

PROJECT WHIRLWIND

Angelo Papenhoff/aap
aap@papnet.eu

Computers in the 1940s

- human computers: lady at a desk
- punch card equipment: accounting &c.
- differential analyzers: solve differential equations mechanically
- electromechanical (relay) digital computers:
 - Zuse Z3
 - Harvard Mark I (essentially Charles Babbage's Analytical Engine)
 - IBM SSEC (IBM's successor to Mark I)
- electronic (vacuum tube) digital computers:
 - Colossus (classified until 70s, irrelevant to the field)
 - ENIAC (built to compute ballistic tables)
 - EDVAC (successor to ENIAC, *the* von Neumann computer)
 - EDSAC (inspired by EDVAC)
 - IAS Computer (roughly contemporary with Whirlwind)
 - but: not even finished when Project Whirlwind starts

Computers in the 1940s

- how to steer the calculation?
 - hardwired (analog computers, ENIAC initially)
 - coded program from cards/tape (electromechanical computers)
 - coded program in storage (electronic computers, ENIAC later)
- storage/memory technology
 - only registers
 - delay line (EDVAC, EDSAC)
 - storage tubes (Manchester Baby, 1948, IAS machine)
 - ...
- serial vs. parallel: mostly tied to storage technology
- number base
 - decimal (ENIAC, Mark I, SSEC)
 - binary (Z3, EDVAC, EDSAC, IAS machine)
- number of digits
 - Z3: 22 binary digits, floating point(!)
 - usually: ~10-12 decimal digits or binary equivalent (30-40)

Pre-history of Project Whirlwind

- 1943/4
- Problem: training flight crews on warcraft costs too much time and money
- Solution: ground-anchored flight trainers
- flight trainers went from pneumatic to electric (analog)
- But: new trainer for every aircraft
- Captain Luis de Florez (MIT):
- Airplane Stability and Control Analyzer (ACSA): universal flight trainer that can be configured to simulate various airplanes
- flight simulators had been built at Bell Labs
- ACSA goes to MIT's Servomechanisms Lab (Gordon Brown)

Aircraft analyzer

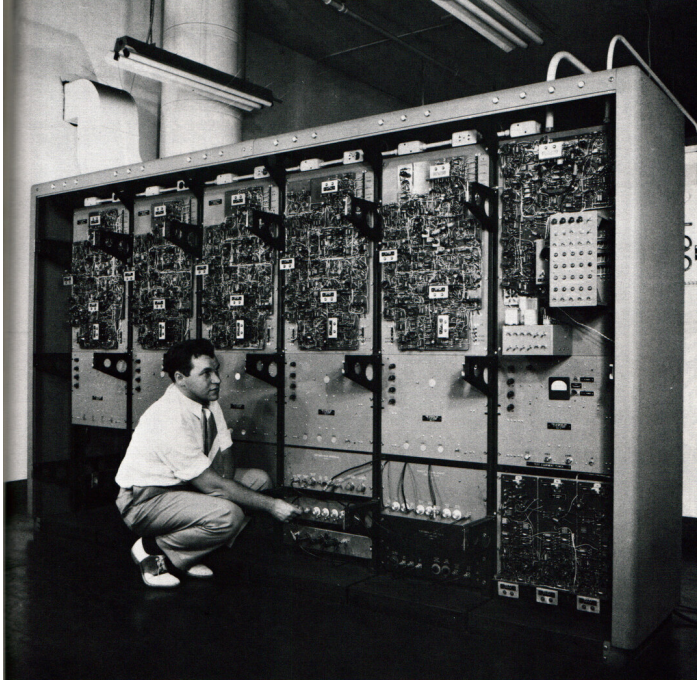
- 1944/5
- end of 1944: preliminary study of the analyzer to determine feasibility
- cockpit + analog computer (mechanical or electrical)
- Jay Forrester becomes director of the project and brings in Robert Everett
- study existing flight trainers and physics behind them
- at least 47 equations of 53 variables
- analog computer: electromechanical differential analyzer
- turns out to be more complex and difficult than anticipated
- Forrester learns about digital computers from Perry Crawford in late summer of '45

