

The Rocappi Team

Jonathan Seybold, September 2018

Computer programmers

The small programming team evolved steadily over the 7 years from 1993 to 1970. No one was there for the entire time. The key programmers were:

Colin Barber: An English programmer who had written the software for the West Palm Beach *Times*. The first employee my father hired. Sent to England in 1964 to become head programmer at Rocappi Ltd.

Pat Steuber: Son of family friends. Pat took a programming course the summer after he graduated from Swarthmore High School, then showed up at Rocappi and asked for a job. Colin figured he could get rid of this pesky kid by giving him a programming challenge that Colin figured would take an experienced programmer a couple of months to solve. Pat showed up the next morning with a brilliant solution. He was hired on the spot. Left to live in England in 1966, starting first at Rocappi Ltd.

Tim Archer: Originally sent by Rocappi Ltd. from England to help work on software development. Took over as head programmer when Colin Barber went to Rocappi Ltd. Recruited away by Alphanumeric in 1967.

Joe Gangemi: A local boy from Philadelphia who joined as a junior programmer. He took over as lead programmer when Tim Archer left. Joe was the solid backbone of the programming team and was with us for longer than any other programmer

Scott Walton: Had a printing/typesetting background and experience writing assembly language code for IBM 360's. I added Scott to the team when we started to re-write the entire software suite for the 360.

Other contributors included Dick Deisher, Dorothy Colman and Greg Diaz.

Copy Mark-up

Martha Morrison lived a few houses up the street from 1501 Baltimore Pike. She had a natural gift for understanding the inherent structure of documents. She was my collaborator in figuring out how we wanted to tag each job. And, she had the primary responsibility for creating all of the typographic style, formatting and data processing definitions that would produce the final output required.

Perforator Operators

The perforator operators used keyboards to type input into 6-channel paper tape. Most of them worked for us for years.

Computer operators

Computer operators had a great deal of responsibility — especially when they worked the night shift. (We always ran big, long jobs over night.)

Milt Carter was hired as a computer operator. But he showed such an unflappable talent for organization and leadership that I ended up promoting him around and then over the guys he had reported to. Milt loved the challenge of getting an organization to run smoothly, but got bored with simply over-seeing day-to-day operations. He went on to have a successful career as someone who could come into a troubled organization and fix it.

Proofreaders

The one skill that the computer could not replace was proofreading. We ended up hiring a small team of experienced industry pros. They were good! One, Russell, even found a typo that had been perpetuated in multiple versions of the King James Bible for many decades. Until we got the Fototronic CRT typesetter, we proofread specially formatted computer printouts with overprints, and underprints to distinguish different type fonts. Once we got the high speed digital CRT typesetter, we mostly proofread typeset output. There is simply no substitute for seeing actual type fonts on paper.

Management

We did not have great luck bringing in experienced executives to run the business side of the company. What we were doing was different enough that having them around added to the payroll but just didn't seem to help that much. My father's experience before I arrived with hiring two outside salesmen was a complete disaster. They knew how to spend money, but not how to sell our services. That we had to do ourselves.

Hans Weiss was the real gem. An old typesetting salesman, Hans taught me the technology and craft. When we needed to understand how the pros handled particular kinds of page make-up problems Hans would find someone with years of experience doing that kind of work who could explain how he approached the problem and what decisions and trade-offs he would make.

After Lehigh Press acquired the company they installed **Carl Buehler** to run the business and production side. Carl had started out as an IBM salesman and understood the technology side in a way that previous managers we had tried did not. This worked out well for all concerned. I could concentrate on the hardware and software development, on the more challenging projects, and on important customers. My father could concentrate on being the outside face of the company, developing new markets and new customer relations, and, as before, being the key idea person.