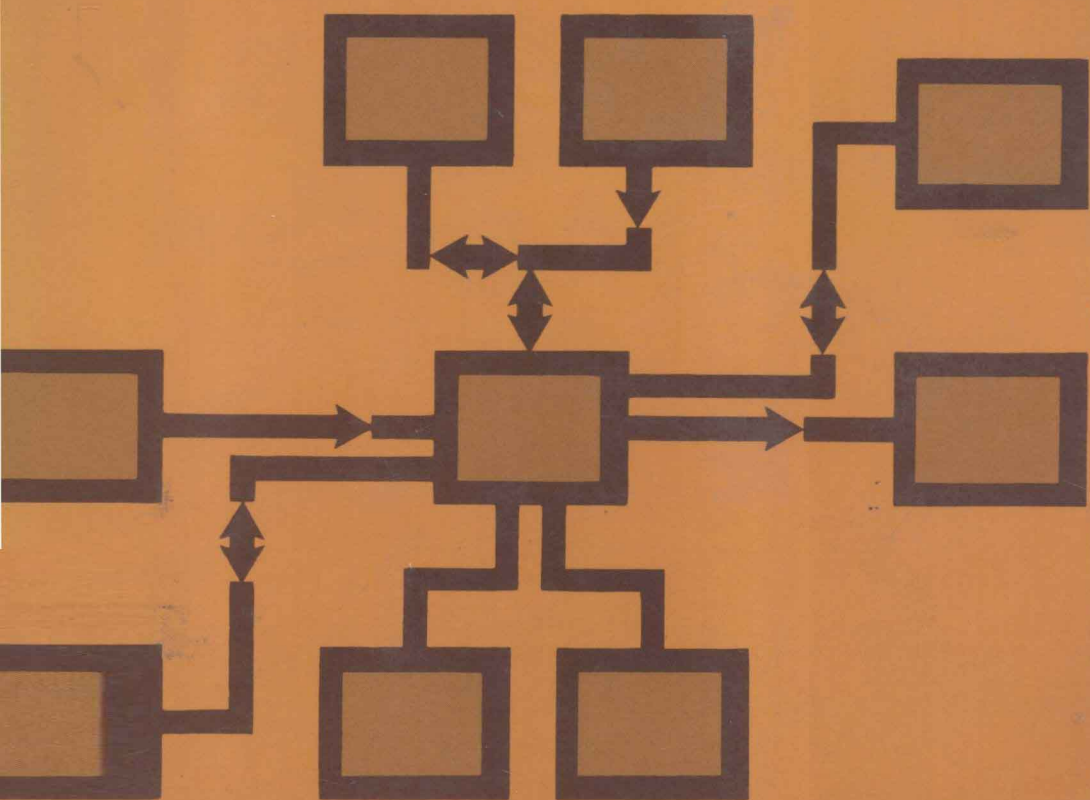


Michael G.Hartley and Martin Healey

# A First Course in Computer Technology



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## A First Course in Computer Technology

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*Consulting Editor:*  
**Richard G. Meadows**  
*The Polytechnic of North London*

To Mike and Sue and friends in JHB  
and  
To Janet

## PREFACE

This book has been written specifically for students commencing the study of computers and computing. It is an introductory text aimed at providing a broad understanding of how a computer works and is, thus, of importance to disciplines which range from electronic engineering to mathematics. The intention has been to cover the subject broadly rather than in depth; during a student's career each chapter may well be expanded into a full course in its own right. It is the authors' opinion that, in their first exposure to the subject, students should acquire an overall picture of hardware and software so that future detailed studies will have relevance and not appear as unrelated entities. While the book is seen especially as an undergraduate text, it should appeal to a wider readership. On the one hand it should be of interest to many final-year high-school pupils, while on the other hand it will be helpful to students on specialized Masters' degree courses who have not studied the subject at undergraduate level and for whom computer technology will be important.

The authors have lectured in the field of computers and computer systems for a number of years. They have been aware of a continuing lack of a book which bridges the gap between the rather elementary volumes and the professional works. It is anticipated that this book will fulfil the need.

