaii, yet there is no greater peace than the one that Heavens provide. May God the Father, God the Word, and God the Spirit welcome you, and the Holy Mother of Christ protect you on your way to eternity.

I close this letter to you with our four-line poem that you liked and that we always worked on:

"Learn to live
Live to learn
Learn to love
Love to learn".

With love,
Simona
or, as you used to sign your letters... Me

A Graceful Exit

(Saturday, July 16 2011)

As most of my friends know, I have accomplished all of the goals I have set for myself throughout my life, and I think I can say, without fear of too much repercussive responses, that the career I have chosen in eBooks has been a success in terms of what I've been trying to accomplish for these last four decades.

At the same time, I do realize that other persons have had other ideas/ideals about eBooks, who have called me everything from an outright raging Communist, to sincere Socialist, to unqualified, in terms of membership. . .not ability. . .member of Capitalists Exploiting The World. . .no kidding. I do realize that is might be difficult for persons living on the other side of this world, given the information they have to work with, to view me, or any other American, as anything other than a Capitalist Imperialist, so I bear less in the way of ill feelings about this.

However, now the time has come to talk of other things.

Yes, I do have one more impossible goal I dream of, but I do not believe I can accomplish it in the same manner I accomplished an assortment of previous goals, with a combination of persistence, ability, and convincing others to give me unofficial assistance, as I face a combination of limited time, limited resources and I must admit, declining energy levels, though I still manage to do more work than I ever did before.

However, I do realize that without some serious changed in life, there is little possibility of accomplishing my last goal with a lifestyle continuing in the same vein.

Therefore, I now would like to remind you of my last goals:

1. A Billion eBook Library
2. Spending More Time In Hawaii
3. Working To Create A Graceful Exit

Here are the details:

A Billion eBook Library

Premise #1:

There are ~25 million books in the public domain.

If we do ~40% of these that will be ~10 million eBooks.

Premise #2:

There are ~250 languages with over a million speakers.

If we do ~40% of these that will be ~100 languages.

Conclusion:

10 million eBooks translated into 100 languages yields

ONE BILLION eBooks

Note: I realize how impossible this sounds, given the powerful lack of interest by thousands of translators, and other experts I have contacted, but given previous personal experiences shared by each of you and myself, I think we must realize it IS possible, even if we are going to have to do all to much of it ourselves.

Nevertheless, I plan to devote a serious amount of the time I have remaining to doing the setup required.

2. Spending More Time In Hawaii

As most of you know, Hawaii was just too laid back for me to stay there more than a month at a time when this opportunity first appeared.

However, you must also realize that from 1999 to 2011, I obviously have aged 12 years, and the difference for me between 52, when I could still pretend to be ~40's, and today, when there is little pretending possible, I am now much more likely to spend at least half my time there, if not even more, given that I might expect the pressures to increase to abandon my Illinois residence for various and sundry reasons we should maybe discuss when we get together next.

However, I can tell you that pressures of Winter, here in Illinois, plus those of advancing age, make it more and more difficult to look forward to more of this.

I should add that even though Spring is my favorite of all the seasons, this spring was an effort, but with a lot of luck I once again managed to do all I planned.

However, I must also admit that this, too, will get to be more and more difficult as the years progress.

Therefore I am very glad to announce that I have a job with John in Hawaii that will, when needed, provide me with the ability to live in a neighboring apartment to John's for as much of the year as I would like, and we will see how this works out starting this Winter.

3. A Graceful Exit

I would like to support all the efforts I have before, plus the final one I have listed above, without any of repercussions that could take place with I shuffle off this mortal coil.

In some ways I would like to simply work behind scenes as much as possible so I won't be missed when I'm gone from those activities, but I also realize that my name just might be worth something in public relations so I leave some of that decision open for your advice.

As John and Greg can testify, I am still capable of an awful lot of Newsletter writing, though it does take a toll, particularly when I have lots more to do for the other portions of my life. Again, I leave this open a lot for your advice.

Please refer to the previous message I sent about work on setting up a new, and much different kind of setup, for The Billion eBook Project, I will resend it.

If I/we play our cards right, perhaps I can leave this scene without causing undue trouble, and perhaps I can even manage it in absentia as some kind of motivation, perhaps setting some goal, perhaps even some rewarding procedures for accomplishment.

I, personally, do not think the world at large really, sincerely wants to provide literacy and education from anyone to The Third World, in spite of all lip service to the contrary. . .so I warn you that the possibility exists that this project will not be supported from an outside set of sources that I still plan to approach-- so you might find that you are more on your own that I would like to hope, and that you might have to expect, really, a future that is more like the past, in terms, sadly to say, of having to do a LOT of this work on an individual basis more than having the world's support.

I hope you feel up to the task. . .you will be tempted more and more to rest from exhaustion as you get older and older. . .the all nighters will turn into just get up early when the air is clear, but you will also find that what you can accomplish in those fewer hours will be more than you ever did before, because experience's power is greater than you might think today.

That is what I leave you with. . . .

Another goal that is nigh well on to impossible.

Little hope of finding any real world support.

And the hope that your experience will leverage future endeavors for you as much as it has for me.

I hope you can put enough into these efforts that I am

able to depart as gracefully as is possible these days.

Hoping to thank you soon for your time & consideration,

Michael

8/9/11 4:18 PM, Michael S. Hart wrote:

The Impatience of Olde Age: Part 0

With your permission, the three of you, I would like to start presenting via email what I had intended to wait until we are all together in once place at the same time.

This past 10 day, up until yesterday, I had been working just about as hard as I possibly could every single day to get the house and everything else prepared for my upcoming trips from here to John's in Hawaii and Brewster's in San Franscico, for the purpose of doing this in person, and it sill might happen that way, but I just do not have the patience to wait and see how it all works out.

So, please RSVP ASAP and give me permission to start sending, in hopefully easy to digest pieces, some messages about those steps I have in mind for the future.

Hoping to thank you soon for your permission,

Michael

“One thing about eBooks that most people haven’t thought much is that eBooks are the very first thing that we’re all able to have as much as we want other than air.

Think about that for a moment and you realize we are in the right job.”

Michael S. Hart, July 2011