Digital computers

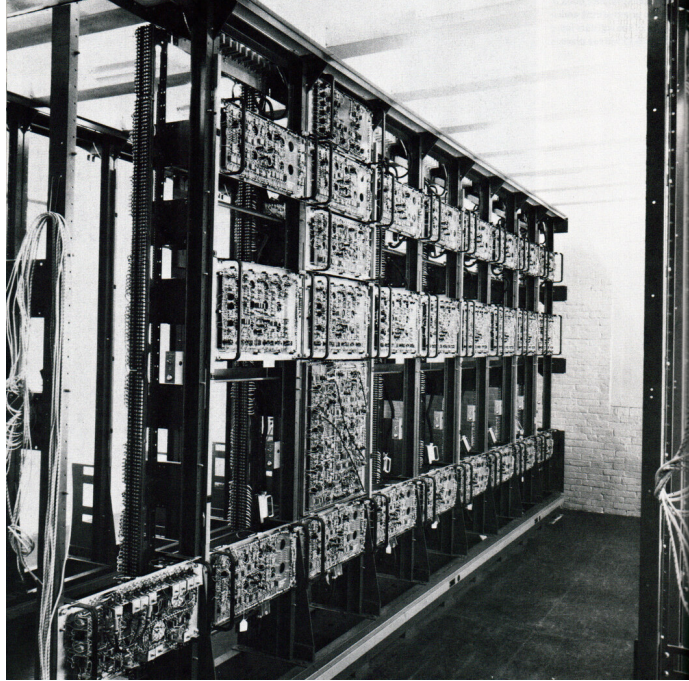
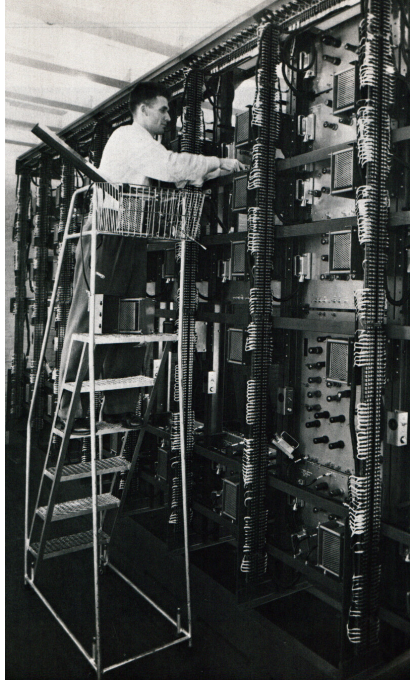
- End of '45: explore digital approach to aircraft analyzer's problems
- has to be electronic to be fast
- binary number system to be preferred
- rewards: more reliable, higher accuracy, lower cost, smaller size, more flexible, application to other problems than aircraft analysis
- possible military applications:
 - aircraft stability and control
 - automatic radar tracking and fire control
 - stability and trajectories of guided missiles
 - study of aerial and submarine torpedos
 - servomechanisms systems
 - stability and control characteristics of surface ships
- early '46: Project Whirlwind
- Phase I: construct small digital computer [...]
- Phase II: build aircraft analyzer based on Phase I

Digital computer

- investigate:
 - block diagrams
 - computing circuits
 - mathematics
 - mechanical questions, including cockpit
 - mercury delay lines
 - storage tube research
 - other electronic problems
- serial or parallel?
- delay line or storage tube memory?
- how many bits?
- ...
- sept. 1947: Whirlwind I Computer Block Diagrams (R-127)
- late 1948: no more Phase II, cockpit scrapped
- 5-digit multiplier built to test circuitry and reliability







Difficult times

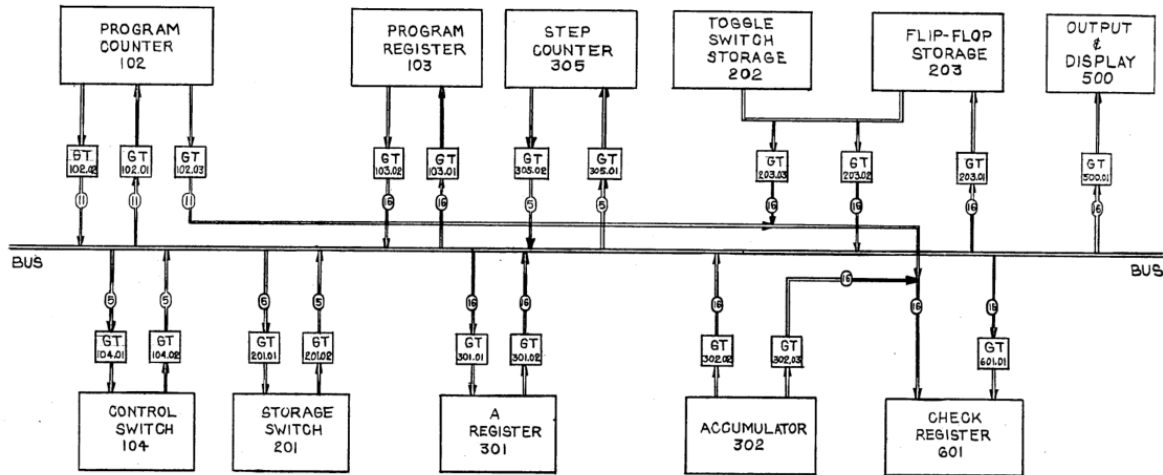
- Project is in trouble 1946-1950
- "peace broke out" → bad times for funding of military projects
- what is the purpose of Whirlwind?
- way too expensive, and for what?
- ONR complained about lack of mathematical insight
- ONR didn't understand computer engineering
- Air Force wants air defense system, saves the project