With the increasing use of integrated circuits, coupled with an almost miraculous fall in the price of components, the earlier emphasis on logic design is now no longer so important. This change of emphasis is reflected in the book, which strives to preserve a balance between computer hardware, architecture, and software and, as a result, finds only a limited space for Boolean algebra and logic design. A systematic treatment has been adopted throughout, with an initial statement of the objectives of each chapter, the material relating to the chapter itself, a summary, and, in appropriate cases, references and problems. The references have been kept to reasonable proportions, since it is unrealistic to expect students at undergraduate level to have sufficient time to read a substantial number of books and papers ancillary to the main course material.

The book is divided into nine chapters. Chapter 1 is a reasonably detailed history of computers which, while not essential to an understanding, gives some feel of the exciting field in which we are working. Chapter 2 gives an introduction to the operating principles of a computer and a review of the applications areas. Chapter 3 gives an introduction to the representation of information, both numerical and non-numerical, with particular emphasis on binary techniques. Chapter 4 defines the basic 'building blocks' used in logic systems with a brief review of Boolean algebra. Chapter 5 is devoted to a detailed description of the hardware and machine-level programming of a minimal four-bit computer. While the machine is impractical in terms of computing power, it displays many of the characteristics of a real computer and yet is so simple that the decode logic, etc., can be explained in detail. Having thus established the principle of instruction decoding and execution,

more practical machine architectures are explained in Chapter 6. Both a 24-bit machine with a straightforward instruction set and a rather more sophisticated 16-bit machine are discussed. Chapter 7 is devoted to details of memory systems, concentrating on magnetic-core and semiconductor random-access memory, but putting other types of memory into perspective. Chapter 8 contains a review of the elements that go to make up a complete software system. Finally, Chapter 9 covers the basics of pocket calculators and microprocessors.

The authors wish to acknowledge the assistance of a wide variety of people in producing this present volume. A word of thanks is due to the students who have attended their courses over the years. Through interaction with the students, the need for this book has been identified and points which are likely to prove particularly difficult have been highlighted. The authors' immediate colleagues are especially thanked for their discussions and in some cases for help in reading manuscripts with considerable diligence. These include fellow members of our departments at UMIST and University College, Cardiff and also within the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, where Michael Hartley spent a year as visiting Professor while the book was in preparation. A particular word of thanks is due to Mrs Thomas in Johannesburg and Janet Healey in Cardiff, who assisted with the preparation of the text.



# CONTENTS

PREFACE	xi
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	1
<i>Objectives</i>	1
1.1 Introduction	2
1.2 Charles Babbage – the father of digital computers	5
1.3 Historical development of digital computers	9
1.3.1 Preamble	9
1.3.2 Early machines in the USA	9
1.3.3 Early machines in Britain	11
1.3.4 Further developments	13
1.4 The present and the future	15
1.5 Summary	16
References	16
Problems	17
CHAPTER 2 GENERAL CONCEPTS OF DIGITAL COMPUTERS	19
<i>Objectives</i>	19
2.1 What is a digital computer?	19
2.2 Classification of digital computers	21
2.3 The need for computing power	22
2.4 Applications of digital computers	22
2.4.1 Commercial data processing	23
2.4.2 Scientific data processing	24
2.4.3 Instrumentation, control, and data communications	25
2.5 Schematic organization of a computer	27
2.6 The central processor	33
2.7 Hardware and software	35
2.8 Man-machine communication	36
2.9 Summary	38
References	38
CHAPTER 3 DATA REPRESENTATION, NUMBER SYSTEMS, AND ARITHMETIC PROCESSES	39
<i>Objectives</i>	39
3.1 Data types	40
3.2 Representation of numbers in binary systems	40
3.2.1 Radix number systems	40
3.2.2 Signed numbers	43
3.2.3 Binary fractions	44
3.2.4 Floating-point representation	45
3.3 Binary arithmetic	47
3.3.1 Unsigned numbers	47
3.3.2 Signed numbers	49
3.3.3 Floating point	52
3.4 Non-numeric data	53
3.4.1 Alphanumeric characters	53
3.4.2 Logical variables	55

