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The early development of the computing profession

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Bibliographic citation

Holmes, WN (2007). The early development of the computing profession. University Of Tasmania. Conference contribution.

https://figshare.utas.edu.au/articles/conference_contribution/The_early_development_of_the_computing_profes

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The Early Development of the Computing Profession

Neville Holmes

The HTML files associated with this document were used for a presentation to students and staff of the School of Information Technology and Electrical Engineering at the University of Queensland, in April of the year 2007.

The reception of the presentation, which by request went on much longer than the scheduled time, was so positive that I felt it would be worthwhile to make this presentation available to anyone who might like to use or adapt it.

The material allows the presenter to review how the computing industry developed from before electronic digital computers to roughly the 1980s, and to analyse the roles of people working professionally within the computing industry.

The Files

A very simple HTML presentation was used, rather than the more usual PowerPoint method, so that it could be run in any version of any browser under any operating system, and so that illustrations could be loaded from the world wide web as needed during the presentation.

There are six HTML files. The main one is named `uql.htm` and links to the five others named from `uql1.htm` to `uql5.htm`. However, so that URL links within the presentation would not be highlighted, and so that they could be chosen in response to audience reaction, the file `uql.css` is also needed as part of the group.

The code in the files is simple HTML and anyone wishing to adapt it should find it relatively easy to change, even without any experience of using HTML, by working directly with the text.

The Presentation

There is much too much material for the normal forty minute presentation, and the user will need to be selective about which links to click on. A thorough review of what is available will allow the presenter to be able to select what is

best suited to the audience. The audience can be given the archive URL for the files so that they can look into the material themselves.

The bullet points in the presentation are quite laconic because most of the interest of the audience will be in seeing what kind of machinery was used in the old days. The presenter should either have had experience with the machinery or else should very carefully go over the web material of the links.

Most of the lines of the presentation, at least of the industry part, have several links each. The presenter should be familiar with where the links are because they are not highlighted on the screen. However, most browsers will indicate in some way when the cursor is on a link and what the URL is.

WARNING: Some browsers nowadays can't reliably load plain HTML code, particularly though rarely when started or when first loading a file. Instead it just displays the HTML text uninterpreted. To fix this, all that is needed is to reload the file, either with the reload button or the keyboard combination provided. This has always worked first time for me and once this is done the browser gives no further trouble with the loaded file.

Background

The World Wide Web, in particular the Wikipedia, has a wealth of useful and relevant material. The links used are mostly to pictures of machinery I have used myself, but there should be no difficulty for another presenter to find and substitute other links.

The overall message, on the other hand, should be fairly clear from the text of the bullet points. If more clarification is needed, my two papers, *The major tasks of data processing* (1977, eprints.utas.edu.au/1239) and *A re-vision of information systems* (1996, eprints.utas.edu/1238), might be found helpful.