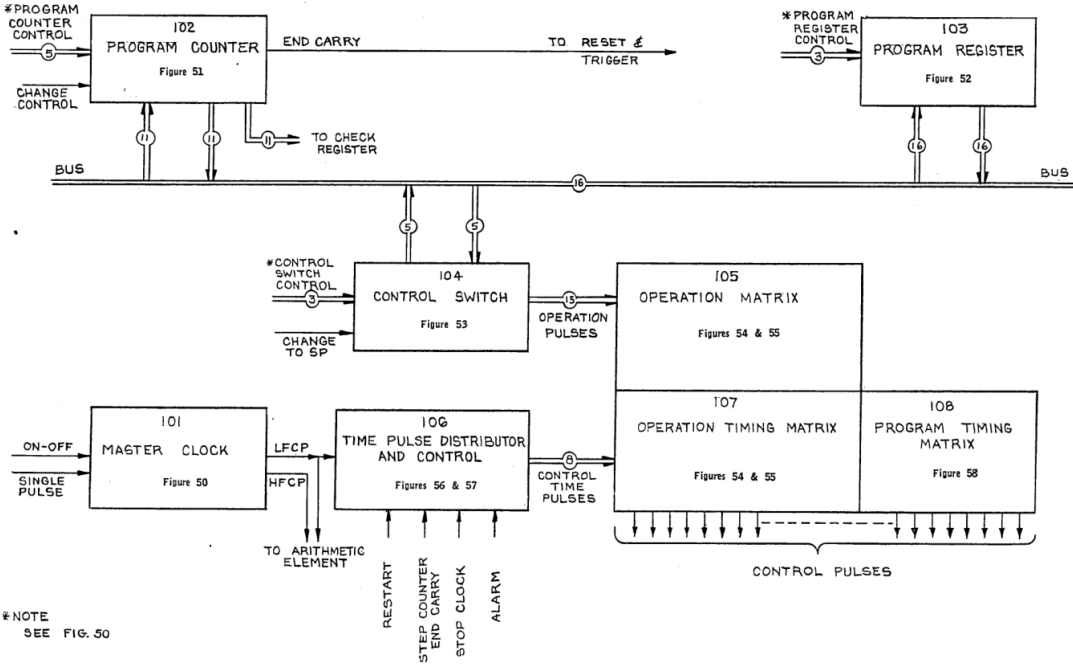
Whirlwind in R-127

- Whirlwind I (prototype for Whirlwind II):
 - parallel
 - one's complement
 - 16 binary digits, fixed point (-1.0; 1.0), scale manually
 - up to 32 orders (instructions), 15 specified
 - up to 2048 words of electrostatic storage
 - 1 megacycle (Mhz), arithmetic faster
- Whirlwind II:
 - bigger numbers (40-46 digits)
 - more storage (640,000 digits = 14,000 - 16,000 words)
 - probably two orders per word (like IAS machine)
 - same speed
 - reality: plans changed, WW II became AN/FSQ-7
- no discussion of ES storage or IO equipment
- instead, test storage: 5 flip-flop words, 27 toggle-switch words