3.5	Summary	56
	Reference	57
	Problems	57
CHAPTER 4 THE BUILDING BLOCKS		58
	<i>Objectives</i>	58
4.1	Logic systems	59
4.2	AND, OR, and NOT gates	60
4.3	Boolean algebra	61
4.4	NAND and NOR gates	64
4.5	The two-input AND gate, bus-bars, and data flow	66
4.6	Combinational logic systems	68
	4.6.1 Binary adders	68
	4.6.2 Decoders	72
4.7	Sequential logic systems	73
	4.7.1 Flip-flops	74
	4.7.2 Binary counters	81
	4.7.3 Shift registers	82
4.8	Word-orientated registers	83
	4.8.1 Registers	83
	4.8.2 Accumulators	84
4.9	A binary multiplier	84
4.10	Summary	87
	References	87
	Problems	87
CHAPTER 5 A SIMPLE TEACHING COMPUTER		89
	<i>Objectives</i>	89
5.1	Introduction	90
5.2	Preliminary ideas	90
5.3	The idea of an instruction	91
5.4	The orders of the instruction set	92
5.5	Specification of addresses	94
5.6	Hardware of the minimal instruction computer (MIC)	95
	5.6.1 Overall control and synchronization	95
	5.6.2 The arithmetic unit	97
	5.6.3 The store	97
5.7	Implementation of orders	97
	5.7.1 Data flow	98
	5.7.2 Gating arrangements for implementation of orders	99
	5.7.3 Store selection	100
	5.7.4 Physical realization and mode of operation of MIC	102
5.8	Example of a simple program	103
5.9	Limitations of the minimal computer	105
	5.9.1 Stored programs	105
	5.9.2 Limitations due to word-length	105
	5.9.3 Increase in the total number of orders	105
	5.9.4 Increase in store locations	106
	5.9.5 Additional elements in the instruction words	107
	5.9.6 Enhanced precision of data	107
	5.9.7 Input and output of instructions and data	107

5.10	Summary	108
	References	108
	Problems	108
CHAPTER 6 PRINCIPAL FEATURES OF SMALL DIGITAL COMPUTERS		112
	<i>Objectives</i>	112
6.1	Introduction	113
6.2	A simple 24-bit machine	113
6.2.1	The role of the X accumulators	114
6.2.2	The instruction set	115
6.2.3	The M modifier	115
6.2.4	The N address	116
6.3	Implementation of the instruction set of the 24-bit machine	116
6.3.1	Elementary functions	117
6.3.2	Execution of simple instructions	120
6.3.3	Conditional instructions	121
6.3.4	Relative address notation	123
6.3.5	Provision for insertion of constants into a program	124
6.3.6	Modification of orders	124
6.3.7	Multiplication and division	126
6.3.8	Subroutines	127
6.3.9	Input/output (I/O)	130
6.3.10	Further instructions	130
6.4	Outline architecture of 24-bit parallel computer	131
6.5	Expansion of store capacity	134
6.5.1	Further consideration of the modifier bits M	135
6.5.2	Use of the indirect address bit I	135
6.6	Modern minicomputers	136
6.6.1	Memory reference instructions	138
6.6.2	Addressing techniques	138
6.6.3	Arithmetic and logical instructions	140
6.6.4	Input and output instructions	142
6.6.5	Multiplication and division	145
6.6.6	Overall performance of a 16-bit machine	145
6.7	Summary	145
	References	146
	Problems	146
CHAPTER 7 STORAGE OF DIGITAL INFORMATION		149
	<i>Objectives</i>	149
7.1	Introduction	150
7.2	Basic characteristics of storage devices	151
7.2.1	Volatile and non-volatile storage	151
7.2.2	Categorization by access time	152
7.2.3	Categorization by mode of access	152
7.2.4	Other categorizations of storage devices	153
7.3	Storage hierarchy	154
7.4	The ferrite-core store as an example of a random-access store	156
7.4.1	Physical properties of ferrites	156

