Larry Tesler

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I. Education and Early Career

LARRY Tesler was born on April 24, 1945 in The Bronx burrow of New York City, New York. In 1965 he was awarded a Bachelor of Science Degree in Mathematics from Stanford University in California. While pursuing this degree, Tesler worked as a programmer with the Stanford Genetics and Computer Science Departments. He worked on projects that included interactive software for biomedical research and one of the first raster-based animation systems.

After graduating, Tesler spent a few years in private software development until he found himself back at Stanford in their Artificial Intelligence Laboratory. It was there he designed and implemented PUB, "the most powerful and scriptable markup language of its time.[1]"

II. Contribution

Tesler was well known for being against the various modes that current software required you to enter to access certain features. It was his goal to remove the need for modes altogether. Comically, he created a Vanity California Liscense Plate with the message "NOMODES." During the development of the text editor, Gypsy, Tesler and his associate at Xerox PARC, Timothy Mott, set out to create features that are now an industry standard on any software with text editing capabilities.

At that time, mouse input was not supported by most software so users would have to navigate text documents with the keyboard. When they arrived at the area they wanted to modify, they would then have to enter the appropriate mode to insert text. With Gypsy, users could just use a mouse to click anywhere in the document and just begin typing to insert text, without switching modes.

What followed from this feature was one that allowed users to be able to highlight text with the mouse they wanted to modify and just type the new text instead of using a replace mode.

Finally, the most important feature of Gypsy was the ability to cut,copy and paste. While the ability to copy text already existed, it required a specific mode that would not allow the user to input any other commands while copying, including opening another file. This made copying text between files difficult. With Tesler's cut/copy and paste feature, this was now incredibly easier.

By Yahoo! Blog from Sunnyvale, California, USA - Larry Tesler Smiles at Whisper, CC BY 2.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=2650493

One of his other noteworthy contributions was his designs that were used for the first luggable computer: The Notetaker. While only 10 of these were made, it's design heavily influenced the first commercially successful portable computer: The Osborne 1.

III. Significance

It is hard for many of people today to understand exactly how important Larry Tesler was to the world of computer science. The three text editing features that he designed are so ubiquitous, it is impossible for most people to imagine a world without them. Cut/Copy and Paste has been applied to so many more areas beyond text editing. The ability to copy files between computers is so much more simple. Graphic artists are able to copy images and shapes from external sources and place them into their development environment.

References

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