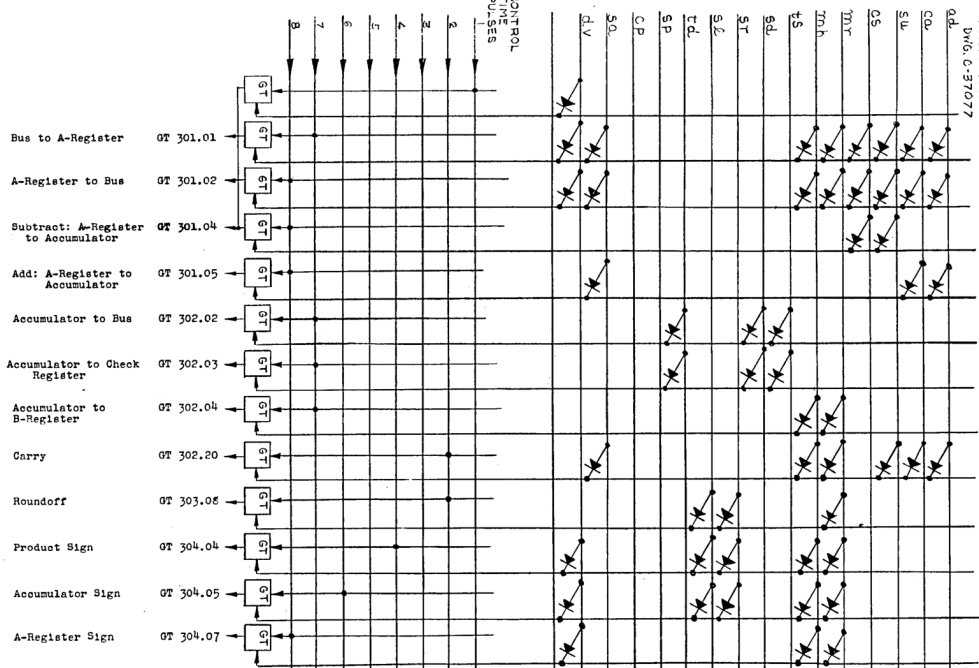
Orders in 1947

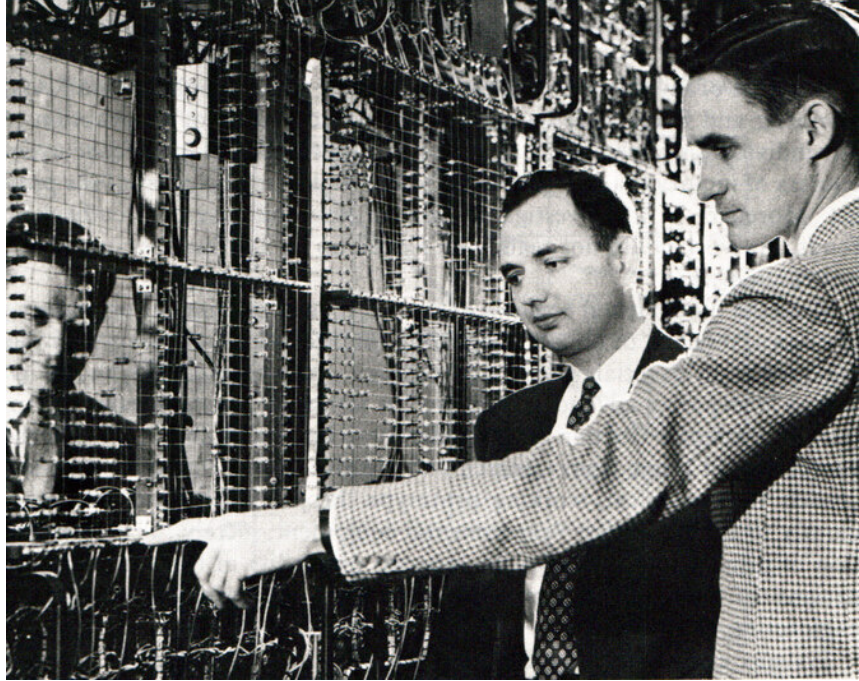
- 5 bits order, 11 bits address
- ca - clear and add - $AC := Mem[addr]$
- ad - add - $AC := AC + Mem[addr]$
- cs - clear and subtract - $AC := -Mem[addr]$
- su - subtract - $AC := AC - Mem[addr]$
- mh - multiply and hold - $AC, BR := AC * Mem[addr]$
- mr - multiply and round off - $AC := round(AC * Mem[addr])$
- dv - divide - $BR := AC / Mem[addr]$
- sr - shift right - $AC, BR := AC, BR \gg n$
- sl - shift left - $AC, BR := AC, BR \ll n$
- sp - subprogram - $PC := addr$
- cp - conditional subprogram - if $AC > 0$: $PC := addr$ (later: $<$)
- ts - transfer to storage - $Mem[addr] := AC$
- td - transfer digits - $Mem[addr] := AC$ (only address portion)
- sa - special add - like ad, but remember overflow
- sd - store and display - like ts, but display on scope (testing only)

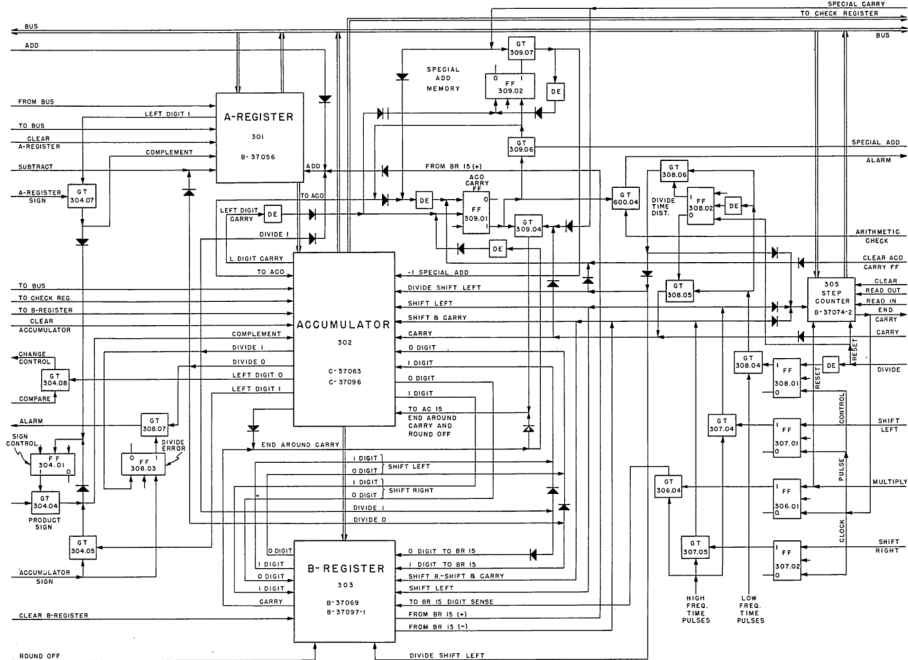


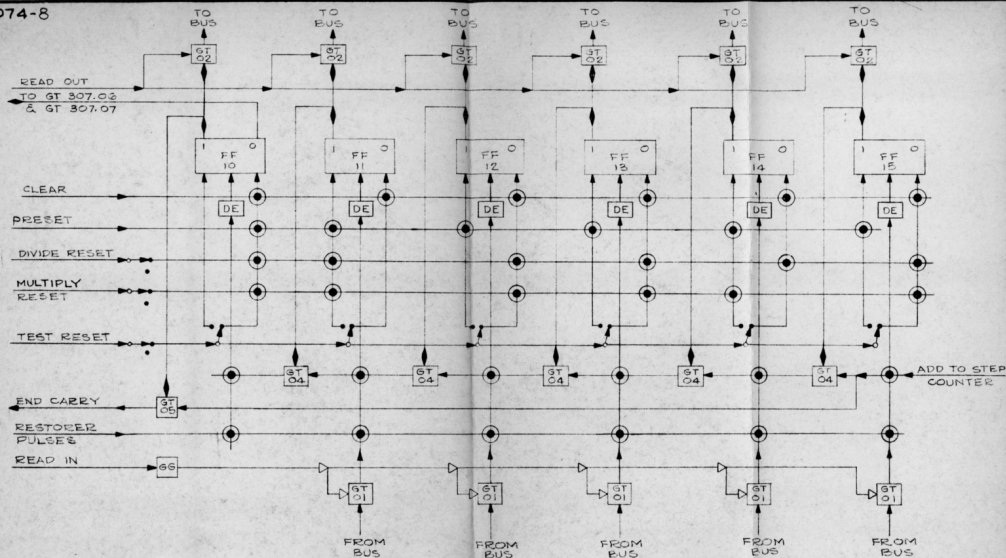


* NOTE
SEE FIG. 50









NOTE: FF NUMBERS CORRESPOND TO BUS NUMBERS.

