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Peter A McWilliams is a nationally syndicated columnist. His column “Personal Computers” appears in newspapers from coast to coast including *The Washington Post*, *The Chicago Tribune*, *The Boston Globe*, *The Miami Herald*, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, *The Dallas Times-Herald*, *The Denver Post*, *The Houston Post* and *The Seattle Times*.

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The  
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Computer  
in  
Business  
Book

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Peter A McWilliams  
Author of *The Personal Computer Book*

With an Introduction by  
William F. Buckley, Jr.

First Edition, October 1983

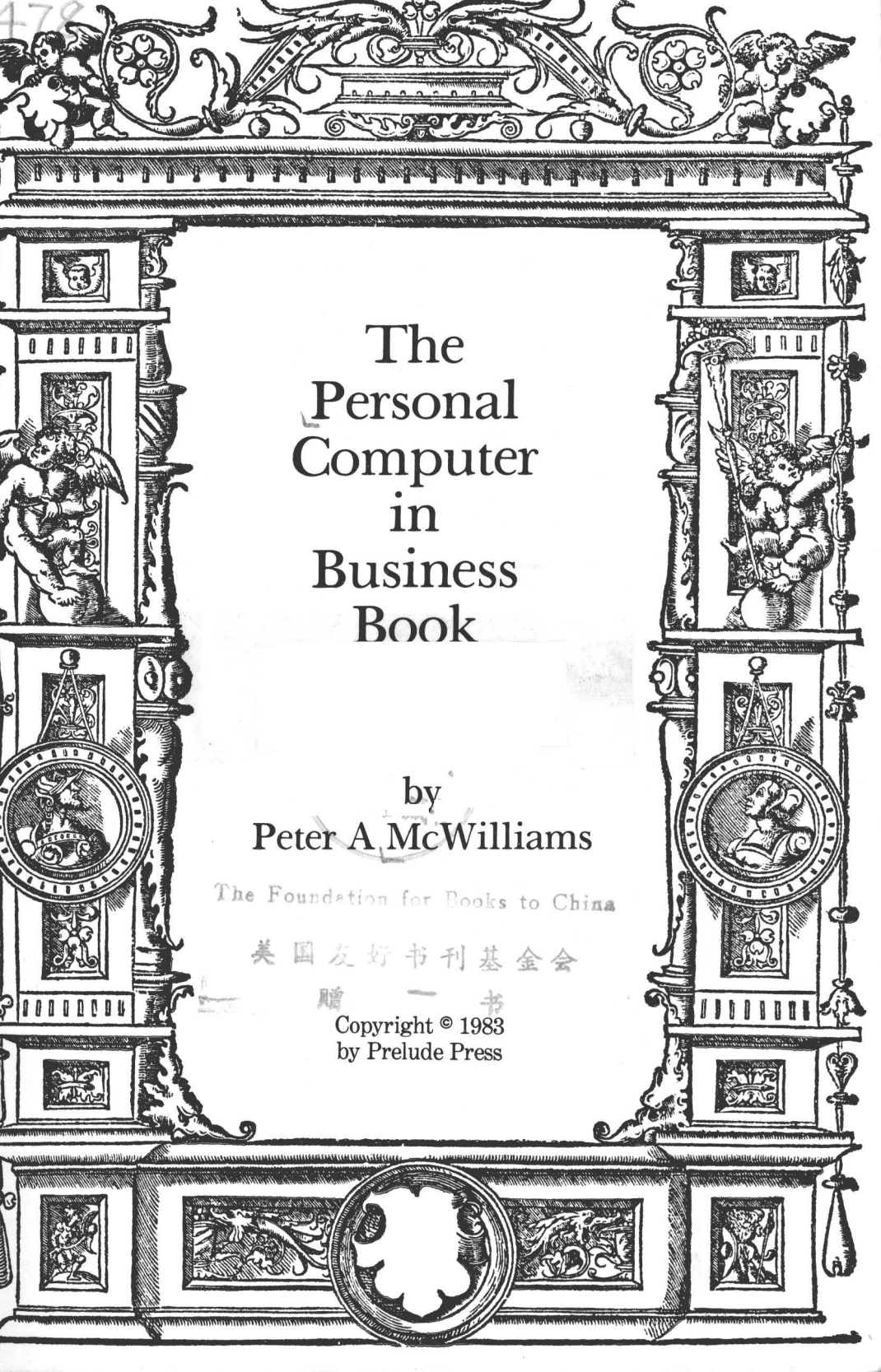
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The  
Personal  
Computer  
in  
Business  
Book

by  
Peter A. McWilliams

The Foundation for Books to China

美国友好书刊基金会

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### Other Books by Peter A McWilliams