7.4.2	Word-organized two-dimensional ferrite-core store	159
7.4.3	Bit-organized three-dimensional ferrite-core store	161
7.5	Store access synchronous and asynchronous computer operation	164
7.6	Semiconductor memory	168
7.7	The disc store – an example of cyclic access	172
7.8	Serial bulk stores	173
7.9	Summary	175
	References	176
	Problems	176
	<b>CHAPTER 8 SOFTWARE</b>	<b>178</b>
	<i>Objectives</i>	178
8.1	Categorization of software	178
8.2	Machine code and assemblers	181
8.3	Loaders	182
8.4	High-level languages	182
8.5	Program development aids	183
8.6	Peripheral handling	184
8.7	Data handling	185
8.8	Maths packages	186
8.9	Other utilities	187
8.10	Operating-system characteristics	187
8.10.1	Off-line versus on-line	188
8.10.2	Batch versus real-time	188
8.10.3	Single-user versus multi-user	189
8.10.4	Multiprogramming	189
8.11	Summary	190
	Recommended reading	190
	<b>CHAPTER 9 CALCULATORS AND MICROPROCESSORS</b>	<b>191</b>
	<i>Objectives</i>	191
9.1	Introduction	191
9.2	LSI technology	192
9.3	The pocket calculator	192
9.3.1	The display	195
9.3.2	The keyboard	196
9.3.3	The processor chip	196
9.4	More advanced calculators	198
9.5	Basic structure of a microcomputer system	199
9.6	Microprocessor structure	203
9.7	System architecture	205
9.7.1	Program memory	207
9.7.2	Data storage	207
9.7.3	Peripherals	208
9.7.4	The single-chip microcomputer	208
9.8	Support for microcomputer system design	208
9.8.1	Cross-products	209
9.8.2	Resident software and associated microprocessor development systems	210
9.8.3	Hardware design aids	211
9.9	Summary	212
	References	213
	Index	214

## INTRODUCTION

### ***Objectives***

This chapter is intended to fulfil a variety of objectives. The first is to serve as a brief historical introduction, stressing the antiquity of aids to calculation and to distinguish between analogue and digital techniques. The work of Charles Babbage, who pioneered digital computers in the early part of the 19th Century, will be contrasted against the analogue approach of Lord Kelvin later in that century. Even at this early stage, computers were developed with commercial, military, and scientific applications in mind.

The chapter continues by contrasting the development of analogue and digital computers in the 1940's and 1950's against the earlier work in the 19th Century. It concludes with a brief mention of the situation in the USA and Britain in the late 1940's and early 1950's; a period when many of the most important features of modern computers were established. This part of the chapter is suitable for re-reading after studying the main body of the text. Such a re-reading will serve to reinforce basic ideas and set them into context.

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

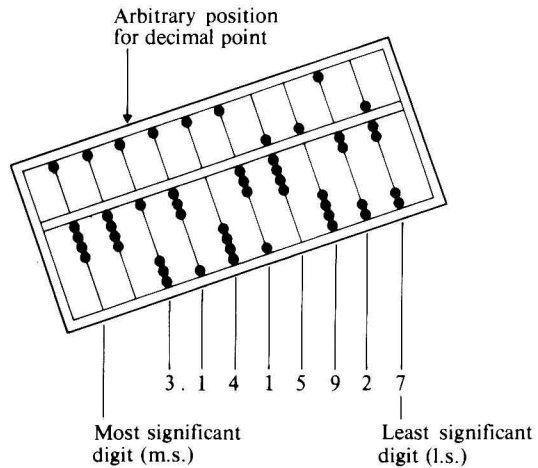
In this chapter, the background to computers is discussed. Early aids to computation are considered and, from the examples chosen, the essential differences between analogue and digital equipment emerge. Long before the end of the 19th Century, the two main types of computer had evolved and much of the basic scientific and mathematical groundwork essential to modern computing machines had been discovered.

Before discussing the work of the two 19th Century pioneers of computing, whose activities serve to distinguish between analogue and digital methods, it is instructive to consider, briefly, earlier aids to calculation and notice how, even at that stage, these exhibited either analogue or digital characteristics.