GRADED BY: DATE: THIS IS A GRADED DRAWING OF HIGHEST GRADE APPROVED BELOW:
 GRADE I FOR REFERENCE ONLY
 GRADE II PRELIMINARY DESIGN
 GRADE III FINAL DESIGN

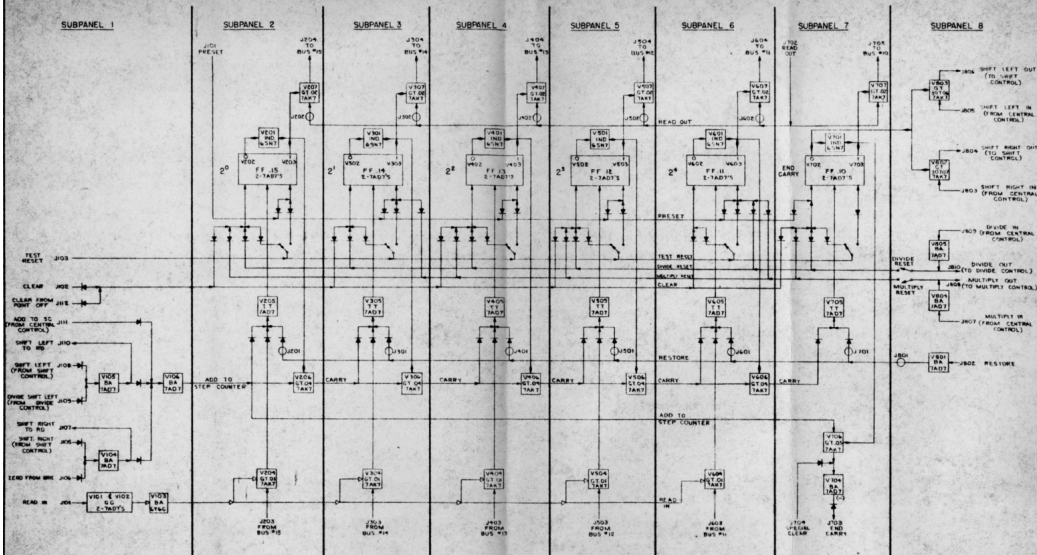
SERVOMECHANISMS LABORATORY OF THE
 MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
 DIVISION OF INDUSTRIAL COOPERATION PROJECT NO. 2345

BLOCK DIAGRAM, 305, STEP COUNTER, WMI

SCALE: DR 2-25-49

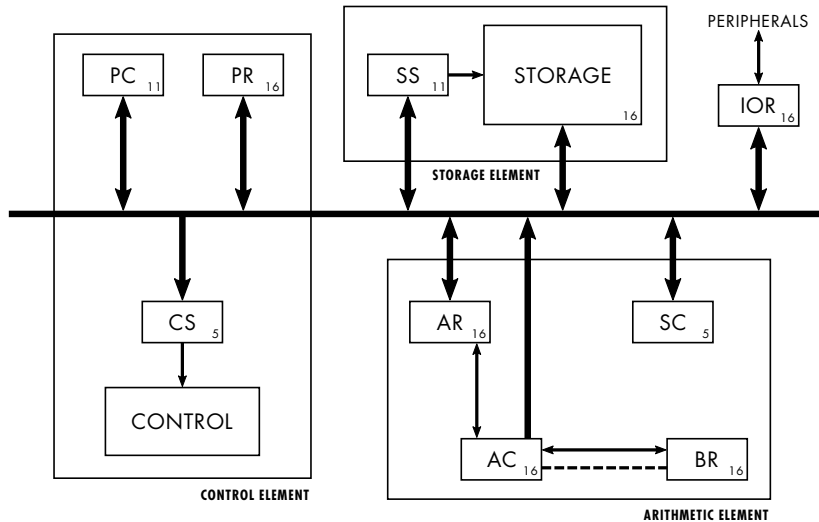
ENC 3/6/49 CK APP

B-37074-8
 FIG. 20



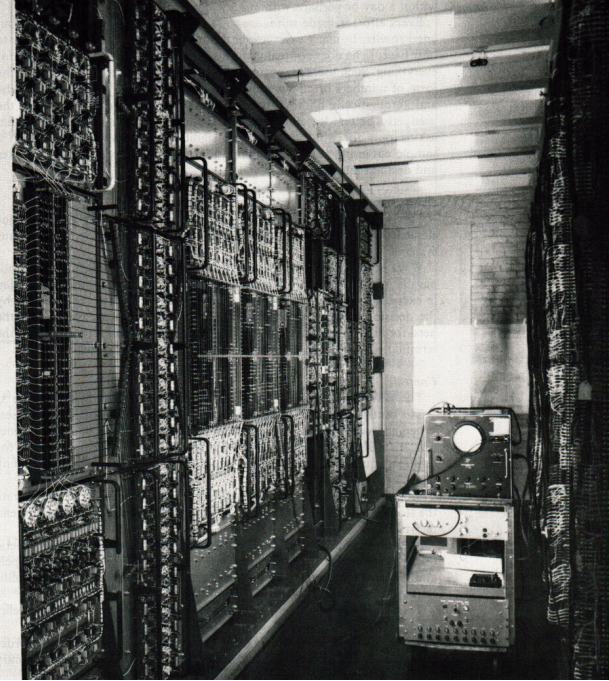
DRAWING REFERENCES:
 CIRCUIT SCHEMATIC: D-31714
 BLOCK DIAGRAM: B-31074
 ASSEMBLY: D-31828

