

provides a true picture of the mind of the past, in the same way as the furnishings of a preserved or restored house provide a picture of past society."¹²

Even in the absence of a mandate to save software, libraries, archival repositories, and museums have mobilized resources to document the history of computing. Historians of software will draw on a variety of historical documentation that includes many formats, both digital and paper based. Because of the widening realm of software applications, hundreds, if not thousands, of repositories have saved collections touching on the history of computers and computing. Consider topics such as the history of hospital information management, library database technology, scientific computation, digital typography, or computer graphics in the film industry, topics for which documentation may be found in repositories ranging from government record centers and university archives to closed private collections and corporate records centers. The spectrum ranges from the Library of Congress to the Disney Archives, and as we shall see in a few moments, to virtual collections such as the Internet Archive.

Archives of Data-Processing History provided a good overview of the major repositories in the field circa 1990, and this circle has not widened considerably since that time, even though many collections have been added since then. The core group of brick-and-mortar collections consists of the Charles Babbage Institute, the Computer Museum (now the Computer History Center), the Hagley Museum and Library, the Library of Congress, the National Archives and Records Administration, the Smithsonian Institution, and the Stanford University Libraries, plus several corporate archives (IBM, AT&T, Texas Instruments, and so on). Smaller, but nonetheless significant, collections can be

12. This brochure was later reproduced in the *IEEE Annals for the History of Computing* 2 (Jan. 1980). The text of this brochure is available via the Web site of the Software History Center from <http://www.softwarehistory.org/>.

that are now separated, while cutting off the uncontrolled extension of established departments of special collections to digital materials and refocusing their attention on the venerated realms of rare books and manuscripts. Still, as Swade has noted in his writings on collecting software, it is tempting to lay aside theoretical problems of proper custody for software and worry, instead, about the work. The conundrum here is that while the relationship of software to hardware, its storage on physical media, or its association with artifacts such as disks, computers, and boxes, might lead one to think of software as fit for the museum, requirements of scholarly access such as identifying and locating sources, standards of indexing and meta-data creation, and maintenance of collections for retrieval and interpretation seem more in line with the capabilities and programs of libraries and archival repositories. In short, ad hoc decisions about curatorial responsibility may well have long-term implications for future scholarly work.

Kittler's admonition that "there is no software" provides little relief to archivists and librarians who discover that there is more of it than they can handle. And yet, the separation of physical media from content offers the glimmer of hope that the hard work of software history might be accomplished through a mixture of new organizational models, new technological skills, and established practices, as well as a reconvergence of museum, library, and archival curatorship.