

# **Guide to the Records of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Computation Center AC.0062**

**Finding aid prepared by Emily Tordo**

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## Summary Information

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<b>Repository</b>	Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Institute Archives and Special Collections
<b>Creator</b>	Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Committee on Machine Methods of Computation
<b>Creator</b>	Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Computation Center
<b>Title</b>	Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Computation Center records
<b>Date [inclusive]</b>	1950-1962
<b>Extent</b>	1.6 cubic feet (1 record carton, 2 manuscript boxes)
<b>Location</b>	Materials are stored off-site. Advance notice is required for use.
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Abstract</b>	<p>This set of Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Computation Center records spans the years 1950-1962 and documents the genesis of the Computation Center and its eventual transformation into the Information Processing Center. The Computation Center housed one of the first high-speed digital computers built by IBM with technology developed at MIT in Project Whirlwind. The purpose of the Center was to provide a means to educate faculty and students in the use of high-speed digital computers and to discover ways of incorporating computers into the fabric of everyday research work. Materials include administrative records; correspondence, memoranda, grant proposals, time reports, and other information from research projects; legal and personnel records; and minutes from the Committee on Machine Methods of Computation.</p>

**Citation**

Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Computation Center Records, AC 62, box X. Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Institute Archives and Special Collections, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

## Historical note

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In 1950, Provost Julius Stratton formed the Committee on Machine Methods of Computation to study the introduction of computers for general use by faculty and students at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Six members were appointed including Jay W. Forrester and Zdenek Kopal from the Department of Electrical Engineering, Chia-Chiao Lin and Eric Reissner from the Department of Mathematics, and Herman Feshbach and Philip M. Morse from the Department of Physics. Philip Morse was named chairman. The establishment of the committee followed the successful research and development of the high-speed digital Whirlwind I computer at MIT. In 1954 the committee recommended to the provost that a special computation center be built on the MIT campus. The stated goals of the Computation Center were “to aid faculty in keeping up to date on computer use within their fields and to assist them in introducing the use of computers into their courses; to educate all MIT students in computer use; and to explore and develop new ways of using computers in engineering and scientific research.”

President James Killian, in his 1956 annual report, described the facilities being built to house the new Computation Center. In 1957 the Computation Center was formally dedicated at MIT with Philip Morse as director, a position he would hold for the next ten years. The construction of the Karl Taylor Compton Laboratories (MIT building 26), which housed the new center, was funded in part by IBM, which also paid for the Computation Center’s equipment and support staff; IBM also donated the machine initially installed in the center, an IBM 704 computer. Part of IBM’s agreement with MIT under which they provided funding for the project allowed other New England schools, as well as IBM researchers, to share the use of the facility free of charge. This arrangement eventually became NERComp – the New England Regional Computing Program. Project funding also came from the National Science Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation as well as from charging computer time to internal department accounts.

IBM was petitioned on several occasions to provide the center with newer faster computers. The Computation Center received an IBM 709 to replace the initial 704 model in 1960. This was followed in 1962 by the installation of an IBM 7090, and finally in 1966 IBM System/360 Model 65 was donated to MIT.

An early version of the Compatible Time Sharing System (CTSS) devised by Professor Fernando Corbató to maximize the use of available computing time was demonstrated in November 1961 at the Computation Center. After ten years MIT reorganized its computer services, and in 1967 the Computation Center transitioned into a central Office of Information Processing Services. Richard G. Mills, formerly the assistant director of Project MAC, was appointed to a new post as Director of Information Processing Services to coordinate all computer facilities at MIT.

### Computation Center

Phillip M. Morse, Computation Center Director, 1957-1967; Frank M. Verzuh, Computation Center Assistant Director, 1956-1960; Fernando J. Corbató, Computation Center Associate Director, 1960-1966.

## Scope and Contents of the Collection

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Materials in the collection include correspondence and memoranda, reports, bulletins, grant proposals, time reports, research data and committee minutes.