Whirlwind I block diagram

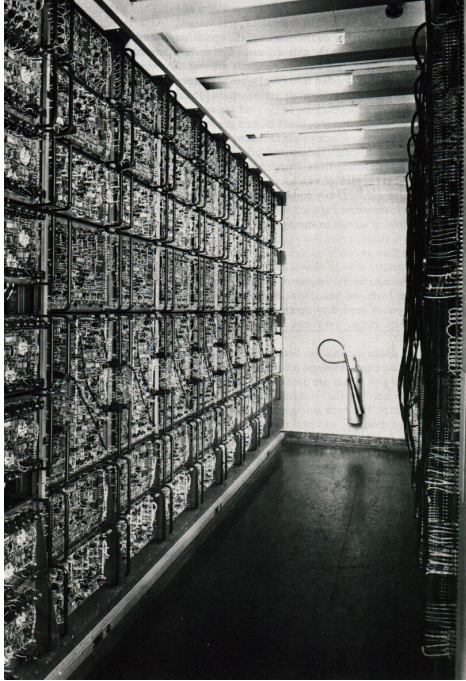


- point-off control added (normalize floating point numbers, sf)
- timing elements added and changed
- registers unified (AR and PR, BR and IO, CHECK and COMPARISON)
- matrices changed and combined
- sp now remembers return address in AR! ta added, most likely
- ao (add one) added
- sl* sr* proposed

- IO orders explained and described
- first program runs on August 9th
- "the computer using test storage is essentially complete" (sept)
- solve and display differential equation on scope
- more orders proposed: qc (ck), qd/qh (display), qe (ex)



FILTER PANEL		FUSE PANEL #1	FILTER PANEL	FILTER PANEL	INACTIVITY ALARM #21	305 STEP-COUNTER OUTPUT (SCO)
DELAY LINE AMPLIFIER #6	105 OPERATION MATRIX DRIVERS (OMD-1)	FILAMENT TRANSFORMER PANEL #1	112 RESTORER PULSE GENERATOR (RPG)	CLOCK PULSE CONTROL DELAY (CPCDE)	READ IN INTERLOCK #35	305 STEP-COUNTER OUTPUT (SCO)
104 CONTROL SWITCH OUTPUT (CSO)		105 CONTROL PULSE OUTPUT (CPO-1)	REGISTER DRIVER TYPE I #17	111 SYNCHRONIZER I (SYN)	SYNCHRONIZER II (SYN II)	
104 CONTROL SWITCH MATRIX (CSM)	105 OPERATION MATRIX DRIVERS (OMD-2)	105 OPERATION MATRIX (OM)	106 TIME-PULSE DISTRIBUTOR OUTPUT (TPDO)	109 CLOCK PULSE CONTROL (CPC)	308 DIVIDE CONTROL (DV)	305 STEP COUNTER (SC-1)
104 CONTROL SWITCH PANEL (CSS)	105 OPERATION MATRIX DRIVERS (OMD-3)	105 CONTROL PULSE OUTPUT (CPO-2)			DC IO REGISTER	RESTART INTERLOCK #22
CONTROL SWITCH DRIVER (CSD)		FILAMENT TRANSFORMER PANEL #2	106 TIME-PULSE DISTRIBUTOR COUNTER (TPDC)	110 FREQUENCY DIVIDER (FDV)	306 & 307 MULTIPLY SHIFT CONTROL (MS)	RESTART SYNCHRONIZER #22
		FUSE PANEL #2	PULSE GEN. SYNCHRONIZER	101 PULSE GENERATOR (PG)		SW TO PB COARSE DELAY SYNCHRONIZER #17
C7	C8	C9 C11	C12	C13	C14	C15



STANDARDIZER AMPLIFIER (SA-4)	BUS DRIVER (BD)	BUS DRIVER (BD)
ARITHMETIC ELEMENT DRIVER 1 (AED-1)	103 PROGRAM REGISTER (PR)	103 PROGRAM REGISTER (PR)
ARITHMETIC ELEMENT DRIVER 1 (AED-2)	102 PROGRAM COUNTER (PC)	102 PROGRAM COUNTER (PC)
ARITHMETIC ELEMENT DRIVER 1 (AED-3)	303 B-REGISTER (BR)	303 B-REGISTER (BR)
ARITHMETIC ELEMENT DRIVER 1 (AED-4)		
ARITHMETIC ELEMENT DRIVER 1 (AED-5)	302 ACCUMULATOR (AC)	302 ACCUMULATOR (AC)
ARITHMETIC ELEMENT DRIVER 1 (AED-6)	301 A-REGISTER (AR)	301 A-REGISTER (AR)
ARITHMETIC ELEMENT DRIVER 1 (AED-7)	601 CHECK REGISTER (CR-(9-15))	
AD	A8, A14	A15

