

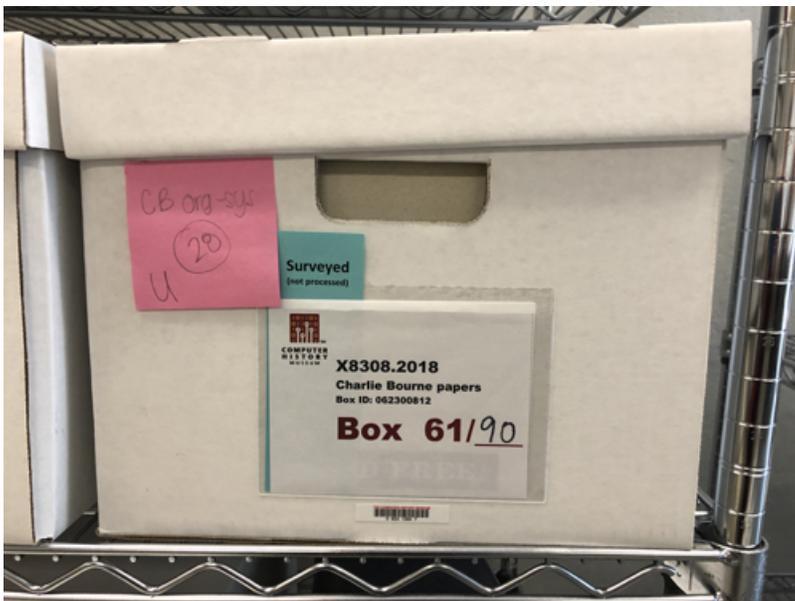
News from Nan

COMPUTER HISTORY

THE ANCIENT ROOTS OF MODERN INFORMATION RETRIEVAL

JUNE 3, 2018 | DICK

From 2014 to 2020 we researched and cataloged over 5000 items (hardware, software, and text) at the Computer History Museum in Mountain View, California. We sometimes blogged about our experiences and the fascinating items we encountered; this post is part of that set.

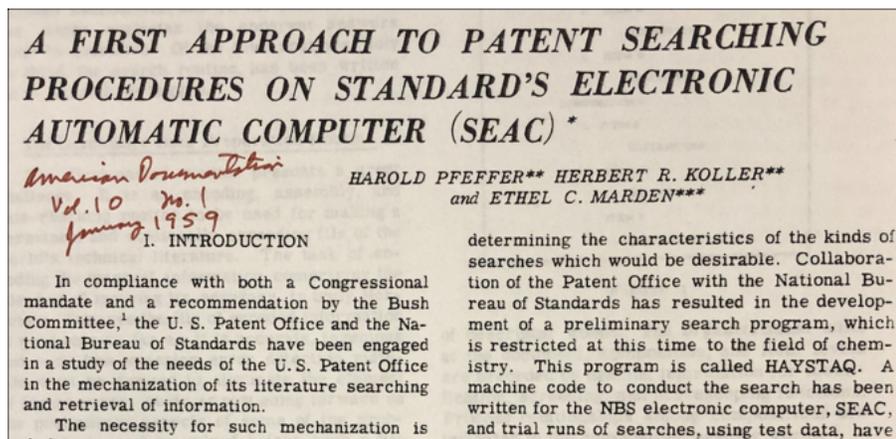


A box from the Chales Bourne papers

In January of 2019 we began working as volunteers at the Computer History Museum on the Software History Processing Project (SHIPP), which is funded by a grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission.

Since February, we have been helping to preserve and catalog materials donated to the museum by Charles Bourne. Charlie is one of the pioneers in the information retrieval industry. His work there goes back as far as 1957. Much of the material we have processed was gathered by Charles Bourne and Trudi Hahn as source material for their book *A History of Online Information Services, 1963-1976*.

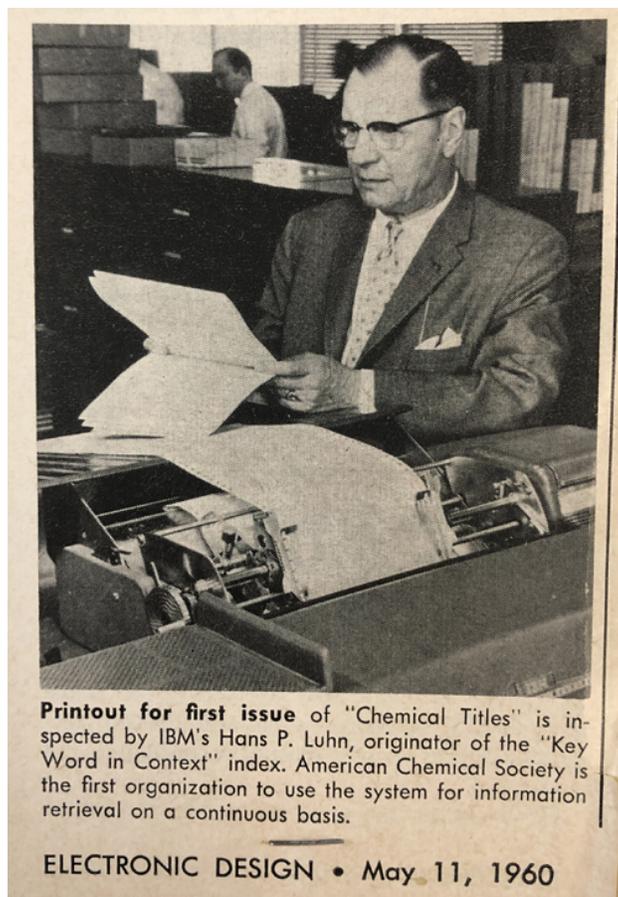
We have noticed while processing the sources how far back the roots of modern information retrieval actually go. Here is an example of a report about doing patent literature searching on the SEAC computer in the 1950s. This was the HAYSTAQ system.



The SEAC HAYSTAQ System

The documents on HAYSTAQ show that even in the 1950s, work was being done on search algorithms for information retrieval.

Another example is this article about the KWIC (Key Words in Context) algorithm invented by Hans Luhn in 1960.



Hans P. Luhn of IBM, inventor of KWIC

Luhn did pioneering work in the areas of full-text processing, hash codes, automatic indexing and abstracting, and KWIC. He also did some of the early work on what he called “Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI)”, which was a way to automatically inform users about new developments on selected topics.

Charles Bourne went on to become an executive at Lockheed DIALOG until his retirement in 1997. DIALOG was the first interactive, online search system. As you can imagine, the Bourne collection at the museum contains abundant information about DIALOG and the information retrieval industry in general.

Once the SHIPP project is complete, this information and other information about software history will be available to researchers by contacting the Computer History Museum.

◀ 2019 ◀ COMPUTER HISTORY MUSEUM ◀ HANS P LUHN ◀ HAYSTAQ ◀ KWIC ◀ LOCKHEED DIALOG ◀ SEAC
◀ SHIPP