



Computing: A Concise History (The MIT Press Essential Knowledge series)

By Paul E. Ceruzzi



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The history of computing could be told as the story of hardware and software, or the story of the Internet, or the story of "smart" hand-held devices, with subplots involving IBM, Microsoft, Apple, Facebook, and Twitter. In this concise and accessible account of the invention and development of digital technology, computer historian Paul Ceruzzi offers a broader and more useful perspective. He identifies four major threads that run throughout all of computing's technological development: digitization--the coding of information, computation, and control in binary form, ones and zeros; the convergence of multiple streams of techniques, devices, and machines, yielding more than the sum of their parts; the steady advance of electronic technology, as characterized famously by "Moore's Law"; and the human-machine interface. Ceruzzi guides us through computing history, telling how a Bell Labs mathematician coined the word "digital" in 1942 (to describe a high-speed method of calculating used in anti-aircraft devices), and recounting the development of the punch card (for use in the 1890 U.S. Census). He describes the ENIAC, built for scientific and military applications; the UNIVAC, the first general purpose computer; and ARPANET, the Internet's precursor. Ceruzzi's account traces the world-changing evolution of the computer from a room-size ensemble of machinery to a "minicomputer" to a desktop computer to a pocket-sized smart phone. He describes the development of the silicon chip, which could store ever-increasing amounts of data and enabled ever-decreasing device size. He visits that hotbed of innovation, Silicon Valley, and brings the story up to the present with the Internet, the World Wide Web, and social networking.



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- Sales Rank: #214458 in Books
- Published on: 2012-06-15
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 7.00" h x .44" w x 5.00" l, .50 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 199 pages



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Review

"It's a delightful small book, very nicely produced and with illustrations, perfect for a journey or to slip in a pocket for commuting. It's also, in 150 pages, a super overview of the history of this utterly transformational technology..."--**Diane Coyle**, *The Enlightened Economist*

"For those interested in the fundamentals of computer history, *Computing: A Concise History* navigates a complex world with in-depth, authoritative coverage in terms accessible to the non-expert."--**John F. Barber**, *Leonardo Reviews*

About the Author

Paul E. Ceruzzi is a Curator at the National Air and Space Museum, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. He is the author of *A History of Modern Computing*, *Internet Alley: High Technology in Tysons Corner, 1945-2005*, both published by the MIT Press, and other books.

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