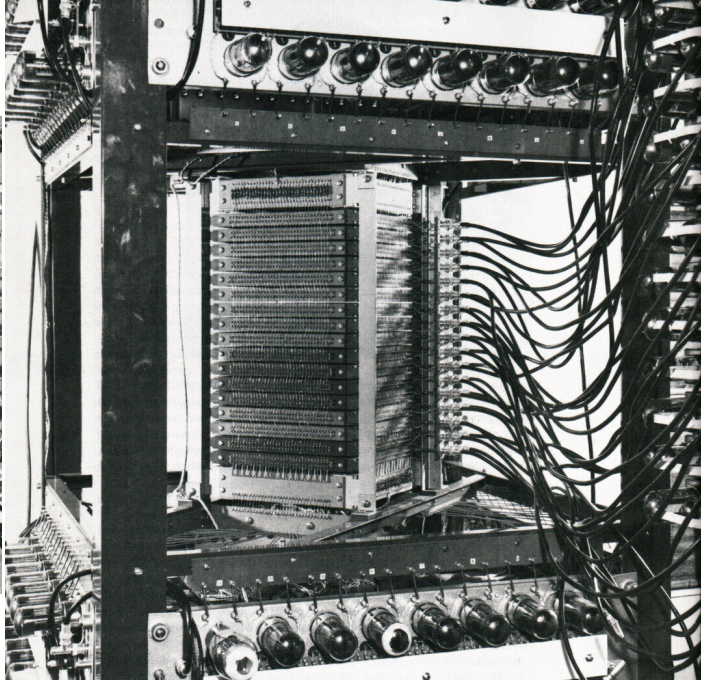
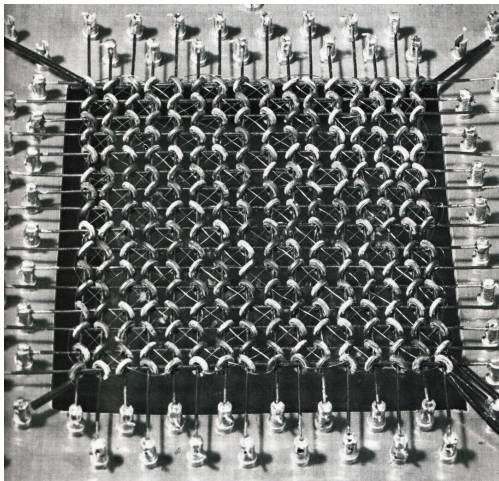
- block diagrams in R-177
- PR removed for testing ES. AR taking its job temporarily
- qc/ck made canonical, more orders proposed
- IO system being integrated into WW
- work on magnetic core storage begins
- electrostatic storage integrated into WW
- first program runs from ES
- SRC (shift round-off control) proposed for sl^* sr^*

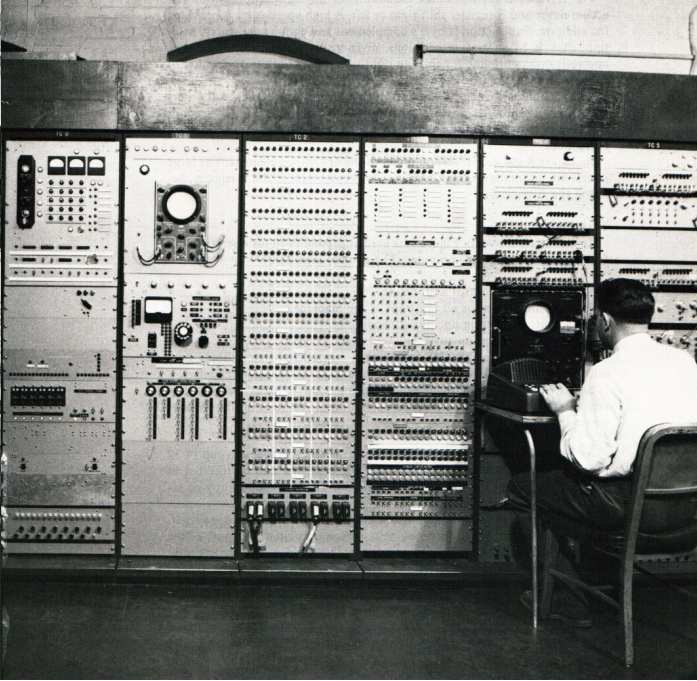
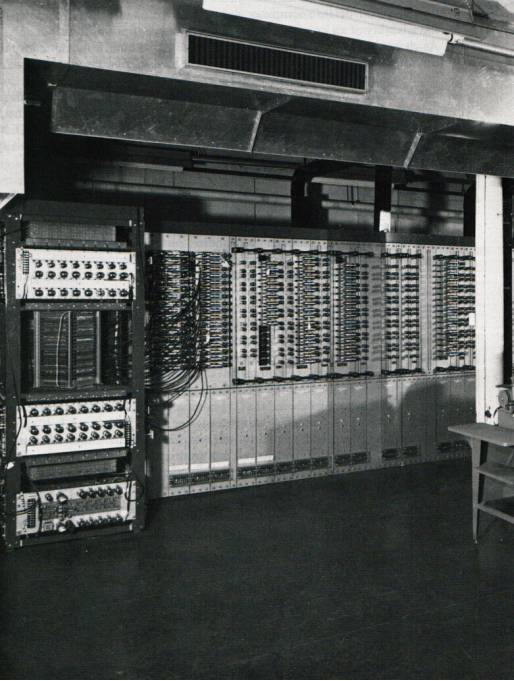
- old IO system not flexible, new IO system considered
- first messages printed on flexowriter:
"all ok
will write
more later
love, WWI"
- SRC working
- Whirlwind ran reliably for a few hours

- no scans of bi-weekly reports :(
- work on IO system and ES continues
- Kodak-Eastman film units ditched
- ...