The Personal Computer Book

The Word Processing Book

Word Processing on The KayPro

Questions & Answers on Word Processing

Word Processing on the IBM



*For Mom,*

*Who taught me one of  
the major precepts of business,  
"Put a little away for a rainy day."*

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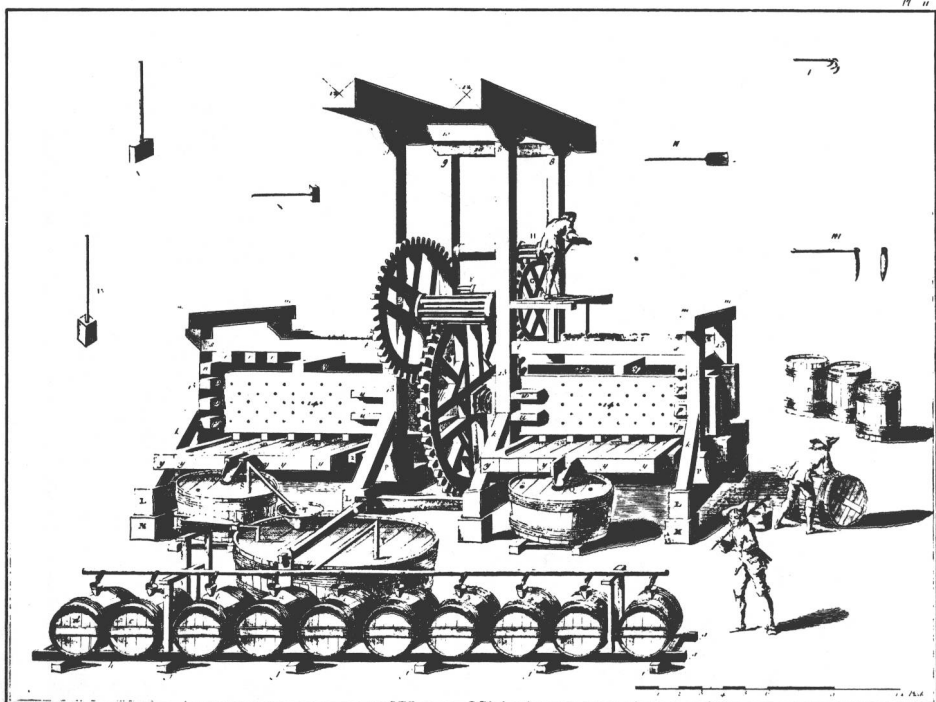


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The  
Personal  
Computer  
in  
Business  
Book



## Preface

Personal computers are the best thing to happen to business since, well, computers.

There is no doubt that big business is happily addicted to big computers. Each day, large computers in large businesses do the work of three *trillion* clerical workers. Three trillion. (A short while ago, most people had no idea how large a trillion was. Thanks to the Pentagon, however, we're starting to get the idea.)

If those three trillion workers went on strike, that is, if someone pulled the plug on all the large computers, big business would not grind to a proverbial halt—it would stop cold.

But this is not a book about the slaughter of three trillion innocent workers (*The Day the Computers Stood Still*). It is a book about the newest addition to the computer family, the personal computer. It's a book about what personal computers are, what they can do for your business, and how to buy one.

This is a book for people in any size business—large, small, and all points in between. Is a personal computer a worthwhile investment for your business? This book will help you decide. (The answer, by the way, is likely to be yes.)

I am not, however, a proponent of the notion that computers belong everywhere right away. In the home, for example, I find little practical use for them. Balancing a personal checkbook is faster with a \$5 pocket calculator and a pencil. Filing recipes is easier with a 99-cent file box and some 3x5 cards. And what's all this talk about computers balancing the household budget? Do you know anyone who even *has* a household budget?

