Dennis Austin PowerPoint records X6642.2013

Finding aid prepared by Bo Doub, Kim Hayden, and Sara Chabino Lott.
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2015
Title: Dennis Austin PowerPoint records
Identifier/Call Number: X6642.2013
Contributing Institution: Computer History Museum
Language of Material: English
Physical Description: 4.67 Linear feet3 record cartons and 1 oversize box
Date (bulk): Bulk, 1985-1994
Date (inclusive): 1984-2007
creator: Austin, Dennis
Collection Processed By
Bo Doub and Kim Hayden, 2015.
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Preferred Citation
[Identification of Item], [Date], Dennis Austin PowerPoint records, Lot X6642.2013, Box [#], Folder [#], Computer History Museum.
Immediate Source of Acquisition
Gift of Dennis Austin, 2012.
Arrangement
The collection is arranged into 5 series:
Series 1, Forethought, Inc. records, 1984-1987
Series 2, PowerPoint source code records, 1985-1988, bulk 1988
Series 3, PowerPoint versions, 1987-1994
Series 4, Notes and correspondence, 1985-1996
Biographical/Historical Note
First released in 1987, PowerPoint is the standard in presentation software. It has been included with Microsoft Office since the software suite's first release in 1990. Dennis Austin designed and developed PowerPoint while working at Forethought, Inc., in Mountain View and Sunnyvale, California. He worked closely with Robert Gaskins, who conceived the program, and Tom Rudkin, who helped develop it. Born May 28, 1947, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Austin studied electrical engineering at University of Virginia, then attended graduate school at Arizona State University, MIT, and UC Santa Barbara. He worked as a software architect for Burroughs Corporation and Gavilan Computers before joining Forethought in 1984. He worked for Microsoft from 1987 to 1996.
Originally called Presenter, PowerPoint was intended to be a simple program for the creation of professional-looking presentations. PowerPoint was first developed for Apple Macintosh because of the computer's simpler programming interface, superior graphical and textual systems, and eager user base, and Forethought was the first company Apple invested in. The first Mac version was released April 20, 1987. Four months later, Microsoft purchased Forethought and the rights to PowerPoint for $14 million in its first significant software acquisition. Microsoft continues to release PowerPoint software, building upon the initial version with color, animation, and the slideshow it is now known for.
For a more detailed history of PowerPoint see: Sweating bullets : notes about inventing PowerPoint, by Robert Gaskins.
Scope and Content of the Collection
The Dennis Austin PowerPoint records contain materials assembled, and mostly authored, by Dennis Austin as a key designer and developer of the slide show presentation software, PowerPoint. The records span 1984 through 2007 with the
The bulk of the collection being from 1985 to 1994. The collection follows the design and development of PowerPoint from its beginnings at Forethought, Inc. when its name was "Presenter," to its initial release for the Apple Macintosh in 1987, its purchase by Microsoft later that same year, and through the software's subsequent versions — with the bulk of this collection covering versions 2.0, 3.0, and 4.0. The records in this collection include Dennis Austin's notes and design drawings, PowerPoint source code, program and feature descriptions, correspondence, user's manuals, promotional materials, and business records from Forethought and Microsoft's Graphics Business Unit (GBU). Since the late 1980s, PowerPoint has had a significant cultural impact on how people give presentations.

**Separated Material**

Commercial software, ephemera, and media items were separated from the main collection. The software includes Typing Intrigue, Forethought PowerPoint (1987), Forethought FileMaker Plus (1986), and various versions of Microsoft PowerPoint. The Ephemera and media include a PowerPoint mouse pad, buttons, badges, and Desktop Publishing on VHS. To view catalog records for the separated items please search CHM's online catalog at [http://www.computerhistory.org/collections/search](http://www.computerhistory.org/collections/search).

**Related Collections at CHM**

- Austin, Dennis oral history, 2015-03-31, Lot X7445.2015, Catalog number 102740062
- Beginnings of PowerPoint: A Personal Technical Story, 2009, Lot X6511.2012, Catalog number 102745695
- Kramlich, Dick (C. Richard) oral history, 2015-03-31, Lot X7447.2015, Catalog number 102740064
- PowerPoint demonstrations and panel discussion: Dennis Austin and Thomas A. Rudkin, 2015-03-30, Lot X7444.2015, Catalog number 102740061
- Rudkin, Tom (Thomas A.) oral history, 2015-03-31, Lot X7446.2015, Catalog number 102740063

**Subjects and Indexing Terms**

- Austin, Dennis
- Computer programming
- Computer software
- Computer software design
- Computer software industry
- Computer software--Development
- Microsoft PowerPoint (Computer file)
- Source code (Computer Science)

**Forethought, Inc. records**, Series 1, 1984-1987

**Language of Material:** English

**Scope and Contents**

This series contains the business, design, and development records of Forethought, Inc., the company that first created PowerPoint before it was known as PowerPoint. Also included are records surrounding the initial design and development of the presentation software, first titled "Diagram" then "Presenter," and finally "PowerPoint." The records in this series most closely associated with the design of the software are written by Dennis Austin and other employees of Forethought, including Peter Bishop, Tom Rudkin, and Robert Gaskins. These records involve the general planning of the software as well as more specific design elements like user interface, slide design, specifications, cutting and pasting within Presenter, and drawing tools – including some of the source code associated with these topics. This series also includes some administrative records from Forethought including a business plan, product proposals, training sessions, and a letter from Apple Computer, Inc.'s Developer Technical Support team confirming Forethought's registration for the new file type and extension: .ppnt. This series is arranged chronologically.