- ql/cl (cycle) discussed
- qe/ex made canonical
- 7-seg display constructed
- new IO system implemented
- PAR added, PR removed
- Memory Test Computer (aka WWIA, aka WWI½):
 - explore circuitry for WWII
 - test and bring up Magnetic Core Storage
 - various block diagrams and order codes discussed
 - final order code almost identical to Whirlwind I
 - construction much simpler by using test equipment
 - built by Ken Olsen (DEC) and Wesley Clark (TX-2, LINC)

- MTC:
 - registers tested calculates and plots sines and cosines (Minsky circle?)
 - MTC and core memory are working
- first bank of Core connected to Whirlwind
- second bank of Core connected to Whirlwind
- WWI now essentially in its final form





Peripherals

- punch tape
- displays
- light guns
- flexowriters
- drum
- magnetic tape
- clock

Whirlwind's legacy

- new paradigm of computing:
 - real-time
 - interactive
 - computer part of a system, not merely a calculator
 - reliable
 - → beginning of the MIT tradition of computing
 - → DEC minicomputers
 - the first microcontroller?
- Core Memory, dominant type of memory for 2 decades
- WW II (aka AN/FSQ-7)
 - center piece of SAGE air defense system (22 SAGE sites)
 - built by IBM
 - IBM seriously enters the computer business
 - looks great in movies



Whirlwind I summary

	INSTRUCTION		AC	BR	AR	SAM	C(x)
00000	SI	SELECT IO UNIT					
00001		ILLEGAL					
00010	BI	BLOCK IN	$x + n$		x		first word
00011	RD	READ	IOR		IOR		
00100	BO	BLOCK OUT	$x + n$		x		
00101	RC	RECORD					
00110	SD	SUM OF DIGITS	$AC \vee C(x)$		$C(x)$	0	
00111	CF	CHANGE FIELDS					
01000	TS	TRANSFER TO STORAGE					AC
01001	TD	TRANSFER DIGITS					$C(x)_{0.4}, AC_{5-15}$
01010	TA	TRANSFER ADDRESS					$C(x)_{0.4}, AR_{5-15}$
01011	CK	CHECK					
01100	AB	ADD BR	$BR + C(x)$		$C(x)$	0	$BR + C(x)$
01101	EX	EXCHANGE	$C(x)$		$C(x)$		AC
01110	CP	CONDITIONAL SP			$y+1$		
01111	SP	SUBPROGRAM			$y+1$		
10000	CA	CLEAR, ADD	$C(x) + SAM$	0	$C(x)$	0	
10001	CS	CLEAR, SUBTRACT	$-C(x) + SAM$	0	$C(x)$	0	
10010	AD	ADD	$AC + C(x)$		$C(x)$	0	
10011	SU	SUBTRACT	$AC - C(x)$		$C(x)$	0	
10100	CM	CLEAR, ADD MAG.	$ C(x) + SAM$	0	$ C(x) $	0	
10101	SA	SPECIAL ADD	$AC + C(x)$		$C(x)$	± 1 or 0	
10110	AO	ADD ONE	$C(x) + 1$		$C(x)$	0	$C(x) + 1$
10111	DM	DIFFERENCE OF MAG.	$ AC - C(x) $	AC	$ C(x) $	0	
11000	MR	MULTIPLY, ROUND	$(AC \times C(x))_{LT} + r$	0	$ C(x) $	0	
11001	MH	MULTIPLY, HOLD	$AC \times C(x)$	$\leftarrow$	$ C(x) $	0	
11010	DV	DIVIDE	± 0	$AC/C(x)$	$ C(x) $	0	
11011 0	SLR	SHIFT LEFT, ROUND	$(AC:BR \ll n)_{LT} + r$	0		0	
11011 1	SLH	SHIFT LEFT, HOLD	$AC:BR \ll n$	$\leftarrow$		0	
11100 0	SRR	SHIFT RIGHT, ROUND	$(AC:BR \gg n)_{LT} + r$	0		0	
11100 1	SRH	SHIFT RIGHT, HOLD	$AC:BR \gg n$	$\leftarrow$		0	
11101	SF	SCALE FACTOR	$AC:BR \ll n$	$\leftarrow$	n	0	n
11110 0	CLC	CYCLE LEFT, CLEAR	$(AC:BR \text{ rot } n)_{LT}$	0			
11110 1	CLH	CYCLE LEFT, HOLD	$AC:BR \text{ rot } n$	$\leftarrow$			
11111	MD	MULTIPLY DIGITS	$AC \wedge C(x)$		$-(\text{final } AC)$		