Eventually, computers will be in every home, and be as invaluable as television or radio, but eventually is ten or twenty years away.

The practical uses of personal computers in business, however, are here today. They are powerful, dependable, and inexpensive. In word processing, accounting, cost

projection, inventory control and several other key areas of business, a personal computer will pay for itself in less than six months.

People ask, "Should I buy a personal computer for my business now, or should I wait?" That's like asking, "Should I buy today's newspaper, or wait for tomorrow's?" Today's newspaper pays for itself today, tomorrow's pays for itself tomorrow.

Today's computer, used in business, pays for itself today. Tomorrow's computer will pay for itself tomorrow. And today's computer will still be on the job.

There's been nothing like the personal computer since the early 1950s, when the computer advances of World War II were finally made available to American business. Except personal computers are not just for big business, they're for every business. And personal computers are something the big computers never were: fun.



Maybe we need a better analogy. "Personal computers are the best thing to happen to business since, well, computers" is a catchy opening line for a preface, but for a closing line, we need something more accurate.

We need to find an instrument that forever changed the face of business, but inexpensive enough for nearly every employee to have. A business tool that became so popular, every home eventually got one. A machine that sits on virtually every desk, and has become so commonplace as to be ignored.

How about, "Personal computers are the best thing to happen to business since the telephone"?

# The Telephone of Tomorrow

Private business is always the pioneer, the trail-blazer and pathfinder—for government and public. And private business is making wide and clear the once hidden road to Tomorrow's Telephone—to the ultimate development of wire communication—to the Automatic Telephone.

Business must avail itself of all things most efficient—of all things simple and sound to the core—of all things making for certainty, economy and high morale—in short of the best as soon as it appears.

Business cannot afford to do otherwise. That is why business in America—wherever that business is dealing with large problems and mighty forces—has blazed the way for Tomorrow's Telephone by investigating the Automatic, buying the Automatic, using the Automatic.

Governments abroad and at home are already traveling the clear road blazed by private enterprise.

England, France and Germany agree on this one point: That the Automatic Telephone must be used for government service because it is the type to which all telephones must eventually rise.

Our own War and Navy Departments, the United States Naval Torpedo Station, the fortifications at Sandy Hook, the Arsenal at Springfield, have used the Automatic Telephone for years and are each year adding to their equipment.

A few weeks ago the Federal Reserve Bank of New York bought the

Automatic because the directors decided to transform their business telephones from a liability to an asset. They saw what many another great business has seen—that the Automatic Telephone is the only one giving 24-hour, 365-day secret service for a minimum labor and investment cost.

The Bethlehem Steel Company, the Alfred Du Pont Estate, the Tonopah Mining Company, Armour and Company, Mayo Hospital at Rochester, Minn., Sears, Roebuck and Company, The Great Northern Railway, the University of Chicago, the Baldwin Locomotive Works and hundreds of others have installed the Automatic Telephone and are constantly adding to the original installation.

Everywhere the signs read plain. Everywhere the trails and roads of telephony lead toward Tomorrow's Telephone, the Automatic. An unusually interesting and valuable booklet, "Your Telephone—Asset or Liability," has been prepared especially for the use of the executives of the larger business concerns and public institutions. A copy will be mailed on request.