The abacus, or counting frame, is an excellent example of a digital calculating aid. It is first mentioned by Herodotus (*c.* 450 BC) as an aid used in ancient Egypt. Samples used by the Greeks and Romans have been discovered. It was particularly useful to the Romans, since with them there was no emphasis on degree of significance, as indicated by place in alphanumeric representation of quantities; thus, XIII for 13 and XIV for 14, but XIX for 19 and XXI for 21. There was no representation of zero in the Roman number system.

It is said that the abacus was introduced into Europe by Pope Sylvester II about 1000 years ago, although its popularity waned after the introduction in the 12th Century of the Hindu–Arabic number system, incorporating the notion of place to indicate degree of significance and representation of zero, and used to the present day. The abacus is still widely used in the Orient.

One of the authors was able to purchase an abacus at the campus bookshop of a major American university as recently as 1962; the shop had a variety for sale, the simpler ones with ten rods, constraining the beads and permitting calculations up to ten significant decimal digits, while the more expensive ones incorporated up to twenty rods, with a corresponding improvement in precision. The Chinese abacus has five beads on the rod below the bar, each of unit value in the appropriate degree of significance, with two beads, each of value five units, above the bar. The Japanese abacus, illustrated in Fig. 1.1, has four beads below the bar, each of unit value, and a single bead of value five units above the bar. With the abacus it is convenient to adopt the normal convention that the most significant digit column is on the extreme left and the least significant digit column is on the right. The representation of decimal 3.141 592 7, i.e.,  $\pi$  to eight significant digits, is shown in Fig. 1.1. It is clear that with a larger abacus greater precision may be achieved. With the abacus, correct answers to the four basic mathematical operations of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division may be attained, provided that the scale of the problem lies within the number of significant digits available with the machine. Good results may be obtained



**Fig. 1.1** An abacus displaying the value of  $\pi$  to eight significant digits

also when appropriate arithmetic algorithms are used, to determine a square root, for example.

In 1642 came the first simple mechanical calculating machine, invented by Blaise Pascal. The stepped-wheel calculator, invented by Leibnitz, was completed in 1673 and exhibited to the Royal Society in London. Such machines came into their own with the work of the Swedish engineer Odhner, who invented the pin-wheel method of mechanical addition in 1878. From his work stemmed the decimal hand or electric calculating machines so widely used throughout the world until the advent of the electronic pocket calculator rather less than a century later. With the exception of the electronic pocket calculator, the other machines concentrated on the four basic arithmetic operations and, like the earlier abacus, provided precise answers to arithmetic calculations, under the constraint that the numbers involved were within their range.

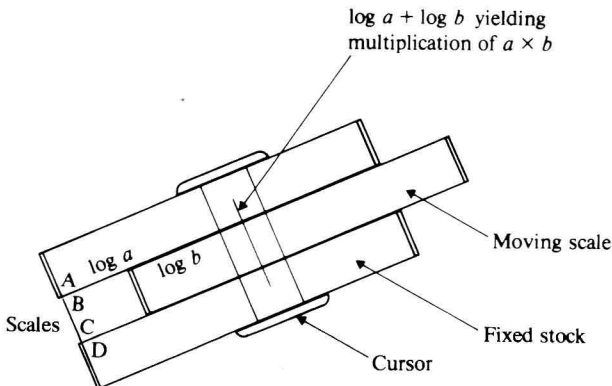
The above aids operate in arithmetic fashion and, hence, are classed as *digital* devices. Mechanical calculating aids reached their zenith with the work of Charles Babbage (1792–1871), of whom more shortly. With the digital devices came others adopting an alternative approach. Here, machines represented the magnitude of numbers by a set of physical quantities, say lengths or shaft rotation, with respect to a datum position. The slide rule exploiting the properties of logarithms is a good example of this approach. Logarithms were invented by John Napier of Merchiston in Scotland, who wrote a treatise on the subject in 1614. In 1632, William Oughtred, an English clergyman, arranged two log scales, which had been invented about 12 years earlier by Edmund Gunter, side by side to form the first slide rule. As a result, multiplication of two quantities was possible by adding the lengths on the log scales, and division occurred on subtraction. The fixed-stock slide rule was invented by Robert Bissaker in 1654, while the modern form was

developed by a French artillery officer, Amédée Mannheim, in 1850. This slide rule incorporated ABCD scales and a cursor, and is similar to the version shown in Fig. 1.2, as used today.