- 102733911 *Forethought, Inc. certificates, business plan, and product proposal 1984-1987*
- 102733910 *Forethought Presenter development 1985-1987*

Language of Material: English

Scope and Contents

This series contains PowerPoint source code documents for Apple Macintosh dating from 1985 to 1988, with the bulk of materials from 1988. Code languages include 68000 and Pascal. Of particular interest are programming conventions, an explanation of the internal structure of PowerPoint in Macintosh Programmer's Workshop Pascal units, and notes on testing of Microsoft Windows modules. This series is arranged chronologically.

102733914 PowerPoint source code 1985-1987
102733912 Apple Macintosh PowerPoint 68k source code 1986-1987
102733913 Apple Macintosh PowerPoint Pascal source code 1988-05

PowerPoint versions, Series 3, 1987-1994

Language of Material: English

Scope and Contents

This series contains software development and design records organized by the different versions of PowerPoint. Most of the records in this series are written by Dennis Austin and appear in the forms of design drawings, software specifications, program and feature descriptions, correspondence, release schedules, and presentation materials. The series begins with records leading up to the release of PowerPoint 2.0 for the Apple Macintosh in 1988 and ends with the PowerPoint 4.0 releases for Windows and Macintosh in 1994. For the records covering the first release of PowerPoint in 1987, see Series 1, "Forethought, Inc. records." Many of the design notes for PowerPoint 2.0 focus on a more dynamic use of color in the software. PowerPoint 2.0 was also the first version of the software to be released for the Microsoft Windows operating system in 1990 (two years later than the version 2.0 release for the Macintosh). This shift to Microsoft Windows is also reflected in both the administrative and design records surrounding PowerPoint 2.0. A major feature represented in the PowerPoint 3.0 records is PowerEdit — the text editing engine used in PowerPoint. In the PowerPoint 4.0 records, the bulk of the records are milestone and review documents created within Microsoft's Graphics Business Unit (GBU). This series is arranged chronologically.

102733919 PowerPoint 2.0 development 1987-1990
102733921 PowerPoint 3.0 development 1988-1992
102733922 PowerPoint 3.0 development 1989-1991
102733920 PowerPoint 2.1 schedule and specification 1990
102733923 PowerPoint 4.0 development bugs 1992-1993
102733925 PowerPoint 4.0 design 1992-1994
102733924 PowerPoint 4.0 specification 1993-07
102733926 PowerPoint 4.0 review 1993-1994

Notes and correspondence, Series 4, 1985-1996

Scope and Contents

This series contains Dennis Austin's notebooks relating to PowerPoint's design, the administrative records of Microsoft's Graphics Business Unit (GBU), legal documents relating to a patent application, and general writings on software features that are not tied to specific versions of PowerPoint. The notes in this series are mostly handwritten or drawn by Dennis Austin in bound notebooks or loose, undated pages. These records also contain short program descriptions and email correspondence on topics including the use of AppleShare, an early file server and network service at Microsoft's GBU offices, and other writings on general principles of user interface. Of particular interest is a 1996 patent application for an invention by Dennis Austin and Anders Kierulf for a method of black and white printing of color documents. This series is arranged chronologically.

102733916 Contact lists, correspondence, and AppleShare at Microsoft 1985-1994
102733915 PowerPoint design notes 1986-1995
102733927 Microsoft Graphics Business Unit 1988-1996
102733917 PowerPoint user interface notes 1990-1994
102733918 Legal documents 1996

Promotional material, user’s manuals, and ephemera, Series 5, Bulk, 1986-1995
1984-2007

Scope and Contents
This series contains user's manuals, advertisements, brochures and other promotional items, conference programs, 3.5” demonstration discs, and articles pertaining to PowerPoint from 1984 to 2007, with the bulk of materials from 1986 to 1995. The user's manuals are for both Apple Macintosh and Microsoft Windows versions of PowerPoint. Also included are manuals for FileMaker, Factfinder, and Xenix Mail. Articles in this series include Microsoft's purchase of Forethought Inc. in 1987 and reviews of PowerPoint after its releases. Of particular interest is a sales source book, which demonstrates how Microsoft marketed PowerPoint. This series is arranged chronologically.

102733930 Factfinder user’s manual for the Apple Macintosh 1984
102733929 FileMaker user’s manual for the Apple Macintosh 1985
102733940 FileMaker Plus user’s manual for the Apple Macintosh 1986
102733934 Apple Macintosh Plus brochure: did you ever imagine you could come into power so quickly? 1986-01
102733937 Microsoft PowerPoint tutorial and demonstration 1987
102733941 PowerPoint user’s manual for the Apple Macintosh 1987
102733932 Quick reference guide to Xenix Mail: communicating on the XENIX/UNIX multiuser operating system 1987
102733936 PowerPoint and Forethought articles 1987-1995; bulk 1987
102733939 Microsoft PowerPoint 1988
102733938 Microsoft PowerPoint for Windows step by step 1992
102733931 Microsoft PowerPoint source book 1992-09-25
102733942 PowerPoint double-spread magazine advertisements 1992-1994
102733935 PowerPoint promotional material 1992-2007
102733933 Apple worldwide developers conference 1994-1995