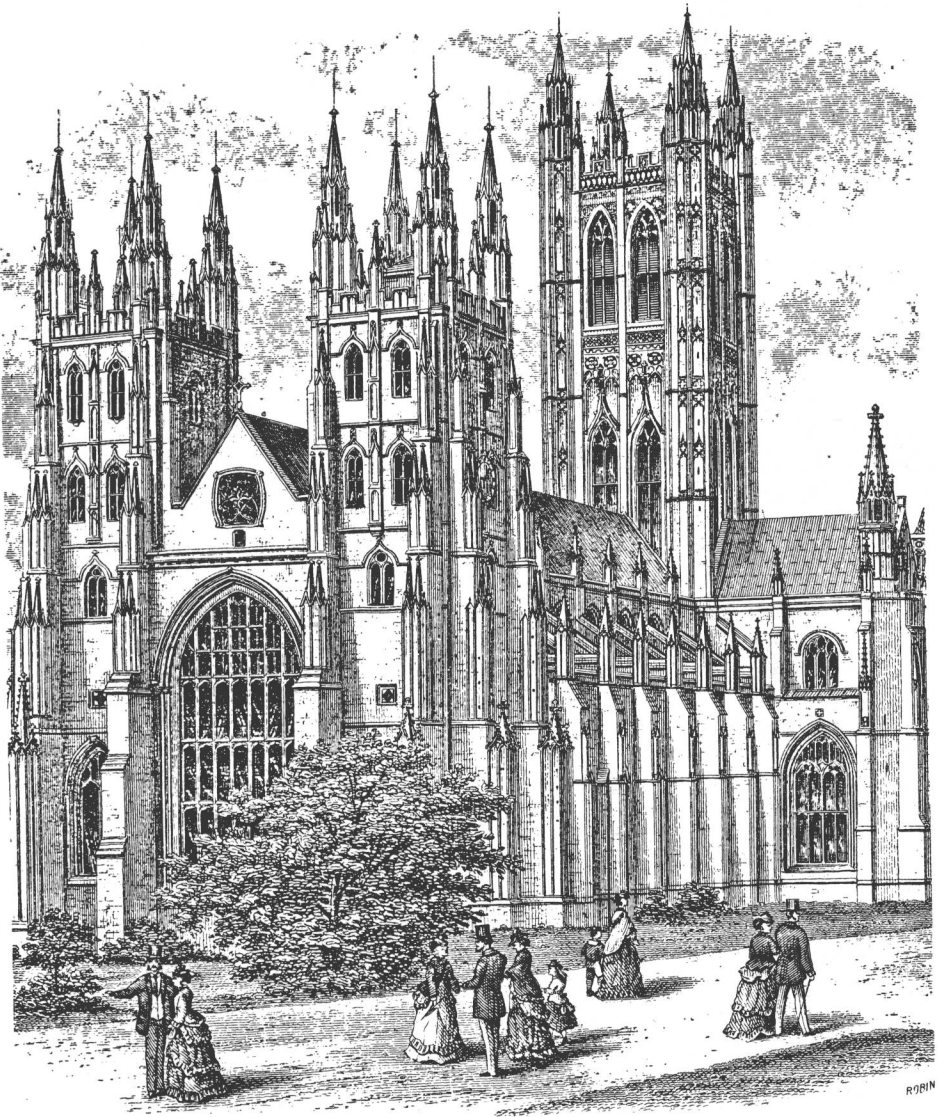
It is sheer coincidence that on the very weekend I had set aside to read in manuscript, and write an introduction to, the latest book by Peter McWilliams I stumbled into a second obligation I had made, which was to set in motion the search for a business computer for an enterprise in which I am heavily involved. If there is a human computer in the sky charged with the felicitous coordination of related chores, I thank him or her, as Peter McWilliams would put it. But on the matter of how McWilliams puts things, let's get into that instantly, because there is nothing more important for me to relate in this introduction.

The author of this book was born to write pleasantly about subjects one is instinctively fearful of. If we go back to capital punishment in a big way, I shall suggest that McWilliams be given the job of writing a manual on how to operate electric chairs so as not to run the risk of getting hurt. I mean, the wrong person. Now, he comes by this skill for three reasons, I think. One is that he is, simply—that way. A second is that he sees an explicit problem in our society—the incapacity of what sometimes seems an entire class of very bright people to communicate to laymen what it is that they are thinking. And a third, and perhaps most important factor, is his own profound ignorance of exactly what it is that you do not wish to know, and let me here give you an example of why I think this is so important.

Recently in conversation with an active, talkative, and bright journalist we got into the question—precisely related to what we are here talking about—of travel instructions. Only a week earlier, an extremely bright technician in charge of a great hunk of public transportation in New York city had invited my friend to lunch the following day, and given him instructions that began with: "When you get to Route 183, turn right." The following day, after agonizing explorations, my friend discovered that Route 183 lay not just outside his garage, but about eighteen miles away.

"Now after you have reached Eaglebrook Lane and are travelling toward Brewster, you will see a huge,





*Please pay no attention to this church.*