Clearly, precision of result is a function of a number of variables. The accuracy with which the scales are engraved, the fit of the moving scale in the fixed stock, the quality of the cursor used to assist in reading the scales all play a part in the precision of the final result. Good eyesight and minimization of parallax error are also important. An increase in the total length of the slide rule, an improvement in the engraving of the scales, the use of a cursor incorporating a magnifying glass, all play their part in improving accuracy, but precise results must not be expected.

With calculating devices such as the slide rule, one set of physical variables represent another. Hence, such devices are categorized as *analog* (analogue) calculating aids and later as *analogue computers*. Other examples include the planimeter, used to estimate areas. The highlight of the early mechanical analogue machines was reached with the work of Lord Kelvin (W. Thomson) when, together with his brother James Thomson, he invented the first differential analyser in 1876.<sup>1,2,3</sup> Here, mechanical adders and integrators were connected together in closed-loop fashion, so as to solve continuously second-order differential equations. For such a machine, the independent variable was shaft rotation. No further machines embodying the principles of Lord Kelvin were made until the first of a class of much more ambitious mechanical differential analysers was constructed by Bush at MIT in 1931.<sup>4</sup> Such machines became popular in the later 1930's and especially in the early 1940's, when they were used for a variety of military applications in World War II.

Up to this time, the analogue quantity remained shaft rotation, but, with the advent of more reliable electronic valves (vacuum tubes) and the invention of the electronic integrator and adder, voltage was used as the



**Fig. 1.2** A simple slide-rule illustrating multiplication

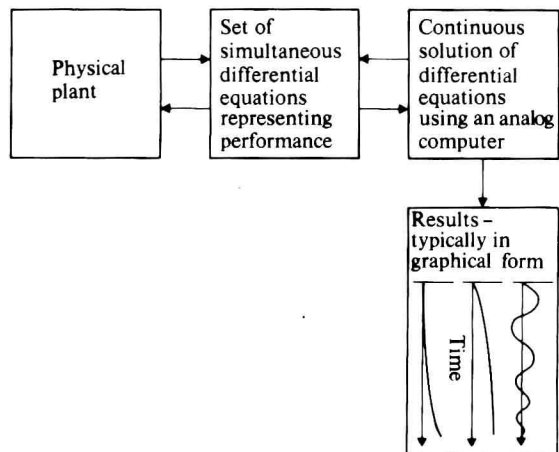


analogue quantity. Integration was with respect to time and, as a result, computations were related to time. In some cases there was a 1:1 time correspondence between the computation and the actual events, permitting *real-time* working. On occasions, the rates differed, permitting working faster or slower than real-time. The relation to real-time has proved very advantageous in many cases, permitting an enhanced 'feel' to the solution of problems.<sup>5</sup> Such an approach has continued to the present day, when general purpose analogue computers based on high-performance transistor *operational amplifiers* solve continuously sets of simultaneous differential equations which represent the behaviour of physical systems large or small.<sup>6</sup> The differential equations act as a link between the real system and the model, as shown in Fig. 1.3. Naturally, the differential equations, frequently linear equations, may not represent performance completely.

Accordingly, in these cases, the solution is not precise. Nevertheless, with care, results achieved with such analogue computers can be both accurate and extremely useful. It is true, however, that analogue computers have been eclipsed in recent years by digital machines. As a result, it is appropriate at this point to return to the field of digital machines for a brief consideration of the work of Charles Babbage, the 'father of digital computers'.

## 1.2 CHARLES BABBAGE – THE FATHER OF DIGITAL COMPUTERS

Charles Babbage<sup>7,8</sup> was one of the most remarkable figures to have emerged during the Victorian age; an age which was so prolific in men and women of tremendous imagination and invention. Born in Devonshire in 1792 he went as a young man to Cambridge, only to discover that he knew more algebra



**Fig. 1.3** Schematic diagram illustrating operation of an analogue computer