The records of the Computation Center provide detailed and comprehensive documentation of the early use of high-speed digital computing by faculty and students at MIT. The collection contains two distinct sets of materials: records from the Committee on Machine Methods of Computation which outline the need for a central computing facility (1950-1956), and the early administrative records of the Computation Center itself (1957-1962). The first set of records from the Committee on Machine Methods of Computation contains proposals for IBM computers and funding and documents the rapidly growing need for such a program. The other group of records reveals details of daily administrative tasks, including staffing, experiments, allotting time, the relationship of the center to other similar programs, to educational institutions in New England, and to IBM and other sponsors.

Research records relating to the Compatible Time-Sharing System (CTSS), which was first demonstrated at the Computation Center in 1961, and other research of Professor Fernando Corbató can be found in his personal papers, MIT collection MC 371.

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## Administrative Information

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### Publication Information

Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Institute Archives and Special Collections (Copyright 2009)

### Revision Description

2010

### Access note

This collection is open for research. In accordance with MIT policy, there may be restrictions on access to some of the records.

### Intellectual Property Rights

Access to collections in the Institute Archives and Special Collections is not authorization to publish. Separate written application for permission to publish must be made to the Institute Archives. Copyright of some items in this collection may be held by respective creators, not by the creating office.

## Source of Acquisition

Records were transferred to the Institute Archives and Special Collections by Phillip Morse in 1977.

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## Related Materials

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### Related Archival Materials

Fernando Corbató Papers (MC 371); Jay W. Forrester Papers (MC 432); Digital Computer Laboratory Records (AC 362); Philip Morse Papers (MC 75); Office of the President, Records of Karl T. Compton and James M. Killian, 1930-1950 (AC 4); Project Whirlwind Collection (MC 665).

*Reports to the President, 1956-1968.*

Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Computation Center. *Progress report ... of the research and educational activities in machine computation by the Cooperating Colleges of New England*, no. 2, Jan. 1958 - no. 18, Jan. 1966.

*Massachusetts Institute of Technology Computation Center Bulletin / MIT Computation Center* (formerly the *Computation Center Bulletin*), no. 7, Apr. 14, 1959 - no. 47, Oct. 16, 1967. Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Information Processing Services.

*Massachusetts Institute of Technology Computation Center Bulletin*, no. 7, Apr. 14, 1959 - no. 47, Oct. 16, 1967.

Massachusetts Institute of Technology Computation Center. *The Computation Center at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology*. Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Computation Center, 1964.

### Material in Other Institutions

Whirlwind Computer Collection, National Museum of American History Archives Center.

Fernando J. Corbató, OH 162. Oral history interview by Arthur L. Norberg, 14 November 1990, Cambridge, Massachusetts. Charles Babbage Institute, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis.

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## Controlled Access Headings

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### **Corporate Name(s)**

- IBM Corporation
- Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Committee on Machine Methods of Computation
- Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Computation Center

### **Personal Name(s)**

- Corbató, F. J.
- Morse, Philip McCord, 1903-1985
- Verzuh, Frank M.

### **Subject(s)**

- Computers--History.
- Electronic digital computers--History.
- IBM 704 (Computer)
- Massachusetts Institute of Technology--History.
- Project Whirlwind.
- Whirlwind computer.



## Collection Inventory

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Statistical Services Center. 1952-1955	1	3
Project proposal, contract correspondence, Division of Industrial Cooperation (DIC) # 5 6915. 1950-1956	1	2
Correspondence relating to Whirlwind and Machine Project. 1954-1956	1	4
Whirlwind time. undated	1	5
Proposal to National Science Foundation (NSF) and Office of Naval Research (ONR). 1956	1	6
NSF proposals and correspondence. 1956-1959	1	7
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Computation Center, history of proposal for 1955-1956. 1955-1956	1	9
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Morse, Philip: 7090 memo to IBM. undated	3	12
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Restricted for 75 years.		
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**Access note**

Restricted for 75 years.

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**Access note**

Restricted for 75 years.